

An aerial photograph of a city grid, overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. A river winds through the city from the top right towards the center. The grid consists of numerous small, rectangular blocks.

UN HABITAT

BURAO

first steps towards strategic
urban planning



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P.O.Box 30030, GPO 00100, Nairobi, Kenya
Fax: +(254-20) 762 3120 (Central Office)
www.unhabitat.org

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Author: Ombretta Tempra, Felix Zeiske, and Aisling O'Loghlen

Design and layout: Ombretta Tempra

Graphics: Ombretta Tempra, Khalied Jacobs, Katja Schafer

Editor: Edward Miller

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INTRODUCTION

The city of Burao has been undertaking, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, a series of steps towards effective and integrated urban development:

- **a city consultation** built a common vision for the desired future of the city and identified priority needs and related areas for strategic intervention.
- **an urban spatial analysis** – an indispensable tool for strategic planning – gave a basic spatial understanding of the city, highlighting challenges and priority interventions from a spatial perspective.
- **tables** were developed that contain methodological information and further details on the urban spatial analysis, city consultation, and projects implemented by UN-HABITAT in Burao.

The main objectives of this publication are:

- Documenting the process undertaken by the Burao municipality through city profiling and city consultation.
- Recording the outcomes of the first broad consensus on urban issues, priority urban interventions, and action plans.
- Introducing spatial analysis as a tool for strategic planning.
- Complementing the documentation of the process undertaken with teaching–learning techniques and tips for local authorities and technical persons involved in the urban development of the city.

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BACKGROUND

Chronology

"Ceel-Gooni" period. 1880

"Burao Gubad" or the burned Burao period. 1900

Present-day Burao is established. 1910

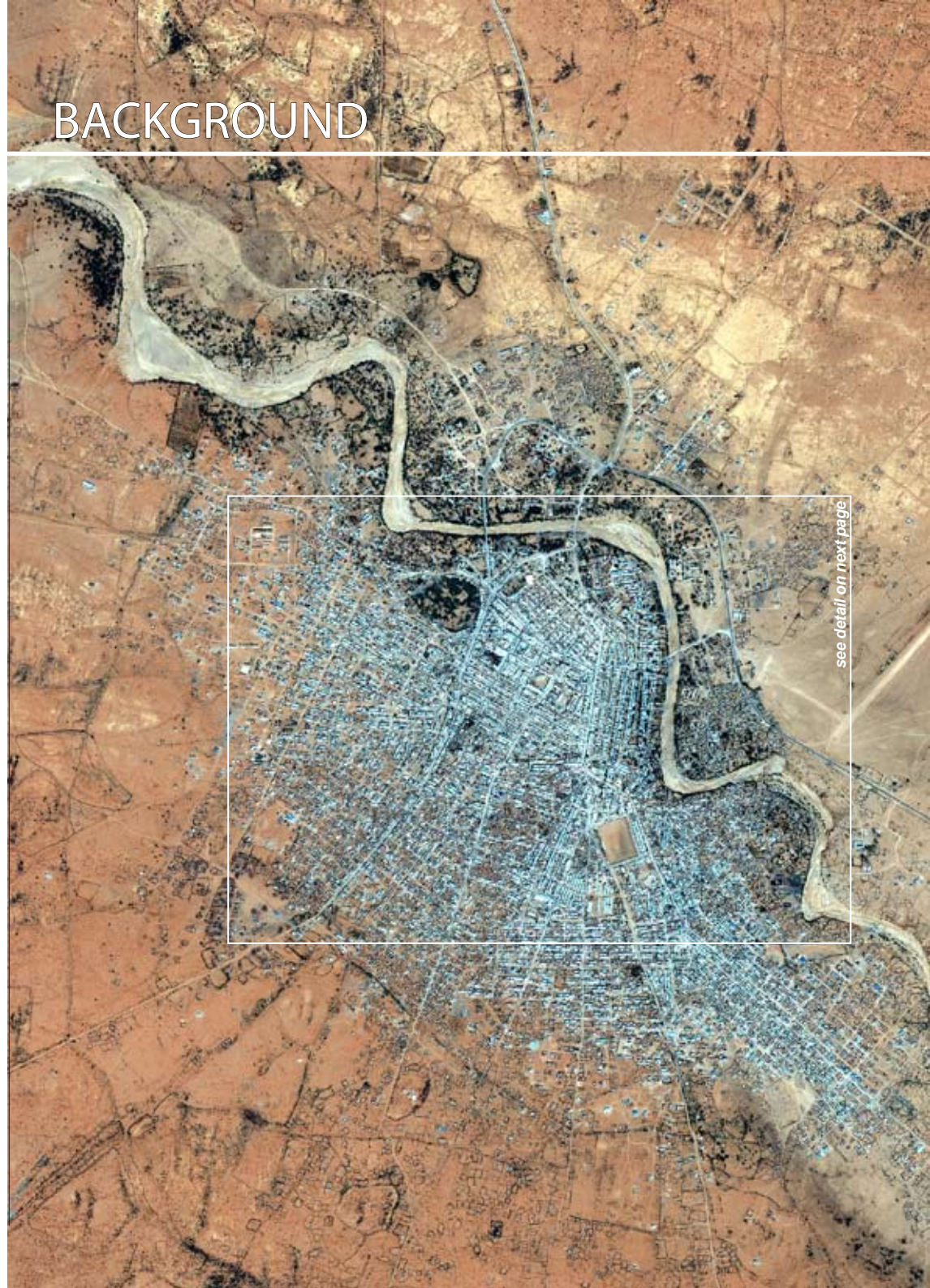
Burao obtains district status and important government offices such as a post office, a police station, and military garrisons are established by the British colonial administration. 1920

Italy and Britain grant independence to their respective Somali protectorates, allowing the two sectors to merge as the unified Republic of Somalia. 1960

Somalia openly backs a rebel movement in the Ogaden desert in an attempt to recapture the area, which was seized by Ethiopia at the turn of the century. Somalia admits defeat after 8 months of war with Ethiopia, having lost much of its 32,000-man army and most of its planes and tanks. 1977

After years of civil conflict, Somaliland declares independence to become the Republic of Somaliland. 1991

Local elections see the birth of a multiparty democracy in Somaliland. 2002



Located on the intermittent Togdheer River, Burao is the second largest town in Somaliland.

population – A census has not been carried out, but the current population is commonly estimated at 150,000. Other estimates go as high as 300,000.

climate – Burao has a hot, semi-arid climate. Annual rainfall is only 200 millimetres, falling in the two wet seasons of April to June and October to November.

topography – The city is situated in the northern part of the Haud plateau, at an elevation of around 1,040 metres above sea level, and gently slopes to the south-east. The intermittent Togdheer River is the main natural element in the city, with the built-up area concentrated on its southern banks.

economy – The city's main economic activities are related to livestock rearing, commerce, and communication services. However, a very high unemployment rate remains a critical problem for the inhabitants of Burao.

land ownership patterns are closely connected to clan subdivisions, translating into distinct ethnic quarters in the east and the west of the city and resulting in limited spatial movement and social contact among the different ethnic groups residing in the urban area.

ethnic tensions are a constant threat to urban stability and at times lead to a volatile and even hostile environment, with violent land disputes; the local government, civil society actors, and elders are then required to mediate disputes.



VISION *for the future*

“Peaceful and attractive city where the rule of law is governing, the economy is growing, and multi-ethnic dialogue is encouraged.

Quality urban services and good recreational and residential areas should make of Burao a high-standard city”*

*the slogan for Burao's development, chosen by the participants of the Burao City Consultation.

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