A home for the diaspora

FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA TO MELBOURNE'S PUBLIC HOUSING

Sandra Carrasco | **Neeraj Dangol** | **Majdi Faleh**

The artwork featured throughout is by **Muhubo Suleiman**,
Somali artist and educator.

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Public Housing in Collingwood
Source: Authors

A Home for the Diaspora:
From the Horn of Africa to Melbourne's public housing

This book explores the sense of home that refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa created in Melbourne's public housing estates. The transition from forced migration and resettlement to making Melbourne their new home is presented through stories narrated by refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa. These are considered one of Melbourne's most vulnerable communities and shamefully some of the most discriminated and isolated. Thus, this book shows that despite differences in culture, customs and ways of life in their home countries, migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa are moving towards integrating into the Australian society.

This book is written for policymakers, researchers, social workers, humanitarian and non-profit organisations, religious groups and organisations and anyone interested in social justice, refugees' studies, migrants and integration, and social equity.

"Based on extensive fieldwork, 'A Home for the Diaspora: From the Horn of Africa to Melbourne's public housing' presents a rich case study of refugees adjusting to and transforming the public housing communities they call home in Melbourne, Australia. Carrasco, Dangol, and Faleh incorporate the narratives of individual refugees in order to shed light on the challenges faced by displaced groups trying to forge new lives in Australian society. This book is an important contribution to refugee studies and should be of value to policymakers, researchers, and anyone interested in refugee resettlement, public housing, and integration."

- **Dr. James P. Chaney**, *Assistant Professor, Middle Tennessee State University, USA*

"A beautifully researched book that documents personal experiences of Horn of Africa communities in Melbourne, Australia with an emphasis on providing a voice to the migrants themselves through a series of case studies. The book is full of information relevant to those of us who are interested in the experiences of migrants and refugees, and highlights the importance of public housing for community building and identity. The Economic and Social Participation Hallmark Research Initiative (ESPRIt) is proud to have supported such an important interdisciplinary research project through providing initial seed funding."

- **Dr Jordy Meekes**, *Economic and Social Participation Hallmark Research Initiative (ESPRIt), University of Melbourne, Australia*

Abbreviations

AMSSA Australian Muslim Social Services Agency

HRIAH Hallmark Research Initiative for Affordable Housing

ESPRit Economic and Social Participation Research Initiative

HoA Horn of Africa

AREiA African Research and Engagement in Australia

IOM International Organization for Migration

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics

SPLM Sudan People's Liberation Army

UNDESA United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

CNLC Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre

USA United States of America

Preface

The Hallmark Research Initiative for Affordable Housing is proud to support this important piece of work from Drs Sandra Carrasco, Neeraj Dangol and Majdi Faleh. We are grateful and humbled to provide a platform for sharing the rich histories, experiences and insights of members of Melbourne's community from the Horn of Africa. Thank you to the 15 story tellers who shared their experiences.

Amplifying the narratives of African migrants and refugees who live in Melbourne's public housing estates allows us to celebrate the skills, capacities, creativity and resourcefulness of members of our community. It captures the pathways that led the story tellers to Melbourne, often via many other countries and often in response to war, drought and conflict. The book contains stories from parents, community leaders, artists, entrepreneurs, students, religious leaders, volunteers. It also includes a range of visions for a better future; peace, equality, economic opportunities, support programs, education and training and better politicians.

This book also acknowledges the important role that public housing plays in welcoming new migrants, fostering long-term, connected communities and generating a sense of home in a new country. The stories in this book refer to deep family and community support networks, both within the estates, Melbourne and in connection to family living throughout Africa.

These stories also shine a light on deep challenges experienced by the storytellers and critical perspectives on public housing. In particular, many of the storytellers in this book refer to challenges with raising children in public housing, a lack of public space, experiences of racism and drug problems.

This book represents a valuable and unique contribution to research and an important reflection of life in Melbourne's public housing estates. As a research group, we are committed to projects that capture the voices of the experts in housing – the residents – and we are glad to support this project.

Professor Alan Pert and **Dr Katrina Raynor**
Hallmark Research Initiative for Affordable Housing (HRIAH)
The University of Melbourne

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* The real name was changed to protect privacy

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Foreword

I am pleased to have been asked to write the foreword to Migrants from the Horn of Africa: Creating a sense of home in Melbourne's Public Housing. The Horn of Africa includes Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. The book is the outcome of two research projects at the University of Melbourne and looks at the ways in which migrants from Horn of Africa countries make homes in Melbourne's public housing. As a Professor of Sociology who has worked with Sudanese and South Sudanese migrants in my own research, and with the African-Australian community more broadly in co-leading the African Research and Engagement in Australia (AREiA) initiative at the University, I welcome this work.

The book provides important insights into both public housing and Horn of Africa communities. It has four parts. It starts with an overview of African migration to Australia, outlining how Horn of Africa migrants came to be displaced and resettled in Australia. It provides useful and interesting demographic information about these communities including when they started arriving in Melbourne, where they came from, and how they come to belong. I found it interesting to learn that a small number of housing estates are home to a large number of former refugees from the Horn of Africa and their families. These estates provide opportunities for newly arrived migrants to develop social connections, becoming what the book describes as 'community incubators'.

In the second section, the book shares stories of individual migrants including their journeys to Australia, their experiences living in Melbourne, and their aspirations for and critiques of life in public housing. Narratives from fifteen research participants highlight the varied range of experiences within the group. Participants recount their pathways to Australia, including many experiences as refugees, and their feelings about having stable and (mostly) safe housing, even when there are still issues with it. The stories are specific and individualised accounts of life in public housing, but also share similarities. Themes of the book include the importance of community, the place of Africans in Australia, gratefulness for having access to stable housing and also critiques of the state of the housing. Many participants mention issues with getting their flat maintained, even while being grateful for having housing. Some flats are too small for the number of residents and therefore are crowded, and several mentioned a lack of parking. Nevertheless, they make their units into homes, frequently

decorating as they would have in Africa, using precious objects to foster a sense of belonging. Even when conditions here are tough, they are still better than what residents experienced prior to arrival. Some participants expressed wanting to go back to Africa at some point in the future due to lack of belonging here, while others have found solid and supportive communities.

The third section provides an analysis of the narratives, exploring how migrants create new lives in Melbourne. It nicely relates the affordances of the public housing estates with community building activities, while also examining migrants' feelings about their homelands and those left behind, and dreams of returning. The critical mass of Horn of Africa migrants in some of the estates enabled the creation of supportive communities that might have been more challenging to find elsewhere. However the stories are not all positive. Several participants felt that the estates were not safe for children, that the units were not properly maintained and there were not enough recreational spaces, and there were bad influences that led young people to misbehave. So while residents were grateful for their affordable and stable housing, they would like to see it improved.

For me the book really highlights the resilience of the refugee-background migrants from the Horn of Africa. The participants' voices are at its heart, providing nuanced accounts of life in the estates. The researchers have provided an innovative account of life in the estates from the perspectives of these residents. The residents are grateful, but also critical. They have constructive ideas about how things can be improved. They recount their experiences of exclusion and marginalization in Australia, but also the ways they have managed to create homes here. The book provides new insights into an important set of experiences.

The researchers are to be commended for this work, which provides important insights into the experiences of a much-maligned migrant group and the role of public housing in community building. I hope that you enjoy reading the stories and the analysis.

Karen Farquharson,
Professor of Sociology
and Head of the School of Social and Political
Sciences,
The University of Melbourne.

Acknowledgements

About the authors

Sandra Carrasco is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Newcastle, Australia. She received the prestigious McKenzie Fellowship for postdoctoral research at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Sandra holds a PhD in Environmental Management from Kyoto University, Japan, where she completed her master and doctorate studies under the Japanese government's MEXT scholarship. Her research interests include post-disaster reconstruction and community resilience, housing transformation and the appropriateness of rebuilt settlements, incremental housing, informal settlements, governance and city planning, urban poverty, and migrant and refugee studies.

Sandra Carrasco

Neeraj Dangol holds a PhD in Urban Planning from the University of Melbourne. He completed a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Hawaii at Manoa under Asian Development Bank Japanese Scholarship Program. He teaches various postgraduate and undergraduate subjects in the Melbourne School of Design. His research interests include informal urbanism, housing, urban poverty, tenure security, risk perception, disaster risk reduction, community resilience and governance. He practised architecture and worked as an urban planner with government agencies in Nepal.

Neeraj Dangol
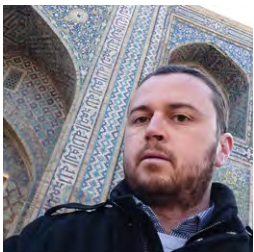
Majdi Faleh is an Assistant Professor at the University of Bahrain, Architecture and Interior Design Department. He holds a PhD in Architecture and Humanities from the University of Western Australia and a Master of Architecture from Ball State University (USA) under the Fulbright Program. His interests include social justice, migration and architecture, ethics and aesthetics in Islamic architecture. Majdi was the Aga Khan Postdoctoral Fellow at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was a senior teaching assistant and a design studio leader at the University of Melbourne. Majdi lectured in Australia and China.

Majdi Faleh

*All the authors were affiliated to the University of Melbourne during the term of this research.

PART I   Introduction

Introduction

The international migration and forced displacement have dramatically increased in the last decades and have become a global phenomenon. The World Migration Report 2020 (IOM, 2019, p. 2) estimated the number of international migrants to be almost 272 million globally—about 3.5% of the world's population. In 2003, the International Organization of Migration (IOM, 2003) projected that by 2050, the percentage of displaced people would be approximately 2.6% of the global population. This reveals the current and future challenges and the unpredictability in the drivers of migration and displacement.

Forced migration and displacement globally produce great hardship, trauma and loss of life (IOM, 2020), which are caused by conflicts, extreme violence, severe economic and political instability and destruction caused by disastrous events related to natural hazards. Refugees are among the forcibly displaced people seeking secure locations and refuge, often in foreign countries. The UN Refugee Agency reported that at the end of 2019, there were 79 million forcibly displaced people, including 25.9 million people holding refugee status worldwide (UNHCR, 2019a).

Refugees are compelled by circumstances beyond their control to leave their homes and find a new home somewhere else, either temporarily or permanently (Taylor, 2015). Migrants who are forced to leave their home countries seeking a safer and a better life share the feelings of dispossession and displacement because they feel uprooted from what they called 'home' (Younge, 2015). Despite the importance of the notion of a 'sense of home', this is often dismissed in studies of forced migration (Taylor, 2015). Further, the migrants and refugees experience of the process of creating new homes and bonding with their social and personal identities are rarely studied (Turton, 2005). These gaps in refugee studies are the result of the over-emphasis on policy definitions and its implications and have been observed by researchers to be one of the main weaknesses of the literature (Black, 2001; Taylor, 2015).

The over-emphasis on policy in refugee studies has reduced its scope to a focus on the pain and suffering of refugees while dismissing their agency in producing their new home (Taylor, 2015; Turton, 2005). Turton (2005) claimed that understanding communities' abilities to develop an attachment to place as a social product rather than a precondition of social activities creates empathy inside and outside of the displaced communities. Thus, presenting and sharing the details of how refugees and migrants re-create a home reduces the tendency to marginalise the 'suffering' and promote the 'imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers' (Rorty, Rorty & Richard, 1989).

The countries in the Horn of Africa (HoA) have experienced multiple and consecutive conflicts that have caused the forced migration of people since the second half of the twentieth century. Many countries have become hosts to these communities in the urgency to seek permanent and safe locations to relocate them. One of them is Australia; in particular, Melbourne has become the home of almost half of the migrants and refugees from the HoA that have resettled in Australia (ABS, 2018).

This book presents the narratives of the community from the HoA residing in Melbourne. The personal experiences of the migrants and refugees are the basis for understanding their pathways and challenges to settling down in Melbourne and their efforts to create home towards the construction of a future for themselves and their families in this new land. This book observes the human side of migrants and refugees' pain and hopes as part of the Australian society and beyond their victimisation and focus exclusively on analysing the effectiveness of migration policies.

Before the presentation of the migrants and refugees' narratives, the following section presents the conditions that characterised the causes of displacement in the HoA and the resettlement context in Melbourne. In particular, this study observes how Melbourne's public housing estates became 'incubators' for the reconstruction of the sense of home. Some of the residents of public housing from the HoA shared their experiences with this researcher, and these are presented as the core of this publication in the form of fifteen stories. Finally, the discussion and conclusion are presented.

1. *Catalysts for Migration in the Horn of Africa*

In the context of this study, the HoA and Sudan include Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan (see Figure 1). This region of Africa is regarded as highly volatile and conflict-ridden (Hoehne, Feyissa & Abdile, 2011; Kubai, 2013) and one of the most unstable and least-developed areas in the African continent (Kubai, 2013; UNHCR, 2019b). It has witnessed subsequent waves of migration and displacement. Forced migration in the region has been driven by a complex combination of factors such as war, conflict and insecurity. These factors are exacerbated by environmental issues and hazards, governance failures, public health emergencies, harsh economic conditions and a lack of livelihood opportunities (IOM, 2020). Family reunification has added to the number of migrants as reported by the IOM (IOM, 2018).
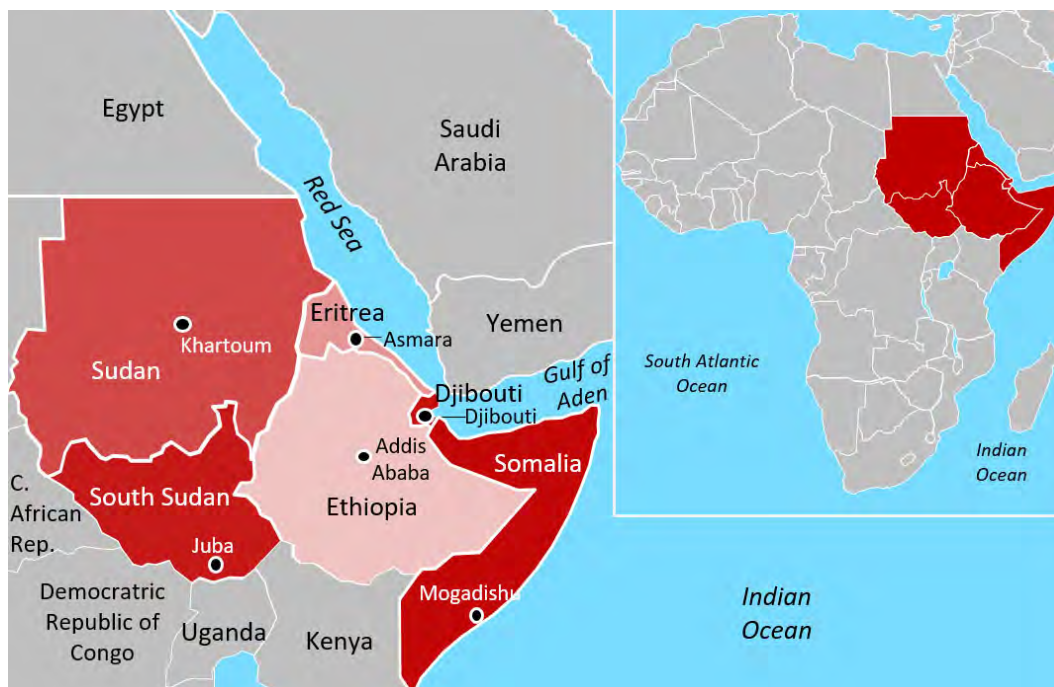
Figure 1.1 Map of the HoA and Sudan
Source: Authors

In the second half of the twentieth century, the region was characterised by subsequent civil wars and interstate violent conflicts (Hoehne et al., 2011), which date back to their colonial periods and were amplified in the light of the independence of these nations (Noack, 2020). The major complexities of displacement and conflict are traced back to the period after World War II. For example, violence erupted in Sudan with a civil war that lasted for seventeen years until 1972. This conflict triggered internal displacement and extended to neighbouring countries (Cutts, 2000). In the 1960s, the so-called Greater Somalia policy of the postcolonial Somali governments led to conflicts with Kenya and Ethiopia. Later in the 1980s, the Somali Civil War erupted in opposition to a dictatorial regime whose armed opponents were hosted by Ethiopia (Hoehne et al., 2011). Further, conflicts between Ethiopian forces and separatists of the Eritrean province resulted in a massive flow of refugees into Sudan (Noack, 2020).

In the following two decades, the East–West tensions were renewed, causing several displacements in the region. These were exacerbated by superpower rivalry and external influences in the conflicts and famine (Noack, 2020). In the late 1970s, when Somali forces invaded Ethiopian territory, displaced Ethiopian communities found shelter in Somalia and Djibouti. Another wave of displacement to Somalia took place in the 1980s, and many refugees later returned to Ethiopia. More than 400,000 refugees from Eritrea, which was part of Ethiopia before 1993, were displaced to Sudan during the self-determination conflicts (Noack, 2020). The 1983 war in Southern Sudan

between the Sudanese forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM) led to the displacement of Sudanese people to Ethiopia (Noack, 2020). Later, over 300,000 refugees from Ethiopia escaped famine entering Sudan between 1984 and 1995. In the late 1980s, the conflict between the Somali government forces and rebels seeking independence of Northwest Somalia caused the displacement of Somalis fleeing to Ethiopia (Cutts, 2000).

In the 1990s, famine and drought were added to the intensified conflicts in the region, which resulted in the displacement of about two million people (Cutts, 2000). The disputes between Ethiopia and Eritrea also caused the expulsion of 68,000 people to Eritrea. In 1996, tensions escalated between Uganda and Sudan. By 1999, Ethiopia hosted nearly 260,000 refugees and Sudan over 390,000 from the HoA (Cutts, 2000; Noack, 2020).

The situation in the HoA remains unstable as a result of the ongoing violent outbreaks, terrorism, droughts and social and political crises (UNHCR, 2019b). With the estimated 190 million inhabitants in the HoA currently (UNDESA, 2019), there are over 2.3 refugees, over 49,000 asylum seekers and more than 9 million internally displaced people in the region (UNHCR, 2018). The situations in South Sudan and Somalia remain critical. They were the two largest refugee crises in the world at the end of 2018 (UNHCR, 2019b). Amid security-, violence- and climate-related challenges in Somalia, the number of internally displaced people increased to more than 2.6 million. Over 800,000 Somalis have been seeking refuge in countries in the region, and

remarkably, almost 140,000 travelled to Yemen despite the violence, conflicts and famine in this country (IOM, 2020; UNHCR, 2019b). Migrants are often unaware of the challenges and dangers they might encounter in their journeys to wealthier countries in the Arabian peninsula (IOM, 2020).

Even though most of the displaced people have remained in the region since the 1970s, refugees from the HoA have also been resettled in a third country in coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR). Data from the UNCHR estimated that more than 414,000 people have been resettled in various countries around the world (UNHCR, 2020). The countries that are currently hosting the greatest number of refugees are the United States, Canada and Australia, which accommodate 93% of the resettled refugees from the HoA and Sudan (UNHCR, 2020) (see Figure 2). However, this number does not consider the migrants who later joined their relatives who had already settled in the host country.

Total refugees resettled between 1979 - 2018 = 414,706
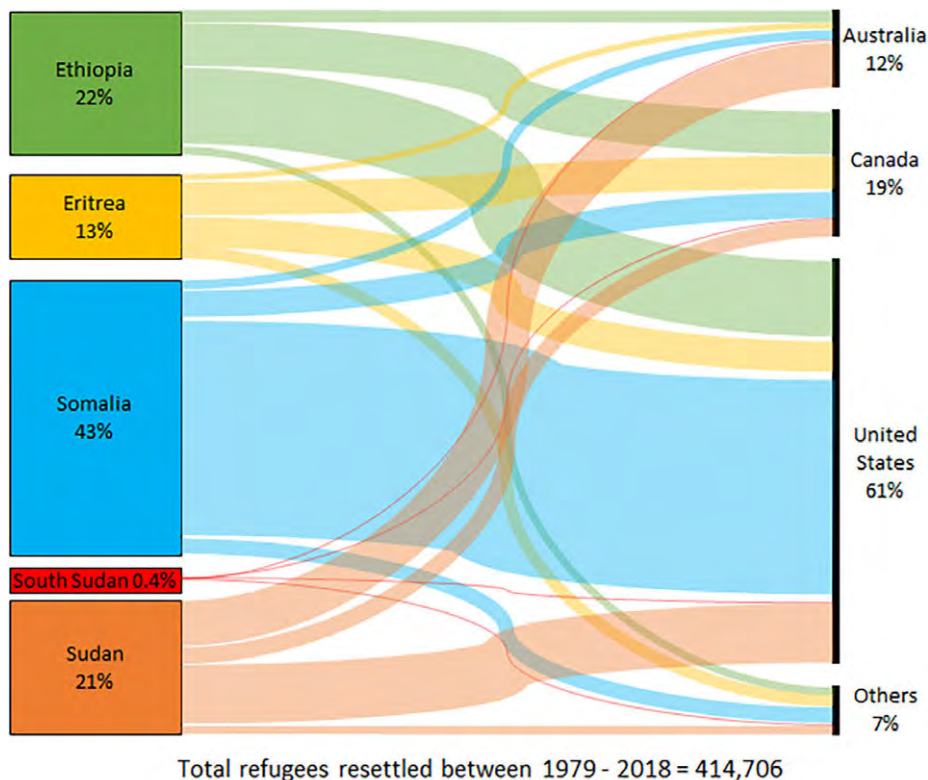
Figure 1.2 HoA refugees' origin and resettlement countries 1979–2018
Source: Authors based on data from UNHCR (2020)

2. From Diasporas to the Creation of Home in Melbourne

Ethiopian migrants were the first from the HoA to arrive in Australia in the 1970s as a result of the Ethiopian government repression that resulted in over 30,000 people imprisoned or killed (Museums Victoria, n.d.-b). In the following decades, Ethiopian migrants continued arriving in Australia, particularly to Victoria, where 838 Ethiopia-born residents were recorded in 1991 (Museums Victoria, n.d.-b). The number of Ethiopian migrants living in Victoria grew over the years increasing from 1,971 in 2001 to 6,368 in 2016, which is 54% of the total Ethiopia-born population in Australia.

Somali and Sudanese migrants were the next group of people from the HoA recorded in the 1991 census, which shows 242 Somalia-born and 184 Sudan-born migrants living in Victoria. At that time, South Sudanese were recorded together with Sudanese, as South Sudan did not obtain its independence until 2011 (Museums Victoria, n.d.-c, n.d.-e). The Somali community faced additional challenges since many of the children had not received education in their home country, and once they arrived in Australia, they had to adjust to the local school life while also learning English (Museums Victoria, n.d.-c). Additionally, many members of the Somali community had the economic responsibility of supporting their family members back in their home country as they continued to suffer from war, famine and displacement (Museums Victoria, n.d.-c). The Somali community in Victoria significantly increased in the following years with 2,309 in 2001 to 3,904 in 2016, which means that Victoria and in particular Melbourne is home of 51% of the Somali-born people residing in Australia (Museums Victoria, n.d.-b; Victoria State Government, 2018b).

The continuous conflicts and regional inequalities resulted in decades of civil war together with drought, famine, war damage and inequal infrastructure hindered the possibilities for the return of displaced Sudanese and South Sudanese who found refuge in third countries (Museums Victoria, n.d.-e). These conditions caused a wave of refugees that were long-term resettled in countries like Australia. It was recorded that 988 Sudanese and South Sudanese made Victoria their home in 2001 (Museums Victoria, n.d.-d, n.d.-e). This number dramatically increased to 6,209 in 2006, and according to the 2011 data, 6,084 Sudanese and 1,118 South Sudanese were residing in Victoria. By 2016, the number of Sudanese-born residents in Victoria reached 5,665, which was 33% of their total population in Australia. The number of South Sudanese residing in Victoria was 2,487, which was 36% of their total population in the country (Victoria State Government, 2018d, 2018e).

The newest community from the HoA arriving in Victoria is the Eritrean-born residents. There were 745 recorded in 1996. The Eritrean community gradually increased over the

years, as 1,518 were recorded in 2011 and 2,002 in 2016 (Museums Victoria, n.d.-a; Victoria State Government, 2018a), which accounts for 43% of the entire Eritrean community in Australia. Djibouti-born residents in Australia is the smallest community from the HoA, with 86 people reported permanently residing in Australia in 2016 (ABS, 2018).

The 2016 census in Australia revealed that there were a total of 48,493 migrants and refugees from the HoA residing in the country. For 43% of these people, Victoria is their home, and almost 20,000 residents of Greater Melbourne were born in the countries of the HoA and Sudan (ABS, 2018).
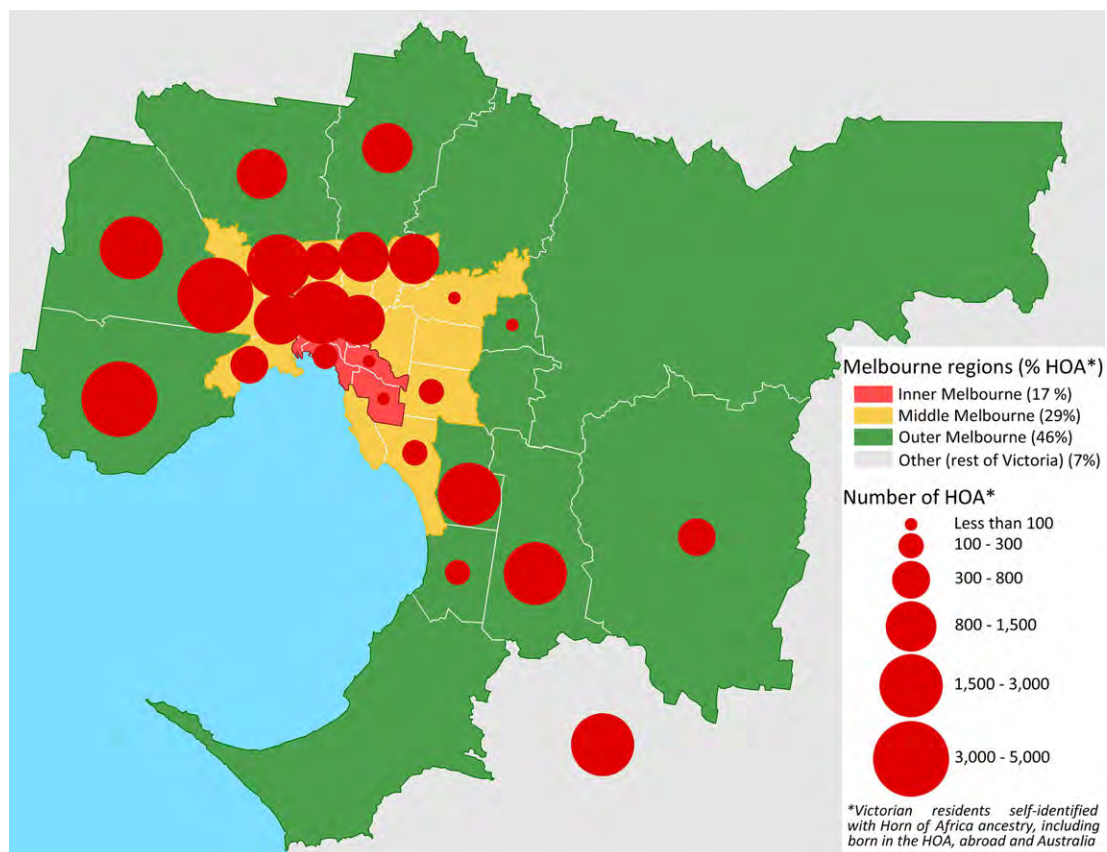
Figure 1.3 Geographic distribution of the communities from the HoA in Melbourne and Victoria
Source: Authors based on data from Victoria State Government (2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e)

Together with the people born in countries from the HoA, the latest census in 2016 also recorded the people who identified themselves as having ancestry from the HoA. In total, 30,161 Victorians identify themselves as Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali, South Sudanese or Sudanese (Victoria State Government, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e). It is estimated that 27,927 members of the HoA communities reside within Greater Melbourne boundaries. Figure 3 presents the distribution of the HoA community in Melbourne where 17% reside in the inner suburbs, 29% in middle suburbs, 46% in Melbourne's outer suburbs and 7% residing in other areas across the state.

Following the arrival and settlement of the different communities from the HoA in Australia, they have gradually grouped as the numbers increased but also based on affinities. The networks created in migrants' communities, such as the HoA communities, are called diasporas. 'Diasporas', as per its Greek origin, means 'scattering of seeds', which in the context of migration studies is often related to people that have been forcefully or violently displaced (Anthias, 1998, p. 560). Thus, migrants create transnational networks linking their places of origin or homeland and places of resettlement, and these networks become 'transnational social spaces' (Johansson Dahre, 2007) that are not limited to a territory but grounded in the sense of people and society (Horst, 2013). Migrants share particular identities and ideas of an 'idealised homeland' (Cuko & Traoré, 2008). In this sense, homeland implies a complex, multilayered (Abdile & Pirkkalainen, 2011), heterogeneous and multifaceted idea that

the diaspora creates rather than a rigid place that defines the diaspora (Axel, 2002). Further, diasporas are changing and dynamic, as they mutate across time and space (Pasura, 2014).

Members of the six nations studied have established and, in some cases, officially registered a variety of organisations. The multicultural commission of the Victoria State Government recorded 39 community organisations from the HoA community. Among them, four are Ethiopian, four Eritrean, thirteen Somali and eighteen Sudanese and Southern Sudanese (Victoria State Government, n. d.). Additionally, there are two organisations that group transboundary communities within the HoA, such as the Harari and Tigrayan people. However, the directory from 'Afro Helpline', which records supporting community organisations for the African residents in Australia, presents 209 organisations from the HoA nationwide and 91 based in Victoria (Afro Helpline, n. d.). Additionally, there are groups assisted by other organisations; for instance, the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre supports Eritrean and Harari women groups (CNLC [Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre], n. d.). Another example is the Australian Muslim Social Services Agency in North Melbourne, which provides religious and educational assistance to the Somali people. It is run by Somali migrants and has become a point of contact for Somali people.

The large number and diversity of organisations indicate different objectives and motivations, including supporting vulnerable members of

the community such as youth, women and the elderly. Organisations also congregate members of the community based on their affinities and interests in terms of education, religion, sports, culture but also based on specific ethnic identities. Other recorded organisations include social and cultural clubs and businesses such as restaurants, which in many cases became a hub for social activities. There are also charities aimed to support residents from the HoA in Australia or to provide humanitarian aid to their home countries. Thus, similarly to researchers observed in the HoA diasporas in other countries, the large number of organisations are related to the high level of fragmentation within the communities (Horst & Gaas, 2009). Also, many of the organisations are the response to specific events, needs or difficulties faced by the communities. Most of the organisations' communication channels with their members are through social media rather than official websites, and only a few of these organisations are professionally run.

3. *Melbourne's Public Housing Estates as a Community Incubator*

Migrants and refugees are in a particular position of vulnerability once they arrive in a country far from their homeland. They need to become familiar with a new physical and socio-cultural environment and an uncertain future ahead for themselves and their families. Refugees resettled in Australia in the last decades were reported to be facing challenges in the initial stages of their resettlement. These include learning English, completing education, addressing health issues, finding permanent housing, securing livelihoods (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; Higgins, 2009) and having access to mechanisms for a family reunion (Abur & Spaaij, 2016). However, the more significant challenge is to ensure a successful settlement and integration, defined as an ongoing process of 'adapting to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's cultural identity' (UNHCR, 2002). Integration also implies that migrants and refugees become an active part of the social, institutional and cultural fabric of the society (Valtonen, 2004). Integration takes place in tandem with the assistance that migrants and refugees receive from their resettled countries following strategies that lead to self-reliance and the independent development of the new communities (Flatau et al., 2015; UNHCR, 2007).

Successful integration depends on a diversity of factors, which were initially recognised by the Geneva Convention (*Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951), such as employment, social welfare, education and housing. Ager and Strang (2008) claimed that the concept of integration is an ambiguous and 'chaotic' concept, controversial and highly debated. Ager and Strang (2008) explained that there are different domains of integration. The most relevant are the 'makers of integration', which define the contexts in which integration takes place. Within this definition, housing, education, employment and healthcare are crucial in the process of refugee integration. In Australia, refugees and migrants generally receive assistance to access affordable and secure housing (Flatau, Colic-Peisker, Bauskis, Maginn & Buergelt, 2014) through settlement services. Housing assistance also comes from family, friends, ethnic communities and religious organisations (Flatau et al., 2014).

Among the various housing options, social housing seems to be the most preferred to secure long-term housing in the current context of housing affordability challenges, financial constraints and disadvantages and discrimination faced by migrants and refugees. Social housing includes public rental housing provided by state governments and community sector organisations (Settlement Council of Australia, 2019). Thus, many migrants and refugees aim to secure public housing, and they consider that access to public housing is the most useful assistance

they need (Migrant Information Centre, 2007). Public housing is available to migrants and refugees under the same conditions as to the general population (Flatau et al., 2014). Unfortunately, the limited availability of public housing results in long waiting lists; Flatau et al. (2015) reported in their study that one-third of the participating refugees were placed on public housing waiting lists.

Migrants and refugees, and in particular those from the HoA, represent a considerable number of the residents living in the five inner Melbourne public housing estates covered in this book. On average, 47% of the residents were born in countries from the HoA. However, this percentage differs from one public housing estate to another. This is detailed in the data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2019) as follows: Flemington 74%, North Melbourne 39%, Carlton (Lygon St) 52%, Carlton (Elgin St) 46% and Fitzroy 16%. Further, it is essential to acknowledge that public housing estates are considered places where diverse ethnic groups converge and face similar socio-economic challenges as the most marginalised in Australia (Arthurson, 2008; Carrasco, Faleh & Dangol, 2020).

Thus, Melbourne's public housing estates became the incubator or the basis for community and social connections, which, as Flatau et al. (2015) claimed, is crucial in the refugees' journey to settle in the host country. Carrasco and O'Brien (2019) explored the importance of the reconstruction of the sense of home among displaced communities and the urgency to re-create social, cultural and spatial attachments. Abrahamson (1996)

observed that newly arrived ethnic groups often tend to converge in certain areas or suburbs in a city. The proximity to members from the same community is crucial in the adjustment to the new physical and social environment, particularly for first-generation migrants and refugees (Abrahamson, 1996). Additionally, having support from a community with a similar background can help migrants and refugees to understand the housing systems and gain access to appropriate housing options (Settlement Council of Australia, 2019).

PART II

Living in Melbourne
Refugees and Migrants' Experiences in Public Housing

Living in Melbourne
Refugees and Migrants' Experiences in Public Housing

The unique experiences of members of the communities from the HoA are presented in this section. The importance of understanding personal experiences through narratives is crucial to provide supportive evidence of the migrants and refugees' challenges and development opportunities. The lived experiences of displacement, efforts to rebuild lives, family ties, community, livelihoods and home are mostly overlooked in the research on forced migration, which primarily favours quantifiable data (Taylor, 2015). However, lived experiences can only be transmitted through narratives, and they cannot be subject to generalisation (Powles, 2004).

The collection and presentation of the participants' stories have their origins in two research projects that were sponsored by research hubs from the University of Melbourne. The main objective of these studies was to capture the housing challenges and experiences of African migrants and refugees in public housing and shed light on their perspectives concerning future housing options.

The first research project is 'A socio-economic exploration of Melbourne's African migrants: Public housing as an incubator' funded by the Economic and Social Participation Research Initiative—ESPRIt Hallmark Seed Funding Scheme 2018. This project's objectives are 1) to spatially describe African migrants' and refugees' neighbourhood experiences and construction of a sense of 'place' as individuals, families and community members; and 2) to gain insight into African migrants' and refugees' daily life experiences, achievements and the limitations they face during the process of integration and development.

The second project is 'Exploring housing alternatives and challenges of Melbourne's African migrants: Is leaving public housing a reality' funded by the Hallmark Research Initiative for Affordable Housing (HRIAH) — Seed Funding Scheme 2019. This project's objectives are 1) to observe the limitations of the housing policies and private market to integrate migrants and refugees in attention to the cultural or religious factors; and 2) to gain insight into the experiences of African migrants and refugees who have left public housing (including their challenges with integrating into private housing).

This book is based on in-depth narrative interviews conducted in Melbourne between December 2019 and February 2020. Previously, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted

between November 2018 and June 2019 aligned with the objectives of the first research project. Subsequently, the second round of 30 interviews was conducted between October 2019 and January 2020 aligned with the objectives of the second research project. The initial findings from the first round of interviews shaped the conversations of the fifteen narrative interviews presented in this book.

The interview participants were male and female migrants and refugees from the HoA who are current or former residents of five of Melbourne's public housing estates in the inner suburbs (see Figure 4). Other representative members of the community who are not residents of public housing were also included.
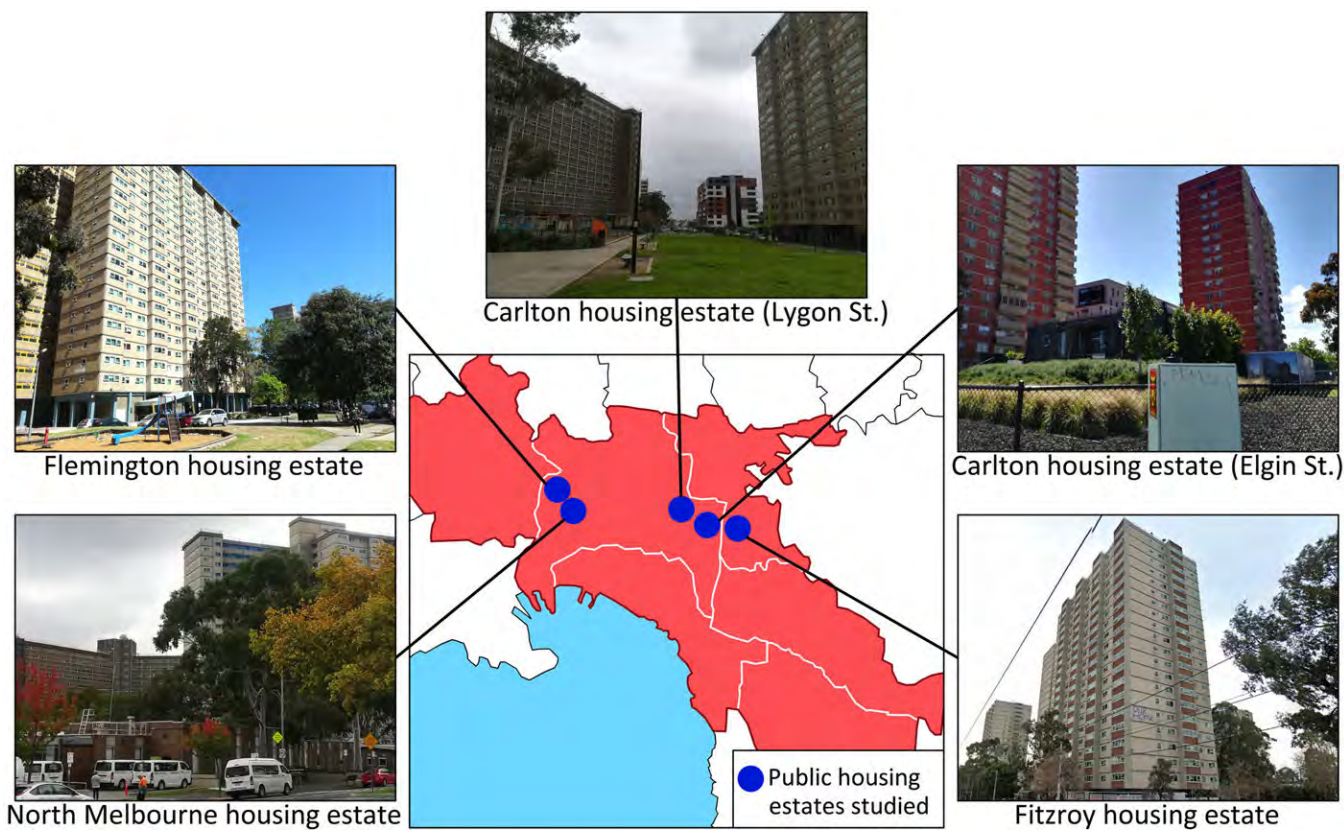
Figure 2.1 Public housing estates studied in inner Melbourne suburbs
Source: Authors

Tewelde Kidane

Eritrean Community Leader

'Integration is the backbone of the community'

Tewelde Kidane is originally from Eritrea. He was born in the mid-1960s in a city named Hebo where he studied in a Catholic college. He participated in the revolutionary movement in Eritrea when he was sixteen years old. He became a refugee in Sudan in 1985. There, Tewelde finished his schooling at a Catholic school in Port Sudan. Tewelde became the head of the Eritrean student community in Port Sudan from 1985 to 1988. He also worked as a laboratory clinician in a Catholic hospital.

In Sudan, Tewelde met an Australian friend who was volunteering there and helping Eritreans. Tewelde learned about the process to come to Australia. Earlier, he had applied for the USA; however, his application was unsuccessful. Thus, he decided to apply for resettlement in Australia, and this time his application was accepted. He received a message from the Australian Embassy in Cairo. He flew from Sudan to Cairo and spent around eight months there teaching English at an elementary school. Eventually, he arrived in Melbourne with his sister and friends on 13 February 1989 when he was about 25 years old. He lived with a family in Coburg (one of Melbourne's inner suburbs) for two months.

'If you are isolated, then you are in a problem'

Figure 3.1 Tewelde Kidane in Carlton Public Housing estates
Source: Authors

Figure 3.2 Tewelde Kidane discusses the problems in his community
Source: Authors

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'We should bring diverse communities together to build Australia stronger'

In the beginning, Tewelde tried to find a post as a laboratory technician because he was experienced in the field. However, he could not be employed due to differences in the rules and requirements here. Nonetheless, within two months after his arrival, he found a job at a hospital where he worked for a couple of years. After leaving that job, he started working as a tram conductor on the Brunswick routes.

Tewelde experienced a significant change in his life when he came to Australia in terms of jobs and the way of life. However, he was not wholly unaware of Australian culture before coming here because he and his friends had heard stories about life in Australia from volunteers and other friends. Back then, there were less than 2,000 Eritreans in Melbourne. Later, Tewelde was elected as a chairperson of the workers' union, and he held that position until 1992. At present, the population of Eritrean is around 10,000 in Melbourne, and according to Tewelde, they can be categorised into four communities based on their faiths and origin of the place.

Tewelde believes that integration is the most important and necessary element for Eritrean people in Melbourne. According to him, at present, this is a big challenge due to the lack of education, information and preparation provided to refugees. In the past, when refugees arrived in Australia, they used to be advised and educated with the necessary information and resources that were valuable

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Figure 3.3 Tewelde Kidane
Source: Authors

for them to learn how to live here. But later, the government cut their budget for it. So, lots of people feel lost and trapped when they arrive in Australia.

He emphasised that integration is the backbone of the community. Integration means, to Tewelde, to know themselves and the role they play in the construction of a diverse community. He said, *'If you are isolated, then you are in a problem'*. He believes that they should work together with their community to solve common problems regarding education and cultural identity and many other issues. Such actions should be beneficial for individuals and the community.

Tewelde is not happy with the lack of unity among Eritreans in Melbourne. He recalled that they used to be integrated regardless of differences in religions and tribes. He

Figure 3.4 The Eritrean Youth Group represent the nine nationalities of Eritrea, 2008.
Source: Museums Victoria

Tewelde sees that the existing segregation is compromising the community's unity and joint efforts to work for the improvement of the Eritreans' lives in the future.

wonders why Eritreans segregated here and formed different groups based on their religion, mainly Islam and Christianity, and tribes. Unfortunately, he sees that the existing segregation is compromising the community's unity and joint efforts to work for the improvement of the Eritreans' lives in the future.

Tewelde believes that living in public housing is good while residents are working to secure their livelihood. When they become financially stable, he thinks it is better to live in private housing. Tewelde considers private housing safer, as it provides appropriate living environments for children preventing them from negative influences and behaviours such as drug addiction.

Tewelde summarised his journey to Australia as a fortunate decision. He is hopeful about his retirement here. Tewelde is proud of the hard work he did during in his life, which has provided him with superannuation. He has also bought a small farm in regional Victoria and plans to live there upon retirement.

Tewelde believes he has been doing his best to serve his community since he came to Melbourne and thinks that by doing so, he is contributing to Australia. He sees that most Eritreans are hardworking and able to take care of their families, and some have even bought their own house already as a result of their hard work. Thus, he pointed out that even though this is sometimes a distant dream, it is achievable. Overall, he sees that Eritrean are doing better comparatively than other refugee communities, but they are still in the process of fully integrating into Australian society.

Working with and for the community has been his ambition since before he came to Australia. He finds satisfaction working for his people and feeling connected to his origins. Now, he cannot stay away from community activities because people want him to be involved. He feels that working with the community is the best part of his life.

Maryam*

War Survivor

'I am the first person who started small scale business here in the community'

In 1993, Maryam and her family left Somalia to escape from the civil war. They settled in a refugee camp in Kenya. Maryam related that in 1995, the Kenyan government started torturing and killing Somali refugees. She went through extremely difficult situations that continue to make her emotional when she discusses them. She was not comfortable to share what happened at that time. She struggled to survive until the UN helped her in 1996 to move to Australia.

She was brought into the housing commission in Carlton. At that time, there were not many Africans in the community. Life was good, and things were cheap. She wanted to financially support her relatives and friends in refugee camps and back home. However, the Centrelink support she was receiving was not enough. This became her motivation to start a small community business of selling products from Somalia and other countries. Many Somalis helped and trusted her and shared their products with her. She also started supporting many orphans in her country using her earnings.

Maryam was excited when she said, '*I am the first person who started small scale business here in the community. I encouraged many people to come outside and participate in a community market.*' At present, the community market takes place every week

Figure 3.6 Maryam showing the products she sells in her clothes business
Source: Authors

at the Carlton housing estate, where different communities sell their products. For example, the Eritrean community sets up their food and tea stall, and Somalis sell their food. When Maryam sees people interacting in the market, she feels happy.

However, life in public housing can be challenging for her community. She worries when she sees some youngsters in the community engaging in drug use and becoming addicted. She has seen families struggling to help their children who have developed bad habits. She views this as mistakes made by young people and believes they can be rehabilitated with the support of the community and the government.

Maryam was thrilled to share that '*My son has recently finished his bachelor degree and he would like to start his master's.*' For her, this is especially important because her son lost his sight in his childhood. Maryam recalled her hardships when looking after her son as a single mother. She feels very proud of her son's achievements despite going through several difficulties.

Life in public housing and especially within the community has been an essential factor in Maryam's journey. Maryam always wanted to live inside this community, given the challenges she might face if living far away. However, living in public housing has been difficult for them due to restricted spaces. Her son needs better and bigger spaces, places to walk and to take fresh air. The government provided him with resources, including a computer, but she acknowledges that more is required.

'My son has recently finished his bachelor degree and he would like to start his master's'

> **'Ten years ago, the city council used to help to organise community markets and fairs, for example, by providing tents, but later they cut the budget and stopped helping'**

For Maryam, the involvement of community members is helpful, but the government and the council need to intervene. She is concerned about insufficient community spaces. She believes people from diverse backgrounds, including children, the elderly and people who feel isolated, could connect and interact more easily if the council provided better community facilities.

She demands community consultation and participation to find out what they want for the improvement of community spaces. She complained, *'Ten years ago, the city council used to help to organise community markets and fairs, for example, by providing tents, but later they cut the budget and stopped helping.'*

She has not seen her family members for 23 years. Maryam's home is in a part of Somalia that has now become part of Ethiopia. She related that many people were killed by the Ethiopian government during the war. Still, conflicts continue in that region; however, she has not lost her hope. She said, *'I am hopeful for the better future. If things become peaceful there [her home region], I would love to go back home to start my own business there.'* She explained that Somalis are good at innovation, and many women are involved in business. Her home region is rich with oil and natural resources, and if peace returns, as Maryam explains, many people can gain employment there, including refugees.

Figure 3.7 Weekly vegetables market at Carlton Public Housing Estates
Source: Authors

Sultan Abdiwali

Imam

'the mosque plays a vital role to sensitise children and make them aware of the adverse effects of bad behaviour'

Following the footsteps of his family, Abdiwali, from Somalia, migrated to Australia in 2014. He lived in Perth for four years and then moved to Melbourne. When he came to Australia, everything was new to him. Challenges included speaking English and becoming familiar with the considerable cultural differences, especially in the small city of Perth. Back then, he was not fluent in English. It took him one year to adjust to his new life. In the second year, Abdiwali obtained his driver's licence, improved his English skills, made new friends, and started working in construction.

Back in Somalia, Abdiwali was a high school teacher. Life was not safe there, and people increasingly faced many challenges and hardships. The Somali Civil War started in 1991, and its consequences can still be seen today. Before moving to Perth, Abdiwali first lived in Malaysia to pursue a master's degree in Arabic Teaching as a Second Language, where he met his future wife, who is also originally from Somalia.

Abdiwali is now an Arabic teacher, and he voluntarily works as an imam or leader of a local mosque in North Melbourne (managed by the Australian Muslim Services Agency [AMSSA]), where he delivers the Friday sermon as well as Islamic classes. To be an imam, as Abdiwali explained, the person

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Figure 3.8 North Melbourne Mosque Imam Sultan Abdiwali
Source: Authors

Figure 3.9 Imam Sultan Abdiwali in a visit to Carlton Public Housing
Source: Authors

should be able to read the Quran properly and memorise it. According to Abdiwali, *'the mosque plays a vital role to sensitise children and make them aware of the adverse effects of bad behaviour in society (drugs and other)'*. However, his job at the mosque is limited to the classes he gives and the prayers, although he mentions other youth support groups that are run by volunteers from AMSSA.

Back in Perth, Abdiwali used to live in private housing, but here in Victoria, he lives in the public housing estates in Carlton. A year and a half ago, Abdiwali was motivated to move to Melbourne because he had family members here. Abdiwali plans to find another job and obtain a house for himself. For him, public housing is small, while private housing offers more freedom. Financing it, despite

being hard, needs to come through a good job and a stable income.

Abdiwali believes that public housing is not the right place for children. If he lived with his children, Abdiwali would live outside of the city, given the quiet environment it offers. He feels that residing near the city centre has disadvantages, although the location provides more employment opportunities. Government support is crucial, as Abdiwali noted, because having more than one child increases the burden. He believes that the government needs to provide more support for job hunting and housing.

As far as discrimination is concerned, Abdiwali believes that it exists and can be hidden. Prejudice is also a serious issue in Australian

society. People feel that the residents of public housing pay less money and might incorrectly think that they do not pay taxes. In his job as a taxi driver, people continuously ask him about his reasons for coming to Australia; unfortunately, many people ask in an unfriendly way. Discrimination comes from different people and is not always directed towards a specific race.

In the future, Abdiwali wants to live in a culturally diverse environment, such as where Asian and Indian people live. He is always keen to discover new cultures and learn something new. The mosque, for instance, is a diverse place for Africans, Somalis, Eritrean, Pakistanis, Indians, Indonesian and Middle Eastern people as well as many other groups. Even where he comes from, East Africa, people have many similarities and some differences. Eritrean people, as Abdiwali put it, are more focused on family and children than Somalis.

Figure 3.11 Interior of AMSSA Centre
Source: Authors

For Abdiwali, public housing is small, while private housing offers more freedom. Financing it, despite being hard, needs to come through a good job and a stable income.

Amria*

Eritrean Resident

'I would like to think about leaving public housing, but the question is always how?'

Figure 3.12 Amira entering to her unit in Carlton Public housing

* The real name was changed to protect her privacy

Amira was born in Eritrea, but she spent most of her childhood and young adult years in Sudan. Now she is 41 years old, and she lives in the Carlton public housing estates with her two sons. She escaped with her family to Sudan because of the war in her home country. When she became an adult, she went to live in the USA for four years and then eleven years in Canada. Her life in these countries was not easy, but gradually she became accustomed to the environment and made friends from different countries. She even used to share recipes with Latin American women living in the USA, and she enjoyed this kind of friendship.

Later, Amira came to Australia after getting married, and she has been living in Melbourne for nine years. Her husband, who is also Eritrean, knew Amira's family back in Eritrea. They introduced Amira, and some conversations led to marriage sometime later. Her husband was already established in Melbourne, where his family also lives. After getting married, Amira settled down in Melbourne in 2010. During the first three months, she temporarily lived with her husband's family in Carlton's public housing. Later, she and her husband decided to rent an apartment in Ascot Vale. After some time, they decided to move back to the public housing in Carlton. The reasons were her need to be close to her friends that she considers family, and she found it challenging to live in a private place where she did not have this kind of friendship network.

Figure 3.13 Laundry facilities at the Carlton public housing
Source: Authors

Figure 3.14 Sharing time with friends in the public spaces
Source: Authors

Amira mentioned that the process to apply for a unit in public housing used to be much easier; now, it is becoming more difficult with the long waiting time. She was finally given a unit in Carlton's public housing in 2012. Amira stated that sometimes people change their apartments because they want a bigger one, or sometimes because the housing commission decides it. She just moved once from one unit to another because the housing commission chose to renovate the unit where she used to live. It was not her decision, but she does not complain about the apartment she lives in now. Although she feels satisfied with life in public housing, she would like to find another place for her family. She related that it might not be possible: '*I would like to think about leaving public housing, but the question is always how? Buying a house is very expensive. I feel that even though I would eventually like to have my own place, this is not realistic. Moreover, as Muslims, we are not allowed to get a house loan; we cannot pay interests.*'

Amira now spends her days raising her children, volunteering for the community, sharing current and home stories with her friends at the public housing and encouraging them to join other activities. Recently, Amira also participated in the program 'women in the park', which promotes women safety in public parks. She likes the diversity of Melbourne and motivates her children to be part of diverse activities in the area and be active.

'...as Muslims we are not allowed to get a house loan; we cannot pay interests'

Figure 3.15 Walking back home from the park
Source: Authors

Yusef*

Somali Student

'the people here are creative, and with an appropriate guiding they can be successful'

Figure 3.16 **Garden and playground in Carlton public housing**
Source: Authors

* The real name was changed to protect his privacy

Yusef was born in Somalia, but soon after his birth, his family left the country due to the civil war. They found shelter in Kenya where he and his family spent almost seventeen years. His parents still live there. Yusef remembers that life in Kenya was hard; the living space was not adequate for a large family like the traditional Somali families. They also had some financial issues because only a few relatives were working and sustaining the family. Yusef also recalls the difficulties of living in a foreign country where Somalis were only referred to as refugees and always asked for their identification. He recalled, 'The police take your ID and look you as inferior reminding that you are a refugee. We also experienced how the police randomly detains people from the community and them harass and demands money.'

His aunt sponsored him and his sister, and they finally arrived in Australia in 2012 when he was 18 years old. Since then, he has been living with his aunt here in the Carlton housing estates. This is one of the things that shocked him when he arrived. When he was waiting in Kenya, he used to watch television and had an idea of how Western people and Australians live. Then, in his journey from the airport to this house, he was looking and thinking, 'in which of these beautiful houses am I going to live, where the car is going to stop'. He continued, 'I had many dreams, I had very high expectations about my life in Australia, but then I came to live in this building; however, it is better than the living conditions in Africa'.

Figure 3.17 Aerial view from Carlton Public Housing
Source: Authors

Soon after he started English classes, he also completed Grade 3. He did a certificate just to be able to work because if he did not work, it was so difficult. He had to take more courses and obtain some certificates to qualify to study at university. Now, he is studying at Victoria University. Yusef is in the second year of his undergraduate studies. He is also working part time; this allows him to send money to support his family in Africa. He says that this is what Somalis living in Melbourne usually do and it is the reason why they struggle financially: *'most of Somalis here are just surviving because people are supporting [their relatives] back home'*.

He hopes to graduate and someday leave public housing because he wants a better place to live. Yusef also thinks that although life is not that bad there, the risk to be here *'forever is a concern'*. He stated, *'I have seen that people live in public housing generations after generations and leaving is more and more difficult'*. He wants to graduate, find a good job and be able to buy his own house: *'what I am afraid just is to be stuck in public housing, so when you apply for it, you just can't get out'*. Even though he cannot hide his frustrations, he finds strength in supporting his community: *'I want to be an example for other young [people] and motivate changes in my community, people here always copy people that succeed'*.

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Figure 3.18 International remittance shop in Footscray
Source: Authors

'most of Somalis here are just surviving because people are supporting [their relatives] back home'

Figure 3.19 Career advice ad found in North Melbourne Mosque (AMSSA)
Source: Authors

He believes that most of the people living in Carlton's public housing would like to leave if they had an opportunity to do so. They would have better living conditions and more space if they rent in the private market. But Yusef believes the fear of being evicted if they cannot pay the rent is holding them back. Further, he thinks the characteristics of Somali families makes it difficult. Usually, families are big, and it is very difficult to move around with many children. Another problem is financial, as Muslims should not take out a loan that incurs interest because that is forbidden in Islam. The only option left is to try to save money to hopefully one day have their own house.

For many Somalis who moved to Australia, it is difficult to integrate into society. Many of the older people did not pursue studies, and they do not know English. They cannot communicate with broader society, and the opportunities are fewer, so they cannot progress. Also, many qualified people from Africa could not validate their degrees in Australia and ended up as taxi drivers or other non-qualified workers. Yusef considers himself fortunate because his English level is good and he is studying at the university. He believes that as long as he works hard, his future will be bright in Melbourne. However, he also would like to go back to Somalia and invest in a business there. He heard that this is a common practice of Somalis living abroad, and many succeed in their home country.

He feels grateful and hopeful about his life here and his future, as he said, '*Australian people now are very welcoming and nice.*

I think there is a good future for the next generation; hopefully, I will be part of it.' However, not everyone from this community has opportunities. He believes that people could receive funding from the government to run entrepreneurship programs: '*the people here are creative, and with an appropriate guiding they can be successful*'.

Abdirahman*

Somali Student

'It is not easy to interact with neighbours with different culture backgrounds and languages'

* The real name was changed
to protect his privacy

Abdirahman was born in Kismayo, a port city in the Southern part of Somalia. He grew up there. He also lived in the capital city of Kenya, Nairobi, for two years. In 2014, he arrived in Australia with his older sister and has been living in Melbourne since then. Abdirahman is a student, and he works casually as a lifeguard. He also volunteers to help the community. He is currently starting a new business, which will soon employ people. In this society, he sometimes feels discriminated against. At times, when he is wearing his traditional Kamis (shirt) and heading to the mosque, some people stare at him and, strangely, spit on the ground.

His home in Somalia was located next to a big road. There were many shops and restaurants around, and people used to gather. His family owned a big house, and they used to rent it out to big businesses when necessary. The family occupied half of the house, and the other half had shops. It had ample space, was right next to the city, and everything was available. However, the house was not aesthetically pleasing, as it had some stores at the front. The kitchen and toilets were not modern. The family had a well in the house for their water and electricity was only available for three hours at a time.

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Figure 3.20 Flemington Public Housing Estates
Source: Authors

Figure 3.21 Flemington Public Housing tower
Source: Authors

For Abdirahman, Melbourne is a large city; it is the best city with many educational and professional opportunities. His neighbourhood is right next to the city. It is a convenient place with access to public transportation and restaurants, including Somali restaurants. One can go to any place easily.

On a typical day out in the neighbourhood, Abdirahman goes to the mosque. He also enjoys going to different places around the city. These places are entirely different from the places he was used to visiting in Somalia. Abdi believes the neighbourhoods in Somalia and Australia cannot be compared because of the lack of resources in Somalia. To improve the neighbourhoods, he explains that houses should have their parking or even underground parking to give more space to the neighbourhood. Safety is excellent in the area compared to other neighbourhoods in Melbourne, but more playgrounds are needed, Abdirahman explained.

Abdirahman does not spend time with his neighbours. They are completely different from his neighbours back home. They have different backgrounds, different languages and different cultures. Their cultures are different, thus preventing them from interacting in depth. In Somalia, people have the same colour, the same traditions and the same language; therefore, communication is more fluid, and people consider themselves more than neighbours. They form a community and become like family.

He enjoys the house he lives in. It is larger than the one he lived in before, and it has five bedrooms. The housing complex is in a nice area and is next to the mosque, which is convenient for him. He also likes living in this neighbourhood because of its proximity to the city centre. However, Abdirahman believes that the house, toilets and kitchen are old and need renovation. He believes that having a backyard would be more convenient.

Figure 3.22 Sports court in Flemington Public Housing
Source: Authors

Dharis*

Ethopian Resident

'Unfortunately, in this community, we do not have the opportunity to have long talks. However, I believe that if we need help, we might support each other'

* The real name was changed to protect his privacy

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Dharis was born in Ethiopia, where he lived with his family. He and his family used to live in a government-owned house that they rented. Because of the emerging conflict with Eritrea, they were forced to leave the country in 1998, when Dharis was 21 years old. He temporarily stayed in Kenya, but later moved to South Africa as a refugee. Dharis spent three and a half years in South Africa where he received his credentials as an asylum seeker that later allowed him to come to Australia. Dharis finally arrived in Australia in June 2001; he feels very grateful to have this opportunity to start a life from scratch: *'Yes, thank God Australia Government gave us a chance, and we come, and we try to be a good citizen here, and we do our best.'*

Dharis met his wife here, and now he has five boys—all live in Carlton's public housing. He enjoys his life in Melbourne, and he refers to the multiculturality and the friendly character of the people in this city. He lives in the lower rise buildings, which are newer than the towers, although the lack of parking makes it inconvenient.

Dharis is Christian and regularly attends the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He and his family also enjoy going to the libraries in the area. Dharis would like it if there were more facilities and activities for children and teenagers in the community. He considers that the lack of appropriate activities to keep them busy,

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Figure 3.23 Dharis proudly showing his African hairstyle
Source: Authors

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Figure 3.24 Traditional Ethiopian kitchen ware in Dharis home
Source: Authors

make friends and create harmony from a young age are the causes of bad behaviour when they are older.

Dharis observed the differences between the Ethiopian community in Melbourne and back in his home country. He explained:In Ethiopia, people acknowledge people from other faiths, and we are united. Muslims come to churches, and we go to mosques; we do not feel uncomfortable. We look after each other because we care about peoples' spirituality and values.

However, he also mentioned the differences and exclusion in Melbourne, '*here it is different because everyone lives their own life and does not show the interest to be part of the community*'.

Dharis recognises that in public housing, it is not easy to have a social life, especially among men; people talk sometimes. Still, since everyone is busy, we just meet in the parking or the elevator. '*Unfortunately, in this community, we do not have the opportunity to have long talks. However, I believe that if we need help, we might support each other.*'

He and his family have tried to keep elements from their culture that make them feel closer to home. For example, when they have visitors, they use their traditional tableware and decorations for tea and coffee ceremonies. Dharis himself proudly showed his dreadlocked hair, which he referred to as part of the Ethiopian male culture.

Dharis is employed; he is a truck driver. He struggled to find a job and livelihood, but once he became employed, things became easier. His experiences working in Australia were excellent in terms of employers respecting and paying employees.

Unfortunately, Dharis also feels that being black in Melbourne sometimes makes him vulnerable to discrimination. However, he has learned to value his identity as black African even more. He said: '*I can invest in improving my skills, I can change everything to be healthier, I can make sacrifices to fit into the Australian culture, but my colour is what makes me, I cannot change my colour, this is what makes me what I am and I am proud of it.*'

Dharis also shared this message: '*I wish in the future, my kids will live in peace, with equality, in love and harmony with this beautiful world. I wish this generation will respect women and men equally, and don't focus on race or colour. We need more good politicians, that is the key to change.*'

Figure 3.25 Medium-rise public housing in Carlton
Source: Authors

Muhubo Suleiman

Somali Artist

'*I want someday people understand us and our culture, and I am sure I can do it through my arts and handicrafts*'

Muhubo was born in Somalia, and she is from a small village in the countryside. The memories of her childhood are mostly of helping her mother with the household tasks, but soon things changed, as she recalled, '*I remember when I was 13 years old, the things in my village changed because of the war and draught*'. Draught and conflict dramatically affected their lives.

Soon after Muhubo was married, the conflicts in her home country worsened, and she had to leave her home country for her safety. During those chaotic days, the differences between the tribes became more substantial, and they started to fight: '*My husband and I belonged to rival tribes, so I could not stay with him longer. I was 20 years old when I left everything and everyone.*' She found a safe place in Egypt for two years while she was waiting to come to Australia through a sponsorship provided by her sister who migrated to Australia earlier as a refugee in 1995. Her time in Egypt was difficult because she was alone and pregnant. Muhubo recalled these days: '*Soon I had to take care of my first daughter, who was born in Egypt*'.

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Figure 3.26 Muhubo Suleiman in her traditional Somali dress showing her handicrafts
Source: Muhubo Suleiman

Figure 3.27 Muhubo in her traditional rural village in Somalia
Source: Muhubo Suleiman

Muhubo arrived in Australia in 2003 and experienced the shocking differences between Somalia, Egypt and Australia. The different people and cultures were interesting for her, but the most surprising was the language. She could not communicate, and she felt homesick many times.

During that time, she used to do some traditional handcrafts called 'grass weaving', which she still remembers: *'It made me feel connected to my roots and my people back in my home country. I used to find things in Australia that could connect to my country; I used to look at the trees, the grass that somehow looks similar to where I lived in Somalia.'* During these initial months in Australia, she received support from her sister.

Muhubo realised that she had to make Australia her new home. She wanted to find a place to live. Back then, it was impossible to think about renting a place; she just could not afford it. So, she applied for a unit in the housing commission in Sydney first, where she used to live. She waited unsuccessfully for two years. Then she came to Melbourne, and again she applied for a unit in public housing, with many challenges ahead: *'back then, I felt emotionally bad because I was only with my daughter, I did not have a job, I still could not speak in English, I did not understand how things work here'*.

It was a difficult time, and she did not have a permanent place to live. She and her daughter would move from one place to another, spending weeks at a time at different friends' houses, wherever her friends could give her and her daughter temporary shelter. She said: *'My daughter was almost three years, and it was difficult because my friends also had children too. Many times, I was told by my friends that I should find my place because they also needed their space for their children.'*

After one year, she was finally given a unit in the Carlton housing estate. But life was still difficult because she could not communicate in English. She could not study English because she was the only carer of her little daughter. Later, she took some English classes, but those were not enough: *'I wish I could have been encouraged to do more, to study more, to receive support to find a job and to receive some training. I wanted to do more, and I wanted to be motivated not just receive financial support from the government, I realised that I did not just want assistance and I was able to do things on my own.'*

In 2006, Muhubo went to Kenya to sponsor her husband. He arrived in Melbourne in 2007; by then, she already had two kids: *'After waiting eight years to be together, he came to join us; my long-dreamt family life finally was going to be a reality. Unfortunately, this dream only lasted four months, then another painful chapter in my life started.'* By then, Muhubo realised she was pregnant with her third child. Again, she was alone, sick and fighting for the custody of her children. Muhubo and her husband finally separated, and she is now the main carer and provider for her children.

Now Muhubo's hope is her children's future, and this is something Muhubo talks about with her mother when they communicate. Muhubo said, *'My mother always tells me*

you are from the countryside, you should be strong as a man, you can do everything. Go look after your kids; look after yourself.' These words helped Muhubo a great deal and made her feel more connected to her family back in Somalia.

Muhubo also started teaching her traditional handicrafts, especially weaving. She organises workshops in schools and community centres. By teaching her skills, she is sharing an important part of her culture with her community: 'This is part of my culture, and I feel happy when the people like it; I feel that I am sharing part of me and my culture and I feel connected to the participants in my workshops.' This is a traditional activity people do back in Somalia: 'In the evenings we sit around, have tea and "sambusas", we sing and do weaving together'. Grass weaving is used for many of the utensils in Somalia and also to make the walls of the huts or traditional houses. Whenever a young couple gets married, the community makes grass weaving to build their house: 'This is the sense of solidarity that people practice in my village, and I am happy to share this spirit with the people in Melbourne'.

Now, Muhubo feels that she is moving ahead; she is finding her place in this country. Her children are growing up, and she feels plenty of hope, but she still has many dreams: 'My biggest dream is to build a full-size traditional hut that can be part of an exhibition in Melbourne. I want someday people understand us and our culture, and I am sure I can do it through my arts and handicrafts. '

'...I used to look at the trees, the grass that somehow looks similar to where I lived in Somalia'

Figure 3.28 Muhubo and her daughter in their first days in Melbourne
Source: Muhubo Suleiman

> **'This is the sense of solidarity that people practice in my village, and I am happy to share this spirit with the people in Melbourne'**

Muhubo feels positive about the future of her family too. Her eldest daughter has recently been admitted to the Law School at RMIT University, and she hopes her younger children will also have many opportunities.

Muhubo believes that experiencing living in public housing has good and bad effects. The houses are small for big families, but for small families like hers, it is not bad. The rent people pay can be lower if they do not have a stable income, and this area in Carlton is beautiful and convenient. Conversely, she has seen how difficult it is for large families to live here: *'They live in overcrowding, and the rent is higher for them'*. Another issue is the safety in the area, sometimes even inside the units because of the noise from neighbours or some bad attitudes from others. But there is a bright side for Muhubo, especially feeling closer to her origins and meeting her friends there. Someday, she also would like to have her own house: 'I like the countryside; I would be happy to live in a regional area and look after my animals and have my small farm in a small village, in the same way I did when I was young.'

She hopes someday she can have this kind of life, although it would be challenging: *'I need to figure out how to save money because I cannot get a home loan from a bank, paying interests is forbidden in Islam'*.

Figure 3.29 Muhubo teaching in an arts workshop
Source: Authors

She feels comfortable that many people from the community, not only from eastern Africa, young and older, men and women enjoy her art and handicrafts. She also recognises that the children and adults of her community need more space to grow up: *'we need more places to interact and share our food, stories, that is we lack here'*. She also mentions that the African community is still quiet and a little bit shy here: *'I think we need to connect with other people; we want others to know who we are'*.

'I think we need to connect with other people; we want others to know who we are'

—
Figure 3.30 Muhubo discussing the impact of her traditional handicrafts in her community
Source: Authors

Mebratu*

Eritrean Youth

'We should not judge the book by its cover. We should have respect for people. That's it'

* The real name was changed to protect his privacy

Mebratu was born in Eritrea; he left his home country with his family when he was eight years old and lived in Kenya for four years. In 1996, when he was around twelve years old, he migrated to Australia with his mother, two brothers and two sisters. His family was given a housing unit in the public housing in Caulfield, Melbourne where he continued his schooling.

During Mebratu's high school years, he came into contact with some negative influences, and he was involved in doing 'nasty things', as he referred to them: 'When I was in my school, I had friends (most of them were from public housings) of my age and I used to spend most of my time with them. We used to have parties. We became like a big family. I could not say no to them and accompanied them doing anything.'

It took several years for Mebratu to leave that friendship network and become free of the consequences of his actions. But still, he thinks his past makes it harder for him to find employment.

After Mebratu's mother died, the housing commission took his unit back. He could not keep the house because his mother did not put his name on the leasing documents. He remembers this as an extremely difficult time. Unfortunately, he was not able to secure a stable job, and he reduced his housing options to continue living in public housing. Currently, he is sharing a public housing unit with his partner.

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Figure 3.31 Dadaab camp northern Kenya July 2011
Source DFID - UK Department for International Development

'When I was in my school, I had friends (most of them were from public housing) of my age and I used to spend most of my time with them. We used to have parties. We became like a big family. I could not say no to them and accompanied them doing anything'

Mebratu feels fortunate to be in public housing because he does not think he can afford to live in private housing without a secure job and with his limited income.

However, Mebratu feels fortunate to be in public housing because he does not think he can afford to live in private housing without a secure job and with his limited income. But he also points out difficulties of living in public housing. Lack of maintenance is one of the major issues he experiences—for example, water leaking from the upper floor. The lack of spaces in public housing estates is also a major problem for him. Mebratu believes that the reduced spaces inside the houses and the limited green areas affect the development of children and makes them prone to develop negative habits. He suggests that creating spaces that enable youth interaction and engaging in sports could be a way to discourage them from becoming involved with negative influences and engaging in bad behaviours.

Despite the challenges of living in public housing, Mebratu also acknowledges the advantages of participating in community activities, including regular meetings. He feels happy to have these opportunities to socialise with people from his community. He believes that these activities strengthen people's relationships and builds strong bonds in the community. He believes harmonious relationships with people within and outside the community are not difficult to develop. He said: *'We should not judge the book by its cover. We should have respect for people. That's it.'* He explained that people living in public housings could have better relationships with others if they are respected and are not judged based on their backgrounds. But at

the same time, he also expressed some of his frustrations: *'but you can't expect people not to judge you. They have their own opinions.'*

Unlike many other migrants, Mebratu does not want to buy a house in Australia even if he could. His plans include investing in his home country and starting a business there. He said, *'I want to support people back home. I want to go back to my home country when I will get older. I am not going to stay here. I want to be with my people.'* This is not only because of his love of his home country but also due to his frustrations and the dreadful memories of his childhood in Australia.

Mebratu suggests that creating an appropriate environment and spaces to engage youth sports could be a way to discourage them to involve in bad habits.

'I want to support people back home. I want to go back to my home country when I will get older. I am not going to stay here. I want to be with my people'

Hussam*

Sudanese Resident

There's a lot of people from my community living here, so it's very good for socialising especially for my mother and my father'

* The real name was changed to protect his privacy

Hussam was born in Sudan, where he spent his early years, but he left his home country when he was just six years old. His memories of home were the city and the villages that he and his family used to visit. The mountains and nature are vivid in his memories, but so too are the water shortages and the lack of proper drainage in his parents' house. He also remembers how his parents' house used to be flooded during heavy rain and the frequent power blackouts that used to leave them with no more than one hour of electricity a day.

Hussam arrived in Melbourne in 2000, together with his mother and older brother. After some time, his father joined them. The family settled in Melbourne because his uncle, who sponsored them, was living there and they decided to remain close in case they need to support each other. Hussam's brother moved around Australia, living in various cities, but Hussam preferred to stay in Melbourne, as he likes to stay with his parents and help them. Since the family arrived, they have lived in the Carlton public housing estates, and Hussam thinks that the location is very convenient. He believes that the multiple opportunities for community interactions there are essential for his parents: *'There's a lot of people from my community living here, so it's very good for socialising especially for my mother and my father'*.

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Figure 3.32 Public housing towers in Carlton
Source: Authors

Figure 3.33 Ladies meeting during Friday's community market at Carlton Public Housing
Source: Authors

Figure 3.34 Watching African news at home
Source: Authors

He thinks that life in public housing is not ideal, but this is what they can afford. There are many issues, like lack of safety since different people enter the buildings without control or monitoring. The common areas such as the corridors are dirty and littered with rubbish. But among the deficiencies in public housing, not having enough parking spots is his primary concern.

Hussam recognises that the relationship with the housing commission is not always smooth, and they might not respond when maintenance is required. Regarding safety in case of an emergency, he mentioned that smoke detectors, sprinklers and alarms were installed recently. However, there is no proper preparedness involving the neighbours since there were no fire drills, although the alarms are frequently tested, and there are maps that might guide the people in case of emergency.

Despite the inconveniences of living in public housing, Hussam believes that feeling closer to his community and culture is especially important. Hussam and his parents actively participate in community activities. His mother regularly visits the community market on Fridays. They also participate in the big meals at the end of daily fasting during Ramadan. They like to join in the celebrations marking Eid and other meetings with the community. He enjoys the friendly behaviour of his neighbours in public housing.

Solidarity is another virtue within the community. Hussam can rely on his neighbours when he needs to move things or needs a lift to go to places. Similarly, his neighbours count

on him when they need help; they also like to play soccer together. Hussam participates in the organisation of the young boys' camps that the community organises every year. The older boys guide the younger ones for two days of activities. He also supports some events and activities during Ramadan and the Iftar supper on weekends. Hussam participates in all these activities as a volunteer and feels happy to do this for his community.

Hussam mentioned that he and his parents have included some elements inside their unit that make them feel closer to their home country. They have replicated some Sudanese furniture and objects; they have curtains that look like the ones they had back home. But one of the things that make the family feel most connected to home is the time they spend watching the news and television programs from Africa that are broadcasted in Arabic or other African languages on satellite TV, for which they are happy to pay: *'Well inside the house the look of the house is very traditional; also, we have the TV satellite, and we watch all the news from back home in Arabic language and African language'*.

Hussam is currently employed full time in a factory where he feels happy and respected and believes that his work valued, although the daily shifts can take up to ten hours. He is the main provider to his family, as his parents are not working at the moment. His monthly income is roughly AUD 3,000; from this, about 25% goes to rent. Hussam feels that he is contributing to Australia, as it is his home, and he pays taxes and respects the law.

Figure 3.35 Typical emergency Exit Floor Plan in public housing towers in Carlton
Source: Authors

Akram*

Eritrean Nurse

Akram feels delightful to have the opportunity to meet diverse people in his neighbourhood, especially familiar faces when he meets people from Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia.

* The real name was changed to protect his privacy

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Figure 3.36 North Melbourne Public Housing Estates
Source: Authors

Akram was born in Eritrea where he lived for seventeen years before moving to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, where he lived for twelve years. His journey continued to the USA, where he lived in Dallas, Texas for eighteen years and in 2016, Akram moved to Australia. Akram studied nursing in the USA and worked as a nurse for almost seven years. Akram's wife is Australian, and she sponsored him to move to Melbourne, where he lives with his wife and four children. Akram works as an Uber driver, and he actively collaborates with his community by teaching the children and organising soccer activities.

Akram's memories of home contrast with his current life in North Melbourne's public housing estates. In Eritrea, the family house had enough rooms for all the family members, children used to play in the large backyard, and the family felt safe. However, there were some issues, such as water shortages and electricity blackouts. At times, the water was cut off for days.

Akram believes that his current accommodation in North Melbourne's public housing is convenient, as it is located near the city centre and markets. Akram thinks that the area is safe; however, it can be noisy, mainly at night, because of the high traffic in the nearby main street. In his apartment, he has tried to create a familiar environment that resembles an Eritrean house, including decorative elements such as furniture, cups, plates and clothing.

Figure 3.37 Public housing towers in North Melbourne
Source: Authors

Akram feels delightful to have the opportunity to meet diverse people in his neighbourhood, especially familiar faces when he meets people from Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia. He also likes to interact with Australians and people from other nationalities that live in the public housing estates and the neighbourhood. He enjoys spending time with his neighbours. He knows some of his neighbours and his children have friends in the community. Every two to three weeks, they organise a barbecue to connect with the community. Akram related that even though people are different here, neighbours still help each other. People in the housing commission and the main office tend to be respectful.

He finds the area conveniently located close to schools, universities and large markets, including Queen Victoria Market. On a typical day, he enjoys going for a walk in the nearby parks. He recognises that safety can be an issue in the parks of Melbourne, and he also feels that cleanliness should also be improved in the nearby areas. He believes that young people and adults should have the opportunity to participate in more activities. He feels that more activities to engage the residents of public housing with the wider community would help to improve the neighbourhoods.

Hala*

Somali Student

'It is not easy to interact with neighbours with different culture backgrounds and languages'

Figure 3.38 Carlton – Elgin St. Public Housing Estates
Source: Authors
* The real name was changed to protect her privacy

Figure 3.39 Public housing towers and medium-rise private housing building in Carlton, Elgin St.
Source: Authors

Hala was born in Ethiopia, but when she was young, she and her family had to escape to Kenya and lived there as refugees. She left her home country with her parents, a younger sister and brother. She recalls the years living in a refugee camp in Nairobi. She remembers the difficulties, injustices and traumatic experiences. For example, one evening 'suddenly, the police came, and I had to hide in one of my neighbours' house'. Our community could not feel safe, even the police used to raid the houses and illegally arrest members of the community and sometimes they went missing never to be seen again by their families or reported dead. She recalls the worse experience in the camp when she was 22 years old: 'there was corruption everywhere, the officers used to ask money to the relatives to free the people, and sometimes they never come back'. The living conditions were also very precarious with inappropriate facilities, such as shared toilets.

It was a chaotic and scary time; sometimes her relatives were missed too, and the whole family was terrified, thinking about whether they would return safely or even meet again. Hala had an older sister who was missing for a long time. The family had not heard from her sister until she contacted them to sponsor the family to start a new life in Australia. Hala's sister was the first one who was relocated as a refugee to Melbourne.

Hala's sister sponsored her, her mother and five younger sisters and one brother. Still, her father had to stay in Kenya longer: 'we

lost each other after we arrived in Australia, we were desperately looking for dad'. After establishing themselves in Melbourne and finding her father, they were finally able to sponsor him to come to Australia. They lived together in Melbourne for less than ten years until he died five years ago.

In the beginning, life in Australia was hard, but at least they were supported by her elder sister. Hala's mother, sisters and brother were living together in her sister's house in Carlton's public housing for two months. Fortunately, soon after, they received their unit in the same housing estate. Later, she was given her unit in the public housing on Elgin Street. Now, she lives there with her four children; she is a single mother.
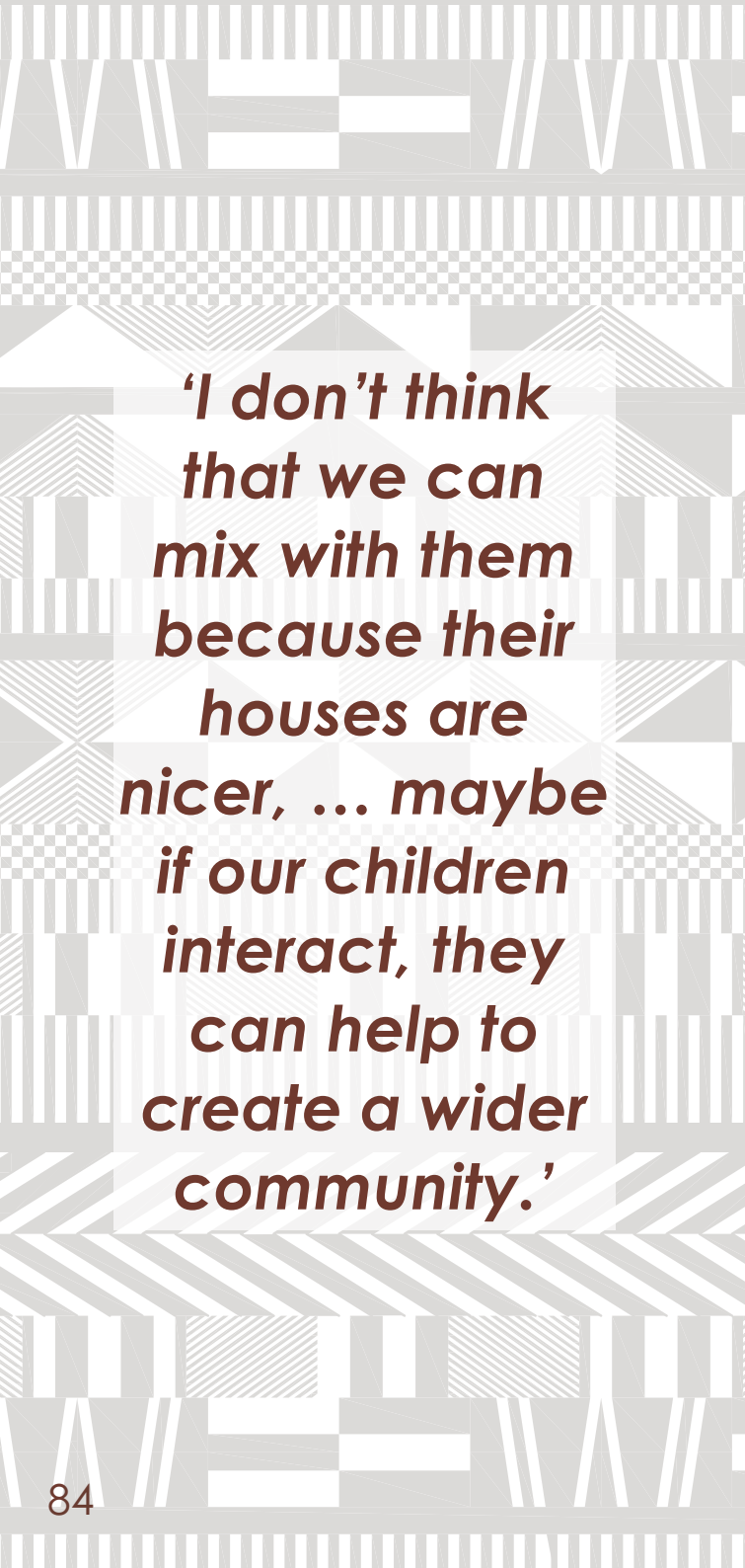
She thinks that living here is not too bad; at least they have a place to live, although sometimes paying the rent challenges the family's finances. The location is convenient, and it is close to the public housing in Lygon Street where most of her friends live. There are many activities, the primary school is nearby, and she meets the mothers of the other children in her neighbourhood. She is also studying English now, and she hopes she can find a job if she can improve her English skills sufficiently.

Regarding her experience living in public housing, Hala acknowledges that there is little assistance from the housing commission if the residents have any problems, and there are delays when maintenance is required. There are many deficiencies in the buildings, for instance, the units' sizes are small for the families, and there are few open spaces for

Figure 3.40 Primary school and public housing in Carlton
Source: Authors

'I don't think that we can mix with them because their houses are nicer, … maybe if our children interact, they can help to create a wider community.'

the children to play. The living conditions inside the units are also precarious; especially considering the ventilation of the units. The ventilation does not always work, and the windows cannot be opened, so even cooking and using the toilet can cause discomfort in the family inside the apartment. This causes health problems in children as she explained: *'The fan in the kitchen and the toilet don't work, and my son is always sick, he frequently has asthma problems'*. The cooling and heating systems do not work correctly, and this causes discomfort in the family, mainly for the children.

In the public housing estate in Elgin St, a project was implemented to mix public housing with private housing residents. A medium-rise private housing block was built, and there is another currently under construction. Hala mentioned: *'I don't think that we can mix with them because their houses are nicer, our children are here and run everywhere, but these people just look from their window but never talk to us, maybe if our children interact, they can help to create a wider community.'* Hala also mentioned that the residents of these new private buildings are mostly busy professionals, but she hopes maybe after some time, they can start talking and interact and meet each other.

'The community have their way of helping each other financially and other ways'

Makonnen Woldu

One of the first Eritreans in Melbourne

Figure 3.41 Makonnen Woldu in a visit to Carlton public housing
Source: Authors
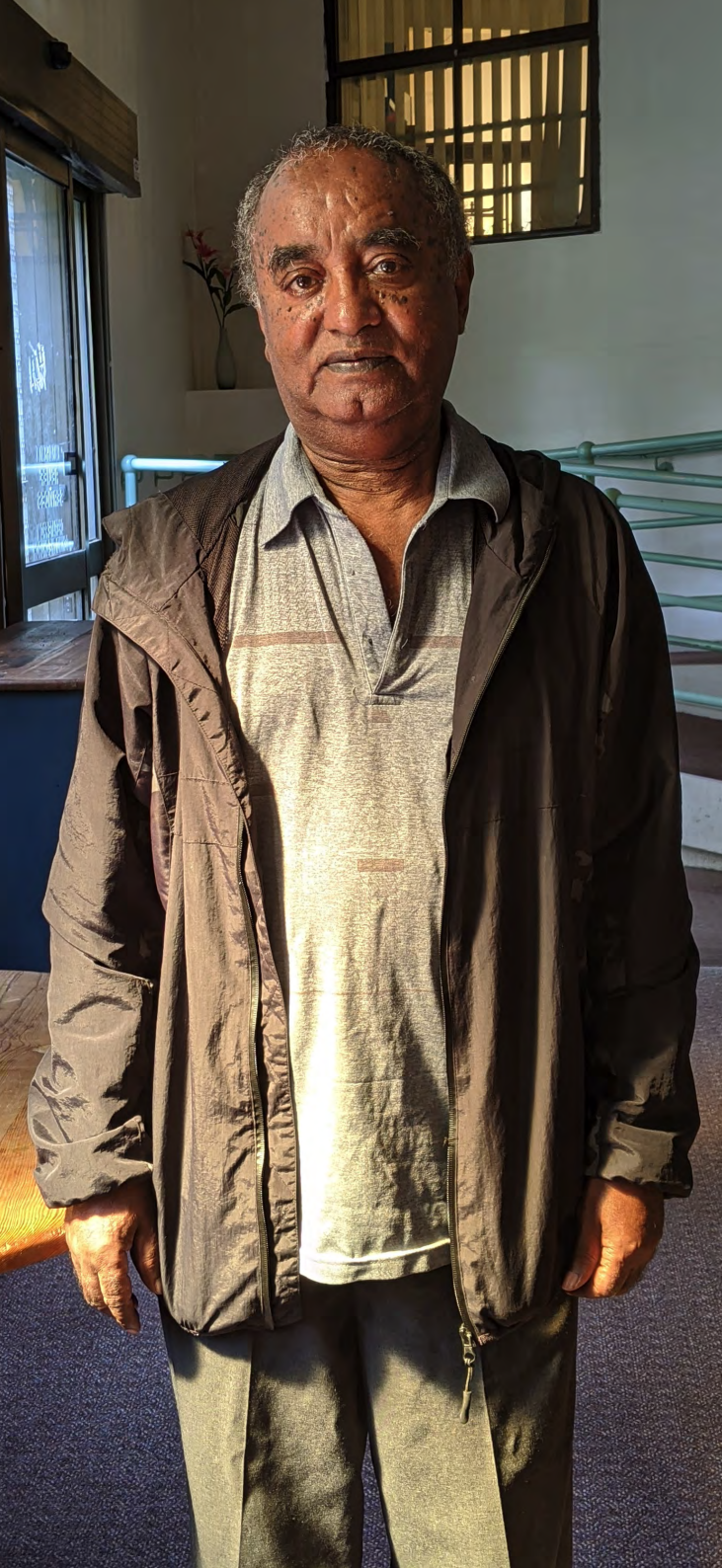
Makonnen is one of the first Eritreans who came to Australia in the late 1980s. He was born in Asmara, Eritrea, where he completed high school. Then he had a chance to study a bachelor's degree in economics at a university in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. By the time he graduated, the situation in Eritrea had deteriorated because of the conflicts with Ethiopia. Thus, he received a scholarship to study a master's degree in Iran, which he considers an excuse to escape from his country.

After his graduation in Iran, he could not return to Eritrea because of the worsening situation there. Thus, Makonnen worked in Iran Air for a few years. Fortunately, he was given immigration visas to the USA and Australia. He chose Australia because he thought it would be easier to find a job and take care of his family. He came to Melbourne with his wife and a child.

He took his first job at Australia Post and later he worked in different organisations in the management and finance sectors. He was able to buy a house from his savings within six years of his arrival because, as he recalled, housing used to be much more affordable in those days. He believes that having access to public transportation and the presence of relatives and friends around the area were important factors for him in choosing the location of his house.

Figure 3.42 Makonnen Woldu explains his community problems
Source: Authors

He has been actively engaging in the activities of the Eritrean community in Melbourne since the beginning. He admires the solidarity among Eritrean people and feels proud of that, as he explained, *'The community have their way of helping each other financially and other ways. When someone dies or gets married or gets a problem, the community take care of the people who need help.'* He believes that Eritreans' deep connection to their family and community and their hardworking attitude explain the favourable situation of Eritreans in comparison with other African refugees in Melbourne. He emphasised that most Eritreans are well connected to their families back home and continue to support them financially by sending money regularly.

He has connections with various members of the Eritrean community, and he considers juvenile misconduct and indiscipline as a major issue in high-rise public housing estates, which needs to be urgently addressed. He thinks that children's negative company leads to the development of bad habits. This is a cause of concern among parents of teenagers and makes them think about leaving public housing. But this is difficult at present due to the high cost of housing, few savings and insecure jobs. He recalled around fifteen to twenty years ago when buying a house was easier. He claims that the Eritreans who arrived in Melbourne in the last ten years were not able to purchase a home and have become stuck in public housing because of the soaring housing prices. He suggests that the government should provide some kind of subsidy or incentive to encourage people to move out of public housing. He finds the high

'As long as people are working hard and have a regular income, banks shouldn't demand very high down payment. They can afford to pay instalments, but they don't have the down payment'

'If peace comes to Eritrea, and a democratic government comes there, I would love to go back. At this age, I want to live there with my school mates, friends, and family'

initial deposit to be a significant obstacle. He said: *'As long as people are working hard and have a regular income, banks shouldn't demand very high down payment. They can afford to pay instalments, but they don't have the down payment.'*

Makonnen has dreamed about going back home and spending the rest of his life in Eritrea. However, he might not be able to go back because he was a political activist. He fears persecution and unjustified punishment by what he referred to as an *'autocratic Eritrean government'*. He has not seen his friends and family members for around 25 years. He expressed his emotions, saying, *'If peace comes to Eritrea, and a democratic government comes there, I would love to go back. At this age, I want to live there with my school mates, friends, and families.'* He talks to friends and family back home on the telephone and says, *'When would be the time when we see each other and have time together in our country. Rather than all the time talking on the telephone like this.'*

Ahmed*

Sudanese Worker

*'I like
Melbourne now
this is my home'*

**Figure 3.43 North Melbourne public
housing estates**
Source: Authors

* The real name was changed to
protect his privacy

Ahmed is originally from Port Sudan, a coastal city located in eastern Sudan on the Red Sea. When he was an infant, his family moved to the capital Khartoum, and most of his memories from home are related to this city. However, he later migrated to Saudi Arabia seeking stability and better living conditions. He spent 22 years in this country.

He remembers that back in Sudan, his family home was large; it had four bedrooms, a lounge and a backyard where there were some fruit trees. He remembers that the electricity blackouts were frequent, but they had access to tap water in the house, similar to the services in Australia. The lifestyle was simple, and the family felt satisfied with it.

Ahmed mentioned that family and community links are particularly important in Sudan. He recalled that Thursdays and Fridays were the days when everyone, including the children, used to participate in diverse community activities. One of the preferred destinations was the community club or centre, which is locally known as 'Nadi'. This community centre is usually an open space, like a green park, where people can have coffee, milk and even cake, and people often visit the community centre after work. Ahmed felt nostalgic when she remembered the strong community ties and solidarity among the neighbours who were always willing to help people in need.

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Figure 3.44 Public spaces in North Melbourne public housings
Source: Authors

In 2003, Ahmed moved to Melbourne with his family, including his wife and two children. He has been living in North Melbourne's public housing estates since he moved to Australia. Ahmed now works selling and distributing food in his car, including oil, flour and dates. The lifestyle in Melbourne and the pressure to earn an income to support his family leaves almost no time to talk with people in his community. However, Ahmed feels grateful for his job, which allows him to meet different people in different areas, including the Carlton public housing estates, where he knows many of the residents.

Ahmed also commented on the difficulties in gaining access to appropriate and affordable housing in Melbourne: '*Unlike Sudan, securing a place to live here can be insecure because landlords can evict a tenant quickly*'. He said that even though he has a job, he would struggle to find a rental outside of public housing. Ahmed says that he just cannot afford to risk his family's stability.

Life in public housing is convenient. Ahmed enjoys the location near the city centre and markets. He also thinks that public transportation is an efficient way to move around the city because there are trams and bus stops nearby. In his free time, Ahmed likes to visit the mosque and the community club. He sees that the communal spaces are vital for people's interactions. Thus, Ahmed hopes to see more seating around the building, especially for the kids and the elderly. Children do not have a proper place to play around the public housing estate, so they go to the community centre, which is a small indoor space.

Bashir*

Eritrean Resident

Bashir rarely interacts with his neighbours, and he observed that the whole community feels disconnected.

Figure 3.45 Fitzroy public housing estates
Source: Authors
* The real name was changed to protect his privacy

Bashir was born in Eritrea, but he left the country for Sudan with his family when he was eight years old. His family settled in the city of Al Qadarif, close to the border with Eritrea. The family lived in a rudimentary hut made up of mud and thatch without essential services such as electricity and water for twelve years.

He got married when he was in Sudan; his wife soon left Sudan for Australia, and later she sponsored him to join her in Melbourne in 2005. Since his arrival, he has been living in a unit at Fitzroy public housing. He appreciates the availability of essential services such as water, gas and electricity and accessibility to public transportation. He feels fortunate to live near the city; he finds it easy to go shopping. Some facilities are close to his home, such as hospitals, schools and the mosque. He also feels happy to be part of the multicultural Melbourne community. Bashir said that he has never felt discriminated against due to his residency in public housing or due to his colour and ethnicity. However, he feels nostalgic about his family as most of his relatives still live in Sudan and can never return to Eritrea.

Even though life in public housing is convenient, he would like to move out and find a larger place for him and his family. However, he believes it is unfeasible because he could not afford to live in a private rental. Bashir mentions his financial struggles: *'I don't have a job. I don't have money. I have no choice other than living here. I can't rent anywhere.'* He had full-time employment for ten years, but after losing his job, he was not able to secure any other employment.

'I don't have a job. I don't have money. I have no choice other than living here. I can't rent anywhere'

'We don't talk to each other. Sometimes I want to talk, but we have different languages and different culture. Some are Chinese, some are Turkish and Vietnamese'

Bashir also commented on the difficulties in communicating with the housing commission that manages the public housing estates. On many occasions, neighbours had requested urgent repairs to the units, but the reply took many days. Bashir also suggested that the heating and cooling systems should be improved as well as the ventilation.

Bashir mentioned that he rarely interacts with his neighbours, and he observed that the whole community feels disconnected. He said everyone is busy with their lives and do not bother to interact with others, which is different than in Sudan. Bashir thinks that the differences in language and culture do not help in building a cohesive community, as he explained: *'We don't talk to each other. Sometimes I want to talk, but we have different languages and different culture. Some are Chinese; some are Turkish and Vietnamese.'*
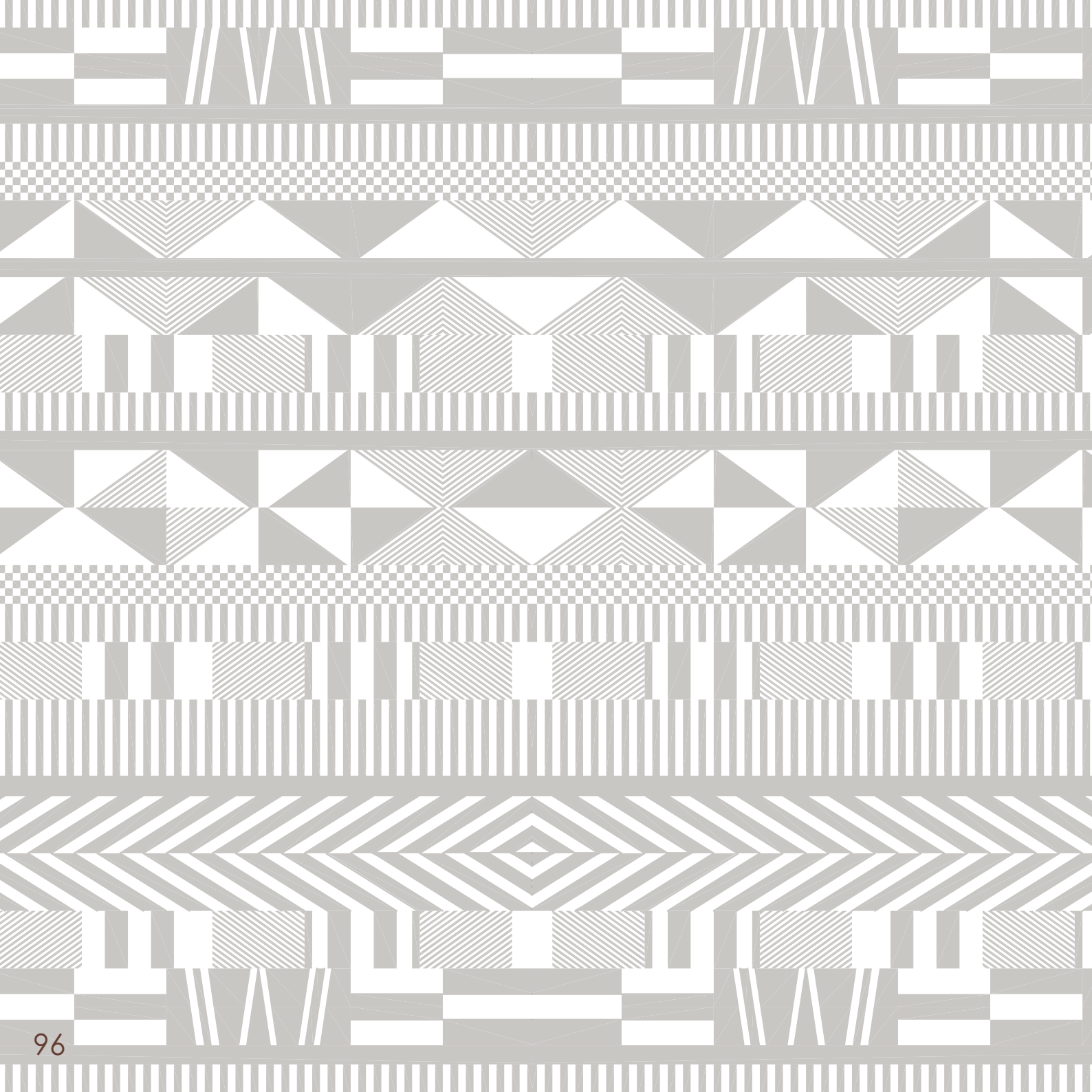
PART III

The Stories of Melbourne's African Migrants and Refugees:
A Common and Shared Ground

The Stories of Melbourne's African Migrants and Refugees:
A Common and Shared Ground

The stories of migrants and refugees provide an understanding of how their journey from the homeland to the 'new' land affected their perception of home, their appreciation of what they left behind, and their continued efforts to build on a legacy carried across countries. Many of the migrants and refugees from the HoA who settled in Melbourne fled war and faced displacement. However, they came to Australia with a heritage that they treasure, even while arriving in 'the land of opportunities' where they hoped to rebuild their lives. Finding the threads and commonalities between these stories and appreciating the sense of place constructed by the migrants and refugees themselves are important to envisage a better future. The pathways for community development should address the common themes, issues and aspirations that are discussed in the following sections.

1. *Transition to Australia*

The refugees and migrants' stories show that one of the common reasons for them to leave or flee their home countries is the multiple armed conflicts in the region. Conflicts and civil unrest in Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia forced people to flee their homes and find a safer temporary shelter in various countries before they were resettled in Australia. In many cases, the temporary accommodation in refugee camps in neighbouring countries became long-term shelter with an undefined timespan. The lives of refugees in camps were precarious, and they were vulnerable to discrimination and unjustified police raids.

The interviewed migrants and refugees came to Australia after living for many years in a third country where their relatives eventually settled down. However, the most unfortunate participants have relatives that are still stuck in camps and unable to return to their home countries or migrate to a safe country like Australia. But these experiences also motivated our interviewees' desire to sponsor their family members to join them in Australia.

Family reunion is a common practice; in each family, some relatives who first arrived in Australia were granted refugee status, and they later sponsored their relatives to join them in Melbourne. Thus, it is not surprising that relatives are also neighbours in public housing estates. This method of family solidarity is also extended to community members. For instance, many recently arrived migrants find temporary accommodation with relatives or friends living in public housing. The stories presented also evidenced the duality existing between the homeland and the new land towards the process of adaptation and development in Melbourne.

2. Community and Identity

The stories presented have in common the interviewees' feeling of attachment to their home countries and culture. Although the narratives evidenced the interviewees' multiple concerns about the current issues in their home countries, they also focused on the challenges that their community is still facing in Melbourne. Interviewees feel responsible for the wellbeing of their people. This motivates the migrants and refugees to reinforce their links with their community that create individual and collective identities. Whether they are migrants or refugees, their stories show a strong sense of attachment to their culture and community.

The active involvement in supporting activities has been reported by many of the participants in this study. This can also motivate leadership within the communities from the HoA in Melbourne. Tewelde Kidane emphasised his role in serving the community in Melbourne voluntarily through different organisations and community groups to create a sense of integration that has been lacking in his community.

The stories also show the migrants and refugees' strong connections to their roots, values, culture and traditional crafts. This can be seen through the inspiring story of determination in which Muhubo from Somalia transmitted her knowledge of traditional arts and crafts, connecting the community through organising workshops in schools and community centres. Some respondents felt nostalgic when they shared stories of home or spoke about replicating traditions in Melbourne. Faleh (2019, p. 30) stated that 'empowering and revisiting urban heritage does not only include tangible elements such as monuments and buildings but it also comprises non-tangible elements such as customs and belief'. These customs and beliefs can easily be revived through traditional arts and crafts and the recreation of a strong sense of a community. Many of the interviewees also shared their wish to go back to their home countries and invest there.

Solidarity and mutual support networks have been developed within the communities from the HoA in Melbourne. For instance, Maryam emphasised the importance of living within the community in the public housing estates, despite the lack of bigger and better spaces. Engaging in community activities and conversations as well as collaborating to support the residents helps the people to feel connected to their roots. Participating in community activities is essential for the whole community, but it is particularly relevant for vulnerable groups. For example, children require active involvement in community activities to promote healthy habits and values. Senior residents also find the interaction with their neighbours crucial, and so do the women residing in the public housing estates.

Residents expressed the need to find peers that are physically and culturally similar to them, as they feel comfortable and develop connections that they trust. Moreover, the differences in the national, ethnic and tribal identities of the interviewees seem to become irrelevant at the moment when people participate in diverse community activities and informal meetings.
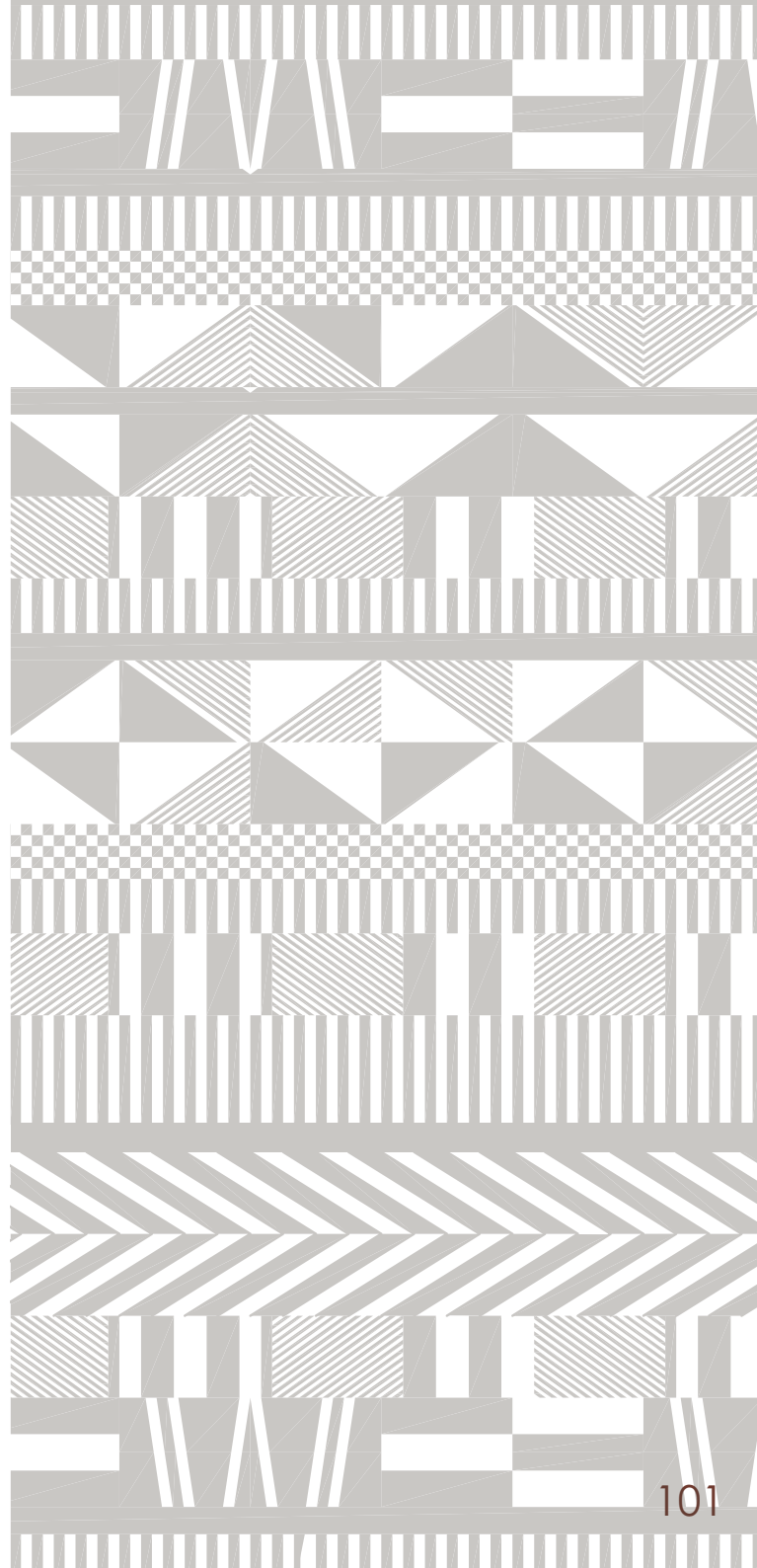
3. *Connections to the Homeland*

The narratives evidence the strong connections that the migrants and refugees maintain with their home countries. Even though they are working towards constructing their sense of home and community in Australia, they do not disconnect with their homeland and their relatives living there. Further, these links are expressed in various dimensions such as emotion and nostalgia, pride about traditions and values, and the feeling of responsibility to support their relatives living back in Africa.

Interviewees like Akram and Ahmed show the emotional connection with their home countries, as they consider them to be their real homes. This feeling is shared by many people in their communities, and they express their desire to go back to their homeland at some point in their lives. Younger migrants have plans to go back to their home countries and invest in businesses or real estate. Older migrants dream of being back in their homeland and spending their last years there. Other interviewees' stories exposed their frustrations over being unable to return to their homeland due to the unstable financial and security situation there. Another reason for being unable to return home is involvement in political activism that is incompatible with the current regime; for instance, Makonnen perceived this as a threat to his personal and family security. This also prevents him from visiting relatives that cannot leave the country.

The traditional values and lifestyles in migrants' home countries also shape their interactions within their community in Melbourne. For instance, Dharis from Ethiopia described the strong connection that exists between Muslims and Christians in his home country and how he wishes to keep this in Melbourne. Many of the interviewees also pointed to community solidarity as one of their most significant assets that they carry from their home countries and practise with their neighbours and friends from the HoA. Migrants aim to replicate the traditional structures of community solidarity based on the sense of mutual care and shared values, as they recognise this as a crucial value needed for the development of a cohesive society.

Many of the respondents, as explained in the interviews, send money to their home countries. There is a great sense of family responsibility to support relatives living back in migrants and refugees' home countries or those who still live in exile. Interviewed migrants explained how important it is to regularly support their relatives even when this is a heavy financial burden for them in their already precarious economic conditions in Melbourne. Yousef mentioned: *'Most of Somalis here are just surviving because people are supporting back home'*.

4. *Creating Home in Public Housing*

People from the HoA shared the challenges linked to their lives in Melbourne's public housing estates. Interviewees also acknowledged the strong community ties that might not have been formed outside public housing. They also shared their hopes and desires and how they are working towards a better future for their families and community.

Residents expressed issues related to safety that are the result of deteriorated and inappropriate physical environments and social issues within and outside public housing estates. Habitability conditions such as area per person and access to appropriate natural lighting and ventilation are not guaranteed to the residents. The situation of large and extended families living in small units is stressful. Natural ventilation is not available for residents in high rises. Further, the tower's design with dark corridors and shared common spaces, including laundry areas, stairs and elevators, became spaces for interaction but also for conflict among residents.

The insecurity that is perceived by residents of Melbourne's public housing estates is linked to the limited communal spaces and deteriorated conditions of the housing units. The interviews also revealed that children and teenagers might be some of the most vulnerable as Mebratu's story evidenced. Sultan Abdiwali, Imam of the North Melbourne Mosque run by AMSSA, said '*public housing is not a good place for children*'. Makonnen also

sees juvenile misconduct as a major problem in Melbourne's public housing estates. Some of these issues include the bad company of teenagers, drug addiction, youth behavioural misconduct as well as the lack of space and opportunities for youth to practice sports and organise activities.

In tandem with the daily challenges of public housing, residents also provided valuable opinions in relation to how to address the community's most acute problems. Residents like Maryam claimed that participative approaches are vital in the implementation of community development projects and improvement of the housing facilities, including public spaces and common areas. The existing facilities and regularly organised events are important for interaction but also to promote some livelihood opportunities. For instance, the weekly farmers' market became a platform for women like Maryam who sell clothes; other women sell food and have temporary cafes with traditional drinks and snacks. These cafes became socialising spaces where women in the community converge. This is, in many cases, a weekly commitment to sharing their problems and receiving advice from their neighbours and friends. Hussam referred to how important it is for the residents to meet people with a similar cultural background. Communal facilities are also valuable spaces to develop residents' skills that could eventually lead to livelihood

opportunities. For instance, Muhubo uses some of the common spaces to organise handicrafts' workshops and share some Somali traditions with public housing residents but also with other Melbourne residents.

The necessity of the involvement of multiple stakeholders to connect residents and their priorities with government agencies was also mentioned by the residents. Community organisations, non-profit organisations and leading faith and cultural institutions should be involved in community development projects. These organisations' activities and roles are appreciated by the community, as they developed mutual trust. Further, residents from the HoA identify with the community and faith organisations. For instance, Sultan Abdiwali explained the role of the mosque in raising awareness and caring for the children, emphasising that '*the mosque plays an important role to sensitise children and make them aware of the negative effects of bad behaviour in society'*.

Non-profit organisations such as the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre (CNLC) have also developed long-term relationships with the community and shown their leadership in aiding the community and organising various events. The CNLC regularly organises activities using public housing facilities such as the Eritrean women and Harari women groups, and it is one of the main organisers of the yearly Harmony Day event in Carlton. The

AMSSA has close links with the Muslim residents in the North Melbourne and Flemington public housing estates. The AMSA regularly organises a variety of activities for the community and works together with supporting groups for children and youth. The leadership of these organisations has recently faced challenges times as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, all communication to the public housing residents in Carlton was channelled through the CNLC.

PART IV

Conclusion

Conclusion

This book analysed the common themes that arose from the stories of migrants and refugees in Melbourne's public housing estates. Identity—encompassing cultural values and, at times, religious practices—has been a central element around which their lives evolve and progress. It has been, throughout these stories, a seed that they continue to grow despite the challenges they face in Australia. Residents, their families and their communities developed despite the extreme challenges of forced migration that they faced due to complex factors including war, poverty and insecurity. Social injustice and continuous civil unrest led to various waves of refugees in the region since the 1970s. Australia became the safe haven to migrants and refugees from the HoA, and Greater Melbourne became the home of almost half of them. These stories are not limited to the different challenges by the community but also emphasise the interviewees' determination and resilience.

The narratives captured in this book show how the lives of the interviewed people were shaped by their will to improve their living conditions in some of Melbourne's dense public housing estates. Community participation and engagement in diverse activities within and outside public housing has also been a backbone of their process of integration into Australia. Respondents described their efforts to engage with different communities as active actors that shape the multicultural character of Melbourne. Interviewees expressed their willingness to share their culture with the general Australian public and their continuous efforts to attain financial stability. The government is still unable to provide appropriate support such as occupational skills and English education aimed at financial independence for migrants and refugees.

Interviewees also acknowledged the lack of trust they have towards the government, which is caused by the continuous exclusion and marginalisation they face. In this context, non-profit organisations, faith groups, neighbourhoods' committees and leaders in the community should be the link between government agencies and the community. The mutual trust between the organisations mentioned earlier and the migrants and refugees took time to develop. These local leadership and governance structures are commonly dismissed by governments despite being the key to community involvement, as was observed in these marginalised communities (Carrasco & Dangol, 2019; Devas, 2001). Government recognition of leaders and community groups is crucial to promote community engagement and participation, and they are also strategic partners to address emergencies. This was evident during the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially during the lockdown of Melbourne's public housing estates (Carrasco et al., 2020).

Migrants and refugees from the HoA residing in Melbourne's public housing rely on the skills acquired in their home countries and the capacities built throughout their process of integration in Australia. A crucial part of this process is the construction of the sense of home and strong community ties in their neighbourhoods. Despite their ethnic and religious similarities and differences, which have caused them to be less engaged at times, members of these communities have managed to redraw their pathway for their families in Australia and abroad. Despite the challenges that they have encountered due to exclusion and financial hardship, the respondents have endured these difficult realities and have been building a better future for themselves, their families and society at large.
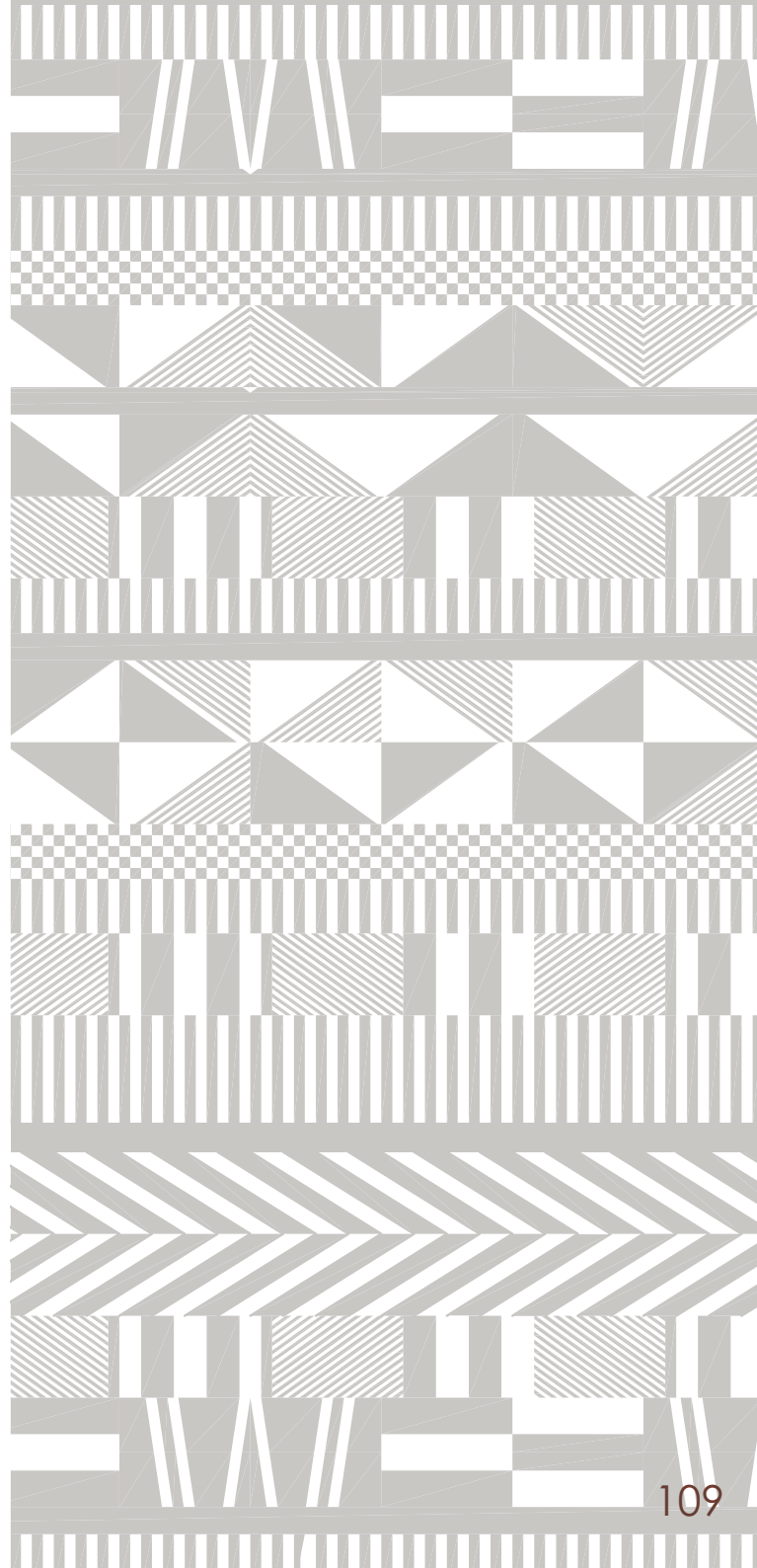
Conclusion:

Un foyer pour la diaspora : de la corne de l'Afrique au logement social à Melbourne

Ce livre explore les thèmes communs qui ont émergé des histoires de résidents migrants et réfugiés qui habitent dans les logements sociaux de Melbourne, la deuxième ville la plus peuplée d'Australie. Parmi de nombreux facteurs clés, l'identité, qui englobe des valeurs culturelles et parfois des pratiques religieuses, a été un élément central autour duquel la vie des communautés de migrants africains évolue et progresse. Ainsi, ces valeurs ont été reflétées dans les histoires que nous présentons comme une graine qui continue de croître malgré les défis rencontrés en Australie. Les résidents des logements sociaux, leurs familles et leurs communautés se sont développés malgré les défis extrêmes posés pour eux par la migration forcée qu'ils ont dû affronter en raison de facteurs aussi complexes que les conflits armés, la pauvreté et l'insécurité. En raison de l'injustice sociale chronique et des troubles civils et armés persistants, il y a eu plusieurs vagues de réfugiés dans la région depuis les années 70. Et c'est en Australie où, à partir des années 90, plus de 48 000 migrants et réfugiés de la Corne de l'Afrique des pays - la Somalie, l'Érythrée, l'Éthiopie, Djibouti, le Soudan et le Soudan du Sud - ont trouvé un havre de paix, et Melbourne est devenue le foyer de près de la moitié d'entre eux. Ainsi, ces histoires que nous présentons ne se limitent pas à raconter les différents défis de

la communauté, mais soulignent également la détermination et la résilience acquises en communauté et individuellement.

Les récits capturés dans ce livre montrent comment la vie des gens a été façonnée par leur volonté d'améliorer leurs conditions de vie dans certains des habitations à loyer modéré (HLM) les plus denses et souvent les plus négligés de Melbourne. L'implication et l'engagement de la communauté dans diverses activités à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur des HLM ont également été à la base de son processus d'intégration dans la société australienne. Les participants à notre étude ont décrit leurs efforts pour interagir avec différentes communautés en tant qu'acteurs actifs façonnant le caractère multiculturel de la ville. Ainsi, d'une part, se conjuguent la grande volonté et l'engagement que les migrants et les réfugiés mettent à partager leur culture avec le grand public. Et d'un autre côté, nous observons les grands efforts des participants à cette étude pour atteindre la stabilité financière tant souhaitée. Nous notons également que ce dernier objectif est malheureusement limité par le manque de soutien adéquat du gouvernement. Parmi eux, le manque de formation continue visant à développer les compétences professionnelles et à promouvoir un enseignement de l'anglais

plus intensif. Ces éléments sont essentiels pour que les migrants et les réfugiés atteignent leur indépendance financière.

Les migrants et les réfugiés interrogés ont également reconnu leur manque de confiance dans le gouvernement, qui résulte de l'exclusion et de la marginalisation auxquelles ils sont confrontés au quotidien. Dans ce contexte, les organisations à but non lucratif, les groupes religieux, les comités de quartier et les leaders communautaires devraient être le lien entre les agences gouvernementales et la communauté. Il est nécessaire de reconnaître que l'établissement d'une confiance mutuelle entre les organisations mentionnées ci-dessus et les migrants et les réfugiés est un processus long mais nécessaire. Cependant, souvent, le leadership local et les structures de gouvernance locale sont souvent ignorés par les gouvernements, bien qu'ils soient la clé de la participation communautaire, comme observé dans les études menées auprès des communautés marginalisées et vulnérables (Carrasco et Dangol, 2019; Devas, 2001). La reconnaissance par les agences gouvernementales des leaders et des groupes communautaires est essentielle pour promouvoir l'engagement et la participation communautaires, et ils sont également des partenaires stratégiques pour faire face aux urgences. Cela était évident lors de la gestion de la pandémie de COVID-19, en particulier lors de la quarantaine stricte dans les HLM à Melbourne (Carrasco et al., 2020).

Les migrants et les réfugiés des pays de la Corne de l'Afrique résidant dans les logements sociaux de Melbourne dépendent des compétences acquises dans leur pays d'origine et des capacités développées tout au long de leur processus d'intégration en Australie. Une partie cruciale de ce processus consiste à créer un sentiment d'appartenance et de solides liens communautaires dans vos quartiers. Malgré leurs similitudes et différences ethniques et religieuses, qui conduisent parfois à une moindre participation, les membres de ces communautés ont réussi à changer le cours de leur vie et de leur famille en Australie et souvent de leurs proches dans leur pays d'origine. Cependant, les multiples défis auxquels les migrants et les réfugiés ont été confrontés, tels que l'exclusion et la privation économique, et bien qu'ayant enduré des réalités aussi difficiles, ils ont réussi à construire un avenir meilleur pour eux-mêmes, leurs familles et la société en général en Australie.

Conclusión:
Un Hogar para la Diáspora: Del Cuerno de África a las Viviendas Públicas en Melbourne

Este libro analiza los temas comunes que surgieron de las historias de migrantes y refugiados residentes de los complejos de vivienda pública de Melbourne, la segunda ciudad más populosa de Australia. Entre muchos factores clave, la identidad, que abarca valores culturales y, en ocasiones, prácticas religiosas, ha sido un elemento central en torno al cual evolucionan y progresan la vida de las comunidades de migrantes africanos. Es así que estos valores han sido reflejados en las historias que presentamos como una semilla que continúa creciendo a pesar de los desafíos que enfrentan en Australia. Los residentes de las viviendas públicas, sus familias y sus comunidades se han desarrollado a pesar de los desafíos extremos que significaron para ellos la migración forzada a la que tuvieron que enfrentar debido a factores tan complejos como conflictos armados, pobreza e inseguridad. Como resultado de la crónica injusticia social y los continuos disturbios civiles y armados se produjeron varias oleadas de refugiados en la región desde la década de 1970. Y es en Australia donde a partir de la década de 1990, más de 48 mil migrantes y refugiados de países del Cuerno de África (Somalia, Eritrea, Etiopia, Yibuti, Sudan y Sudan del Sur) encontraron un refugio seguro, y Melbourne se convirtió

en el hogar para casi la mitad de ellos. Es así que estas historias que presentamos no se limitan a narrar los diferentes desafíos de la comunidad, sino que también enfatizan la determinación y resiliencia lograda en comunidad e individualmente.

Las narrativas capturadas en este libro muestran cómo las vidas de las personas fueron moldeadas por su voluntad de mejorar sus condiciones de vida en algunos de los complejos de vivienda pública más densos y frecuentemente más olvidados de Melbourne. La participación de la comunidad y su compromiso en diversas actividades dentro y fuera de los complejos de vivienda pública también ha sido la columna vertebral de su proceso de integración en la sociedad australiana. Los participantes en nuestro estudio describieron sus esfuerzos por interactuar con diferentes comunidades siendo actores activos que dan forma al carácter multicultural de la ciudad. Es así que se combinan por un lado la gran voluntad y empeño que ponen los migrantes y refugiados en compartir su cultura con el público en general. Y por el otro lado observamos los grandes esfuerzos de los participantes en este estudio para lograr la tan deseada estabilidad financiera. Asimismo, observamos que lamentablemente

este último objetivo se ve limitado por la falta de un apoyo adecuado por parte del gobierno. Dentro de ellos la falta de una continua capacitación orientada al desarrollo de habilidades ocupacionales y la promoción una enseñanza del inglés más intensiva. Estos elementos son clave para que los migrantes y refugiados logren su independencia financiera.

Los migrantes y refugiados entrevistados también reconocieron la falta de confianza que tienen en el gobierno, la cual es el resultado de la exclusión y marginación a la que se enfrentan a diario. En este contexto, las organizaciones sin fines de lucro, los grupos religiosos, los comités de vecinos y los líderes de la comunidad deben ser el vínculo entre las agencias gubernamentales y la comunidad. Es necesario reconocer que construir confianza mutua entre las organizaciones mencionadas anteriormente y los migrantes y refugiados es un proceso largo pero necesario. Sin embargo, muchas veces el liderazgo local y estructuras locales de gobernanza son frecuentemente ignorados por los gobiernos a pesar de ser la clave para la participación comunitaria, como se observó en estudios con comunidades marginadas y vulnerables (Carrasco & Dangol, 2019; Devas, 2001). El reconocimiento por parte de las agencias gubernamentales de los líderes y grupos comunitarios es fundamental para promover el compromiso y la participación de la comunidad, y también son socios estratégicos para abordar las emergencias. Esto fue evidente durante la gestión de la pandemia de COVID-19, especialmente durante la estricta cuarentena en los complejos de vivienda pública en Melbourne (Carrasco et al., 2020).

Los migrantes y refugiados de los países Cuerno de África que residen en las viviendas públicas de Melbourne dependen de las habilidades adquiridas en sus países de origen y de las capacidades desarrolladas a lo largo de su proceso de integración en Australia. Una parte crucial de este proceso es la construcción del sentido de hogar y fuertes lazos comunitarios en sus vecindarios. A pesar de sus similitudes y diferencias étnicas y religiosas, que en ocasiones causa una menor participación, los miembros de estas comunidades han logrado cambiar el curso en sus vidas y sus familias en Australia y muchas veces de sus familiares en sus países de origen. No obstante, los múltiples desafíos a los que los migrantes y refugiados se han enfrentado como la exclusión y las carencias económicas, y a pesar de haber soportado realidades tan difíciles han logrado construir un futuro mejor para ellos, sus familias y la sociedad en general en Australia.

خاتمة
منزل للشتات: من القرن الأفريقي إلى الإسكان العام في ملبورن

يستكشف هذا الكتاب الموضوعات المشتركة التي ظهرت من خلال قصص المهاجرين واللاجئين المقيمين في المجمعات السكنية العامة في ملبورن، ثاني أكبر مدينة في أستراليا من حيث عدد السكان. من بين العديد من العوامل الرئيسية، كانت الهوية، التي تشمل القيم الثقافية وأحيانًا الممارسات الدينية، عنصرًا مركزيًا تتطور حوله حياة مجتمعات المهاجرين الأفارقة وتتقدم. وبالتالي، ظهرت هذه القيم في القصص التي نقدمها كبذرة تستمر في النمو على الرغم من التحديات التي تواجه أستراليا. لقد تطور سكان المساكن العامة وأسرهم ومجتمعاتهم على الرغم من التحديات الشديدة التي فرضتها عليهم الهجرة القسرية التي كان عليهم مواجهتها بسبب عوامل معقدة مثل النزاع المسلح والفقر وانعدام الأمن. نتيجة للظلم الاجتماعي المزمن والاضطرابات المدنية والمسلحة المستمرة، كانت هناك موجات عديدة من اللاجئين في المنطقة منذ السبعينيات. وفي أستراليا، ابتداءً من التسعينيات، أكثر من 48000 مهاجر ولاجئ من القرن الأفريقي الصومال، وإريتريا، وإثيوبيا، وجيبوتي، والسودان، وجنوب السودان - وجدوا دولًا كانت ملاذًا آمنًا، وأصبحت ملبورن موطنًا لما يقرب من نصفهم. وبالتالي، فإن هذه القصص التي نقدمها لا تقتصر على سرد التحديات المختلفة للمجتمع، بل تؤكد أيضًا على العزيمة والمرونة و المثابرة التي نراها في المجتمع وعلى المستوى الفردي.

تُظهر الروايات التي تم جمعها من خلال هذا الكتاب كيف تشكلت حياة الناس بمحض إرادتهم لتحسين ظروفهم المعيشية في بعض المجمعات السكنية العامة الأكثر كثافة والأكثر إهمالًا في ملبورن. كانت مشاركة المجموعة في الأنشطة المختلفة داخل وخارج المجمعات السكنية العامة أيضًا العمود الفقري لعملية اندماجها في المجتمع الأسترالي. وصف المشاركون في دراستنا جهودهم للتفاعل مع المجتمعات المختلفة على أنها جهات فاعلة وتدعم الطابع متعدد الثقافات للمدينة. وبالتالي، من ناحية، يتم الجمع بين الإرادة والالتزام العظيمين اللذين يبديهما المهاجرون واللاجئون في مشاركة ثقافتهم مع عامة الناس. ومن ناحية أخرى نلاحظ الجهود الكبيرة التي بذلها المشاركون في هذه الدراسة لتحقيق الاستقرار المالي المنشود. كما نلاحظ أن هذا الهدف الأخير محدود للأسف بسبب عدم وجود دعم كاف من الحكومة. من بينها الافتقار إلى التدريب المستمر الذي يهدف إلى تطوير المهارات المهنية وتعزيز تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية المكثف. هذه العناصر أساسية للمهاجرين واللاجئين لتحقيق الاستقلال المالي.

كما أقر المهاجرون واللاجئون الذين تمت مقابلتهم بانعدام ثقتهم بالحكومة، نتيجة الإقصاء والتهميش الذي يواجهونه بشكل يومي. في هذا السياق، يجب أن تكون المنظمات غير الربحية والجماعات الدينية ولجان الأحياء وقادة المجتمع هم حلقة الوصل بين الوكالات الحكومية والمجتمع. من الضروري إدراك أن بناء الثقة المتبادلة بين المنظمات المذكورة أعلاه والمهاجرين واللاجئين عملية طويلة ولكنها ضرورية. ومع ذلك، كثيرًا ما يتم تجاهل القيادة المحلية وهياكل الحكم المحلي من قبل الحكومات على الرغم من كونها مفتاح مشاركة المجتمع، كما لوحظ في الدراسات التي أجريت على المجتمعات المهمشة والضعيفة (Carrasco & Dangol, 2019 ; Devas, 2001).

يعتبر اعتراف الوكالات الحكومية بقادة ومجموعات المجتمع أمرًا بالغ الأهمية لتعزيز مشاركة افراد المجتمع والتزامهم كما أنهم شركاء استراتيجيون في معالجة حالات الطوارئ.

كان هذا واضحًا أثناء إدارة جائحة كوفيد 19 ، خاصة أثناء الحجر الصحي الصارم في المجمعات السكنية العامة في ملبورن(Carrasco et al., 2020).

يعتمد المهاجرون واللاجئون من دول القرن الأفريقي المقيمين في المساكن العامة في ملبورن على المهارات المكتسبة في بلدانهم الأصلية والقدرات التي تم تطويرها خلال عملية الاندماج في أستراليا. جزء مهم من هذه العملية يتمثل في بناء شعور بالارتباط بالمكان وروابط مجتمعية قوية في الأحياء. على الرغم من أوجه التشابه والاختلاف الإثني والديني ، والتي تؤدي في بعض الأحيان إلى مشاركة أقل ، فقد تمكن أفراد هذه المجتمعات من تغيير مسار حياتهم وعائلاتهم في أستراليا وغالبًا فقد تمكنوا من مساعدة أقاربهم في بلدانهم الأصلية. ومع ذلك ، فإن التحديات المتعددة التي واجهها المهاجرون واللاجئون مثل الاستبعاد والحرمان الاقتصادي ، وعلى الرغم من تحملهم مثل هذه الحقائق الصعبة ، فقد تمكنوا من بناء مستقبل أفضل لأنفسهم وأسرهم والمجتمع بشكل عام في أستراليا.

PART V

Epilogue –
The kind of research
we need

Epilogue – The kind of research we need

As we enter the second generation in the African-Australian story, much of Australian society remains characterised by widespread ignorance of our African compatriots' many attributes and achievements. While Australians of African descent continue to make a growing impact on Australia's political, business and sporting scenes, those helping their communities often have little idea of where they came from, how they live, or the strengths, skills – and, sadly, too often – the challenges and fears that still hold up their social integration. COVID-19 revealed the attitude and ignorance of Australian leadership and the society at large, with the best example the hard lockdown of the nine towers in Flemington and North Melbourne.

Since Africans began arriving in significant numbers in Melbourne and Sydney in the mid-1980s, nearly 400,000 Africans have landed on Australia's shores. According to the 2016 census, nearly 85,698 Victorian residents were born in sub-Saharan Africa – a number that has roughly doubled over the past decade. As the first city settled by large African communities, Melbourne has emerged as Australia's 'African capital': home to the most significant number of African businesses, traders, restaurants, sports teams – and dozens of little-known 'African enclaves', scattered across inner-city housing estates and outlying suburbs such as Melton, Dandenong, Werribee and Wyndham.

It is proposed to use these communities as the backdrop for an in-depth examination of Australia's African communities' settlement experiences, positive and negative. Through the eyes of a representative group from each country – young and old, female and male, spiritual and secular – we need to explore each of our main African communities, their history and journeys to Australia, their geographical and social (regional and tribal) roots, their community and family structures, their education and professions, their religious practices, their relationships with authorities and other nationalities. As well as the cultural 'norms' they have brought to Australia, this book examines how these traditions and expectations are changing to deal with various aspects of their new lives: family and community hierarchies, child-rearing practices, traditional gender roles, and 'role reversals' between parents and their increasingly independent children.

This book is not be just another 'feelgood' catalogue of role-models and project outcomes; more, a practical examination of the various factors that influence and may help or hinder community projects and social services. We look at interventions that have worked and many others that have not worked in different communities, projects that are genuinely engaging and answering specific populations' needs, role-models who provide practical inspiration to young people.

Our goal is to provide specific practical knowledge that all service providers – from health, education and housing authorities, to NGOs, not-for-profits and socially-minded corporates – can integrate into their consultations and strategic planning.

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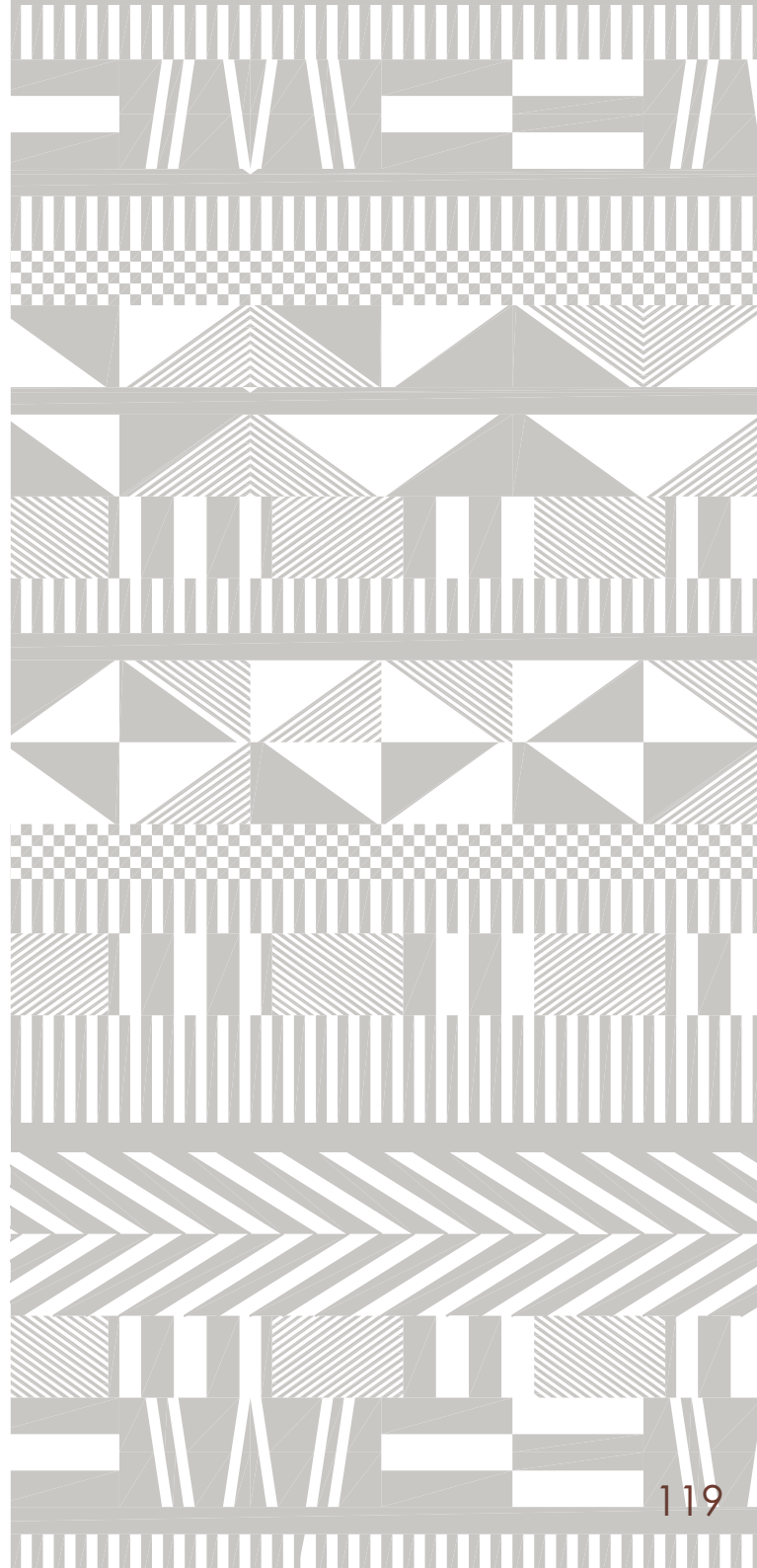
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This book explores the sense of home that refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa created in Melbourne's public housing estates. The transition from forced migration and resettlement to making Melbourne their new home is presented through stories narrated by refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa. These are considered one of Melbourne's most vulnerable communities and shamefully some of the most discriminated and isolated. Thus, this book shows that despite differences in culture, customs and ways of life in their home countries, migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa are moving towards integrating into the Australian society.

This book is written for policymakers, researchers, social workers, humanitarian and non-profit organisations, religious groups and organisations and anyone interested in social justice, refugees' studies, migrants and integration, and social equity.

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