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Market committees and everyday state formation in Mogadishu

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**‘ELDERS AMONG TRADERS’:
MARKET COMMITTEES AND EVERYDAY
STATE FORMATION IN MOGADISHU**

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ABSTRACT

This working paper aims at understanding state formation by looking at local politics in urban markets of Mogadishu. In response to the violence of the early 1990s and the withdrawal of the municipality from marketplaces, market traders organised daily governance by creating market committees that I call here 'elders among traders.' Based on ethnographic material collected over a year and half of fieldwork in two marketplaces in Mogadishu, I reveal and illustrate dynamics of state formation by looking at state imageries and daily encounters around security, taxation, ideals of neutrality and recognition. The working of the market committees, their interactions with state officials, civil servants, soldiers, and members of Harakat al Mujahidiin al-Shabaab (HMS) give us important insight into state formation dynamics. These materialize as paradoxical effects of daily encounters between traders and municipal representatives and their respective imaginaries of the state.

INTRODUCTION

One day during the month of Ramadan 2016 in one of Mogadishu's commercial centres, Ali,¹ a market trader in his 30s, refused to pay the daily tax to a tax collector who was smoking a cigarette. Although Ali normally paid the tax (on the whole – he avoided tax collectors some days) this time Ali insisted that he wouldn't pay because the officer was smoking and thus not fasting. He argued that it was forbidden for a fasting man to give money to another one who was not fasting. After a short argument, the tax collector left, for that day at least. The question of whether a fasting man can pay tax to a non-fasting official was a hotly-debated topic among the bystanders to this incident: was Ali right to refuse to pay? The discussion that followed involved moral/religious concerns as well as security ones. Some said it was dangerous to refuse to pay the tax because it could lead to sanctions, wrongful accusations or even killings if things escalated; a risk that was obviously not worth taking. But at the same time the tax officer wasn't fasting and it was the holy month of Ramadan, and there was the possibility that it could compromise Ali's own fast. Finally, Ali decided to ask a local imam whether it was actually forbidden to pay taxes to someone who was not fasting. The imam corrected Ali: it was forbidden for a fasting man to give money voluntarily to someone as an act of charity (*sadaqa*)², something that did not apply to the tax collector because paying taxes isn't an act of charity. Although the imam recognised the tax collector should be fasting, as Muslims must do during the month of Ramadan, he advised Ali to maintain his fast and pay the tax. The answer satisfied Ali and the onlookers because it was clear and resolved their concerns on both counts: he had to pay the tax and would not compromise his safety and religious duty by doing so.

This vignette is a typical example of an everyday encounter with representatives of the state in contemporary Mogadishu since the establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012. It illustrates the kinds of tensions that emerge in the mundane practice of everyday life, especially as traders encounter the government's representatives and its representations. These kinds of tensions emerge as traders have to deal with competing types of obligations amidst politico-legal uncertainty (see Sikor & Lund 2009).

In this working paper, I highlight some of these daily tensions and relate them to the governance of marketplaces in the midst of political turmoil. More specifically, I look at the role of market traders in providing elements of governance in the marketplace, i.e. in creating market committees (*guddiga suuqa*), and in their relationship with local government. I illustrate how these committees, that I call 'elders among traders', work as 'twilight institutions' (Lund 2006a). They have played an important role in the self-governance of the marketplace, substituting the local government after the state collapse in the early 1990s. By analysing accounts of the tasks and perceptions of two market committees, their role in the market and views on how their marketplace works, I examine the way they engage with the state – both in terms of their encounter with local government in their daily lives, but also in these committees' constant discursive references to state as distinguished from themselves. My main argument suggests that we should look at these constant

references to state as illustrative of state formation as the effect of a set of interrelated practices and ideas which seem to produce the appearance of a world fundamentally divided into state–society, state–economy (Hansen & Stepputat 2001; Mitchell 2006). In this particular case, I demonstrate how market operators contribute to the establishment of local government in the marketplace and negotiate their role in the network of relationships around it.

These insights into political dynamics in the marketplace shed light on the ways in which economy and state are related. The Somali setting has illustrated the logics of an ‘economy without a state’ (Mubarak 1997; Webersik 2006), and revealed a more or less autonomous economic sector, supporting liberal theories which describe economy as something distinct from state. Moreover, the international community has been supporting a political process which requires public administration to expand its reach over society and the economy in an effort to regulate, tax and oversee. Thus, to look at the role of marketplaces, in particular the interrelation between market committees and state formation, is interesting, especially in Mogadishu where state formation dynamics are vivid.

This working paper provides a fresh perspective to studies on the role of traders in state formation in Somalia, which have tended to focus on ‘strongmen’: the most visible traders in and around the state-building process (Sage 2002; Lewis 2003; Schlee 2006; Webersik 2006; Marchal 1996; Menkhaus 2003), especially on highlighting their ambivalent role (on this, see also Hagmann & Stepputat 2016). In this context, this working paper draws attention to sites of power outside of the economic and political elite, and it also presents an insight into the different, sometimes contradictory ways in which traders contribute to maintain and support the institutionalisation of state.

My analysis is based on empirical data collected during a year’s fieldwork in neighbourhood markets of Mogadishu in 2015–2016. The two main market committees I deal with work in smaller markets that count about 1000 small shops and as many booths, much smaller than the main market of Bakaara, which spreads across three neighbourhoods. The data consists of notes based on participant-observation in these markets and on semi-structured interviews with two market committees in two different neighbourhood markets within the same district; with civil servants working in municipalities, and with petty traders.

In the first section, I elaborate on the approach I use to study local politics, and state formation. Next, I describe how market traders came to create market committees in the 1990s, and how they operate. Then, I sketch out representations of the state, that is how traders give meanings to the idea of state as they distinguish themselves from the state and its daily manifestation in the market around recurring themes, namely security and taxation, as an entity that stands between traders and the ‘weight of power’. The last section concludes with a synthesis of the data and reflects on the role of the market committees in the state formation process.

LOCAL POLITICS AND STATE FORMATION IN MARKETPLACES

This paper is interested in the local politics of marketplaces as a way to examine state formation dynamics. More generally, it addresses the question of how to understand local politics and state formation dynamics.

I draw firstly on insights of scholars who account for state formation dynamics through the study of ethnographically grounded and localised encounters in everyday life (for example Blundo 2006; Hagmann & Péclard 2010; Bierschenk & Olivier de Sardan 2014; Thelen, Vettters & von Benda-Beckman 2014). By focusing on daily encounters around administrative services, these authors show, among other things, that state is not unitary but composed of different players: state officials and representatives, civil servants etc. – who engage in local politics to negotiate, manipulate and remodel state services.

As well as civil servants and government officials on the ground, multiple institutions, norms and practices contribute to organising public authority. Abrams (1988) made a distinction between the ‘state system’ as the ‘nexus of practices and institutions centred in government’, and the ‘state idea’ – as a political project, ‘an exercise of legitimizing of an otherwise unacceptable domination’. Building on this, Lund (2006a) extends the ‘state system’ to include ‘twilight institutions’. This refers to a broader range of actors, norms and institutions outside of government that organise public authority and which constantly refer to the state idea.

The study of state politics and state–society relations in contemporary Somalia has been particularly illustrative of how state formation is something continuously negotiated between different actors who exercise some kind of public authority. Indeed, scholars have illustrated how ‘governance without government’ (Menkhaus 2006) worked after the fall of the Siyad Barre regime in January 1991. From then on, rather than political chaos, governance has been restricted to neighbourhood or municipal level (Menkhaus 2004: 155), whereby self-assertive local authorities have consolidated their authority by (re)activating social mechanisms to establish elements of security and justice (e.g. Bakonyi & Stuboy 2005; Menkhaus 2006, 2003; Marchal 2009; Hagmann & Hoehne 2009). More specifically in Mogadishu, different neighbourhoods or parts of them were governed on a daily basis by competing norms and institutions from 1992 on, including local polities of the successive transitional governments, the Islamic courts and, most recently, the armed militant group Harakat al Mujahidiin al-Shabaab (HMS) before the Somali Federal Government took over the city (see for e.g. Hansen 2007; Menkhaus 2006; Marchal 2009).

These competing forms of governance and governing can be described as twilight institutions. Their ‘twilight’ character (Lund 2006b, 2006a) refers to their potential politicisation, that is their ability to govern daily lives if needed, and thereby operate in the twilight between public and private, between state and society (Lund 2006b). For example, Buur and Kyed (2007) note how traditional leaders, unions and organisations can be self-assertive by increasing their influence in local and national

politics. They gain influence by carrying out state functions in local political settings, such as dispensing justice, collecting rent, and policing. Traditional leaders, like other figures of authority, have an ambiguous relationship with state authorities because they can enter into competition, replace and/or complement state function in settings where state authorities are absent or fragile (Buur & Kyed 2007: 2–4; Titeca & de Herdt 2011).

Mogadishu market committees have to be understood as one of the institutions that have played an important role in the governance of marketplaces on a day-to-day basis after the violence in the 1990s. Members of the market committees recall having to respond to a period characterised by no accountability, high criminality and lawlessness until the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) briefly took over Mogadishu in 2006. The Ethiopian intervention and later the confrontation between the Transitional Federal Government and HMS are recalled as periods of intense fighting with intentional and collateral damage to marketplaces – as was much reported for Bakaara market (Anonymous 2010; Sheikh 2010). The major activity of the market committees has been to replace and complement the work of their respective municipalities in the marketplace, especially in the security arrangements. Despite the autonomous way in which they have acted as figures of authority in the marketplace, during my fieldwork the market committees made constant references to ‘the state’ (*dowladda*), usually when complaining about what was happening in the city. Although they constantly engage with the idea of state, they problematise it and disclaim it.

This constant reference to state idea(l)s is a central point of my analysis to understand state formation dynamics. Scholars have shown how people ‘talk the state’, use it as an empirical category and a meaning-making tool in their daily lives. For example, Gupta (1995) illustrates the discourse on corruption in India as a way to negotiate a particular kind of citizenship when ordinary people talk about civil servants and local officials in their daily lives. Hansen (2001) builds on Kantarowicz’s idea of the ‘two bodies of the king’ (the profane/mortal and the sacred/immortal) and suggests how people in India distinguish the profane state, the sometimes bad and corrupt representatives of the state – and the sacred/elevated state. In a similar way, twilight institutions refer to the state by disclaiming it in terms that are ‘formed as a combination of people’s everyday encounter with representatives of the state and its representation’ (Lund 2006b: 689).

In fact, imageries of state keep shaping people’s daily lives even in settings where daily encounters with state officials and representatives do not occur. For example, Nielsen (2007) pays attention to ‘fragmented imaginaries of the state’ which appear, are reproduced and are maintained in peri-urban areas of Maputo. He illustrates how individuals use rumour as a ‘blank figure’ to produce meaningful discourse of the state and facilitate collective strategies. In fact, more than just an abstract category people refer to in relation to state representatives, or a reference out there (Migdal & Schlichte 2005: 19), state is a category or a representation that reproduces itself as an embodied structure which determines individual and collective strategies (Bourdieu 1994). Thus, it manifests itself via a number of affects such as

hope, desire, humiliation, fantasy and discourse of the state that keep shaping the ways people organise their daily lives. Marchal's (2000) description of dreams of state among ordinary people in Mogadishu in the 1990s is echoed in hopes expressed by them since 2012, with the establishment of the SFG (see also Hammond 2013). Also interesting is Jansen's (2014) study in which he shows how teachers and students in besieged Sarajevo kept on their social roles to maintain a sense of what they considered a normal life. Despite the autonomous way in which they organised themselves, they *hoped* for a return of the state to legitimate their activities.³ In this case, state formation corresponds not only to efforts of state officials, representatives and civil servants who negotiate the boundary between state and society, and construct the state as above and outside society, but also to how non-state officials and representatives create and maintain an image of the state that stands above and outside society.

In studying the role of market committees as figures of authority in the marketplace, I highlight their constant references to imageries of the state in daily interactions with local polities. To analyse the constant references to state in daily encounters is to account for state formation. Migdal and Schlichte (2005) suggest that state should be studied as the result of interrelated practices of different actors who constantly refer to particular images of state, and thereby construct, maintain and reconstruct it. In turn, inspired by a Foucauldian approach to power, Mitchell (2006) suggests that the state be considered as the effect of mundane processes and representations that produce the appearance of a world fundamentally divided into state–society, state–economy.

In accounting for how market committees distinguish themselves from state, I show how they maintain and reproduce ideas of the state by exploring the ways in which these state imageries manifest in daily life, and what this means for the ways the committees operate in the marketplace. Among market committees and petty traders, this distinction takes place around topics such as security, taxation, ideals of neutrality and recognition – which correspond to empirical dynamics in the marketplaces of Mogadishu since 2012.

Firstly security, understood as the management of violence, is an important topic and has to be understood within the context of the current 'war on terror' that opposes the SFG and HMS militants, and the binary discourse it involves. Today there are approximately 26 main markets in the regional administration of Benadir; each district/neighbourhood has at least one main market, which is administered by local government (*degmada*), the municipality. The two marketplaces of this study are administered by the same municipality but one of them had a border with HMS. Even though HMS has been ousted from Mogadishu, market traders still deal with competing claims over governance by the Somali government and Islamist insurgents. I illustrate how this takes form on a daily basis and reflect on the ways a particular idea of state reiterates itself as a collective illusion, something common in the binary discourse involved in the war on terror. Drawing on Taussig, Aretxaga (2000, 2003) describes a process whereby the state produces itself like a mirror to its 'threatening Other' (Aretxaga 2003). She writes that the state cannot be

distinguished from its subjective component as she shows how it becomes a social subject in everyday life, an all-pervasive, ghostly and threatening force 'shaped by the collective experience of being overshadowed by an unfathomable power' (Aretxaga 2000: 43–4).

Furthermore, security provision and taxation go hand-in-hand in classic understandings of the relationship between traders and state formation (Tilly 1985). What I document is how traders react to the local municipality's claims over taxation. Indeed, localised encounters with tax collectors, an empirical reality in most marketplaces of Mogadishu since 2012, are a daily performance of state. I illustrate how even so-called 'weak' states can be intrusive on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, I suggest seeing local resistance to pay tax as a moment in which rights and obligations are negotiated rather than a refusal of state power all-together (Roitman 2004).

And finally, an important aspect revolves around recognition – on the one hand the way market committees recognise the municipality within the marketplace, and on the other hand the ways in which the municipality recognises market committees. I focus on how market committees negotiate their place within a particular network of relationships – what Nkuku and Titeca (2018) call *branchement*, that corresponds to a configuration of power based on systems of brokerage and intermediation (see also Blundo 2006; Hagmann 2016). Actually, despite the fact that committees have set themselves up as important actors since the 1990s, I illustrate how their imageries of the state keep bestowing relevance upon the municipality as the local instantiation of state, the institution able to legitimise their actions, and recognise them, even though doing so lends weight to their workings. In a way, the committees paradoxically contribute to maintaining the municipality as an important actor in this network, while at the same time setting themselves up as competitors negotiating their own place.

Before elaborating on this, I will situate market committees within the marketplace as a 'state-system' in the sense of Lund (2006a), that is as part of a broad range of actors, norms and institutions outside government that organise public authority. Market committees are figures of authority in the marketplace, and I describe the ways in which they govern daily lives to replace the work of the municipality of their neighbourhood, in particular in the security arrangements of the marketplace.

‘PROBLEMS CREATED US’: EMERGENCE OF MARKET COMMITTEES IN POST-1991 MOGADISHU

The withdrawal of government institutions in the 1990s had a great impact on the marketplaces of Mogadishu, particularly because of the role Siyad Barre’s government played. Indeed, apart from the market in the old town of Hamar Weyne, the marketplaces in Mogadishu have been created from the late 1960s on government-owned land, and later as part of an urban reform initiated in the late 1970s to enlarge the butchers’ area and build small shops (Marchal 2002). Although committees (*guddi*) were created from 1972 onwards for workers, farmers and government ministries among others (Samatar 1988: 110) there is no evidence of such committees working in the marketplaces. As part of Barre’s scientific socialism policies, these aforementioned *guddi* were created in an effort to decentralise power and respond to discontent over the lack of participation in decision-making at all levels. This actually translated into more government control because their members were nominated and approved by military governors (Samatar 1988: 112). In popular accounts, *guddis* are brutal and corrupt agents of the state, as Nadifa Mohamed (2013) describes so well in her novel.

According to my informants market traders created market committees when Siyad Barre’s government was defeated in January 1991. They created them to respond to the insecurity, violent clashes and gunfire that paralysed mobility in the city, as well as trading activities. As Muse, a man in his 50s and one of the founders of a market committee, explained during an interview:

After 1991 we had reached a stage where we couldn’t bring food, let alone trade it. Faction leaders had divided everywhere and closed the streets – they were after all in defence because they were at war. [For example] Those ones secured this area, those other ones their areas, the harbour is closed. It was like this, and for 16 years, there was a fake government [*dowlad beenbeenatey*].⁴

The faction leaders he mentions were the armed factions that opposed Siyad Barre’s regime who turned against each other, and who divided Mogadishu’s neighbourhoods into two – reflective of the territorial reorganisation of the country along clan lines (see for example Marchal 2000; Menkhaus 2003; Webersik 2006; Hoehne 2016). And *dowlad beenbeenatey*,⁵ that translates as fake government or pseudo-government, is usually used to refer to the successive transitional governments after the fall of Siyad Barre, namely ‘the government of Aidid, the one of Ali Mahdi, the one of Abdi Qaasim etc.’ until the Somali Federal Government was established in 2012. The collapse of the state usually refers to the central government – which impacts too on the working of lower levels. The municipality remained visible in the market on a day-to-day basis but provided limited services and, most importantly, was inefficient in securing the marketplace.

The primary task of the committees was to assure the safety of the marketplace. A quote from one of the market committee members illustrates typical and important

aspects of the way traders sought protection for themselves, their shops and properties during a period in which the harbour was looted and the goods were then sold in the marketplace, but also a time of general food scarcity, both for selling and consuming.

Problems created us. I wasn't chosen, I had to start it with my own hands. We are the family that used to be a majority in the area, who did all the work. We wanted to assure the security for example, to defend the poor people who wanted to sell things to survive or couldn't even sell a sack of rice they stole from the harbour, so we could also eat.⁶

Market committee members were not chosen or elected by traders, nor did they participate in fighting themselves. However, the market committees organised the security of marketplaces to defend them from thieves and intensive fighting. The logic is similar to the one of the 'protection economy' that Marchal (2002: 64) described at the time when traders sought someone from 'stronger' (or in my informants' account 'majority') sub-clans and paid for their services.

Protection could be provided by the clan-family identified as being the 'majority' back then, that is those who were in control of the territorial unit. The market committees were thus initiated by 'majority' clan members who entered into a patron-protégé relationship with market traders from different clan backgrounds. This process can be compared to historical examples of the caravan trade facilitated by *abbaan*. *Abbaan* are 'host/protectors' (Cassanelli 1982: 156) who used to protect caravan traders who passed through territories occupied by foreign groups. Protectors are selected for their good character and for the strength of their lineage and are paid a fee or given gifts for their work (see Lewis 1961: 187; Dua 2013).

The committees acted as figures of authority inside the marketplace because they were in charge of its security arrangements. The following account of a woman in her late 40s who lives in Kismaayo illustrates well the logic of the protection economy in the early 1990s. From a relatively wealthy family herself, and married into a powerful clan-family in the area, she explains how she participated in the conflict in the early 1990s, but also how she took part in creating such committees:

Yesterday I was carrying the gun for my community, right? Everyone was carrying the gun for their community.⁷ But then I was carrying the gun for them. When my community had enough power, I didn't allow that their properties were looted.⁸

In the first part of the quote she refers to her own involvement in the war in Kismaayo in the 1990s, and how she participated as a fighter for her sub-clan against another sub-clan. Her neighbours and other traders in the market from different sub-clans were afraid of her, not only because she was armed so she could kill like any other armed man, but also because she was someone who fought for her clan-family. She 'traded' her bad reputation in the city, for a good one, when she initiated a self-help group – the committees I refer to – a group of market traders who pooled

their belongings and goods and shared the cost of hiring armed men. She hosted the militia men in her house, where all the goods and belongings were stored, and she stayed with the armed men – armed with an AK47 she had registered at the municipality.

With other youth, we went to see them [armed men] and said, ‘my brother, this man didn’t do anything wrong, he is just a trader’, and stopped up to 50 stores from being looted [...] I helped save their stores. I put together a military group for them, and we paid the lunch and *khat* afterwards. We arranged some sort of self-help group to protect their property – put together their wealth.⁹

In fact, in her account, it appears that those who created the committees were not only the family in control of the area, but also those who had most interest in safeguarding their own property. She explains that for seven days and nights she stayed there, guarding their belongings together with the militia men and making sure that the belongings were returned to their rightful owners once the situation calmed down. Even though they mobilised an armed group from among their own clan-families, she had to watch her back among the fighters. Following the same logic as that of: ‘if one store was looted, then all would be’ (Marchal 2002: 64), if all the goods were not given back, then nothing guaranteed that hers’ would be either, hence the mistrust towards hired fighters and their potential conversion into bandits (see for e.g. Marchal 1993). Her story is illustrative as well of the conversion of fighters into petty traders. When she stopped going into the battlefield, she kept her gun as protection against waves of fighting with other sub-clans in the city, but returned to work in the marketplace.

Although she doesn’t live in Mogadishu, the process of fighting for one’s own clan-family for the control of an area, and thus having the ability to provide security is typical and recurrent, and there are many such accounts of how protection was organised in neighbourhoods of Mogadishu in the early 1990s. Those who initiated the committees were from the clan-family¹⁰ who could mobilise armed groups from among their clan-families.

The market committees were limited to inside the marketplaces, which were remembered among petty traders I talked to as being safe places. In the accounts of petty traders who used to buy their foodstuffs from other markets in other neighbourhoods, especially in Bakaara, they recall being at the mercy of bandits on the way, even when soldiers of the municipal office accompanied them. Within the marketplace, they could act as entrepreneurs and were able to call on elders of the different parties to mediate disputes erupting inside the marketplace:

Everyone knows the family of the people who were in dispute. We call upon their elders, we bring the other elders, and we find a solution.¹¹

In short, market traders reproduced inter-lineage solidarity networks in response to the violence in the early 1990s and the withdrawal of the municipality from the

marketplace. They worked initially as urban *abbaan*, namely the committees were paid for protection, they substituted the municipality in providing security in the marketplace. Nowadays, they resemble more a council of known elders of the marketplace who come together if traders or the municipality call upon them. The market committees of different markets are not in touch with one another, even if they are part of the same territorial unit and share similar clan backgrounds.

MARKET COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND WORKINGS

The composition of market committees hasn't changed much since their creation. Members of the market committee have remained the same as long as they were still living and present.

We created the committees a bit before the rule of the faction leaders. Since then, some [of the committee members] died, some left the country. So those who were left in the committee chose the replacement. Someone who is good and known. You know, people know each other in the neighbourhood, that is how we did.¹²

Market committees select new members, valuing qualities such as morality, a good reputation among other market traders, experience in working the market, knowledge about the affairs of the market and being recognised as standing out among their sub-clans. Despite differences between committee members as to their reputation in the market, their power does not come from themselves as individuals but from the group they come from, in this case from their lineage group: if one member dies or departs, they can be replaced by a person who has a similar social status among his/her sub-clan.

The structure of committees, however, does vary. Two trends nowadays can be identified: some are composed only of married men over 30. Another kind of committee has each of their members representing one section of the market, for example one person for the clothes section, one person for the charcoal, for the foodstuffs, for the pharmacies and the electronics to name the most common ones – these committees can also include married women over 30.

The committees' authority was initially related to a 'historical performance' (Sahlins 1963), namely the protection of the marketplace, but today it has become an authority of 'elders' of the marketplace. For example, explaining when he refused to be a member initially, a newly-chosen member points out:

I didn't want to be part of the committee. They chose me, they called me in. At first, I refused because you know responsibility is difficult. Carrying the responsibility of our own children is difficult, so taking over the responsibility of a people [*shacab*] [is even more difficult].¹³

This is why I call being part of the committee being one of the 'elders of the market', one of those responsible for the traders as parents are responsible for their children. This is also the context in which to understand his initial refusal to participate, it was to show humility at being chosen. In actual fact, he was not in a position to refuse this new societal position because 'it is needed', and it is associated with a moral obligation. Indeed, although he refused at first, he ended up accepting because he said he felt it was a moral duty, a response to God's command to cooperate.

If I am told 'come, take part in dealing with this', I go, because it is so. It is 'cooperate in righteousness'. God said. 'And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression',¹⁴ right? That is what is happening. That is a committee that works based on 'cooperation in righteousness'.¹⁵

The number of members has increased, reflecting in a way the confederation of different clan-backgrounds in the marketplace. There is, however, a distinction between active members, and passive ones for market committees of more than ten members, of whom maybe three are active. The others are described as what they call '*geed fadhin*' – literally to 'sit along under the tree'. These members who are invited to 'sit under the tree' can be understood as passive members who can be mobilised if needed and as a way to widen the circle of economic contributions when required.

Lewis (1961: 288) describes the *guddi* as an ad hoc panel of arbitrators who gather sporadically when needed to regulate disputes. Similarly, market committees gather only when their intervention is sought, either by market traders or their municipality. Market traders who enter into a conflict call upon them when a dispute happens. The kind of dispute depends on the market, but commonly mentioned are issues such as one trader's wastewater streaming into another's stall or shop, mobile thefts, etc. For the most part conflicts are solved through dialogue as one of the market committee members summarises:

We do not solve issues with wealth [*dhaqaalo*], but with the Somali language, tradition [*dhaqan*] and *xeer*.¹⁶

To deal with something 'in the Somali language' means to find compromises through speaking an intelligible language to all, through entering into dialogue as opposed to using force. *Dhaqan* can be both translated as tradition and culture and relates to the *xeer*. Usually, *xeer* and *dhaqan* are associated with customary laws used by elders in solving clan disputes (Lewis 2002). In this context, they mean both dealing with cases based on knowledge of previous cases in the market, but also involving the families/sub-clans that the individuals of the dispute belong to.

This is particularly relevant because the municipality also mobilises the committees to reach out to traders. Civil servants do not go in person to the market unless accompanied by soldiers, while higher officials go with a military escort.

To some extent, the committees keep a distance from the municipality as well.

We have done a lot, by the grace of God. And we still have many things to do. Now, we still lack a state that is impartial [*caadil*], that makes sure to understand the needs of the people, like to not have their property stolen. Sometimes you witness things such as (without asking the neighbours or those who live there) that a property is given to someone whose pockets are open. That is not justice [*cadaalad*]. Today we don't have that insecurity as

before, thank God.¹⁷

Unless committee members have a problem to share with the municipality, or the municipality calls them in, market committee members spend the rest of the time in their respective shops. Although the municipality sees the committees as important, the committees observed that they are less often sought by the municipality than they used to be.

The committees are in continual interactions with the municipality and traders in the marketplace. Market committees constantly engage with 'state' at the same time as disclaiming its being state, and emphasising that they are simply market traders. In the next section, I am interested in the ways in which they distinguish themselves from what they consider the state and how.

GHOSTLY PRESENCES: STATE IMAGERIES AND STATE FORMATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The previous section presented the emergence and working of market committees and their role as figures of authority in the marketplace. Their creation and workings are closely related to the role of the municipality in the marketplace. Since 2012 the idea of a fake or pseudo-government has been replaced with a discourse of the 'return of state' that traders constantly referred to. Supporting what Hammond (2013) claims, the establishment of the SFG in 2012 marks a moment in which regular and expected activities of the municipality resumed. However, although the government officially controls the marketplaces along with the rest of the city, it remains an ideological and physical battlefield between government and Harakat al Mujahidiin al-Shabaab (HMS). The marketplace is seen as an example of authentic Somali daily lives, especially in narratives of economic self-sufficiency and independence (see Chonka 2016).

In this section, I am interested in exploring ideas of the state that local market actors share to illustrate state formation dynamics. I present ideas and manifestations of the state in everyday life around four recurrent themes that committee members and petty traders associate with state, namely: security, taxation, ideals of neutrality and formal recognition. The analysis of market committees, their daily workings and interactions with different actors – state officials, civil servants, municipal soldiers, the invisible presence of HMS – as well as war memories give us insight into state formation dynamics, as paradoxical effects of daily encounters with municipal representation and imageries.

'Weight on both sides'

Security, *amniga*, is the most recurring topic associated with state, and relates to the state's claim over the control of the use of force. When it is used to qualify the need for personal security, it should be understood within the context of the violence on a daily basis of the current war that opposes the SFG and HMS militants. Although the two markets analysed in this paper are smaller in size and importance than Bakaara, informants identify the same security issues as in the other marketplaces of the city, such as assassinations, sporadic and deadly explosions and shelling. As such, a typical and recurring assertion is that 'in the market we share all the problems of the city', especially in reference to the ways market traders are caught in-between competing projects to build public authority. In the market, committees and traders problematised it typically as follows:

Our biggest problem now is that the trader cannot go to the state, because he is afraid of Shabaab. And he can't go to Shabaab area, because then the state [*dowladda*] will see him as a target. People have to deal with this weight on both sides. If you stay here, you can't go to the other side, to Shabaab's side, because otherwise you will be told 'You are Shabaab'.¹⁸

To be told 'you are Shabaab' is very problematic for traders because it justifies confiscation, economic sanctions and imprisonment, while to be identified as a supporter of the government exposes them to harassment, attacks and assassination. This very discourse of being either with the government or with HMS that traders have to deal with in their everyday lives translates into a binary discourse as being 'either with the state or against it'.

This is precisely where state formation can be identified, as a process in which the state produces itself like a mirror to its 'threatening Other' (Aretxaga 2003). The informants working at the municipality – those who identify themselves as the state and are identified as such – think of themselves as opposite to the HMS. In doing so, it is the state itself that is in a process of identification as the complete opposite of terrorists, the 'absent subject' (Aretxaga 2003). In fact, present physically, yet unidentifiable, it is the indistinguishability of the terrorist from any other subject, argues Aretxaga (2003), which creates an obsessive fascination which enables both forceful intervention in the political field and a political culture of fear and uncertainty (Aretxaga 2003: 402).

Let me illustrate this with a vignette on the celebration of the Somali national day in and around markets. On the 1st of July 2015, after the ceremony in which the Somali flag was raised had been televised the night before, shops on main streets hung flags. Two rows of shops on both sides of the street had Somali flags of varying sizes, like two columns of soldiers facing each other and raising their flags. As I walked along, impressed with this display of flags everywhere, I was struck by how empty the streets were and most shops were closed, although it was a Wednesday, a regular working day. In fact, it turned out that the topic had been discussed among petty traders in the neighbourhood for almost four days, after the government ordered every working shop, especially those on main streets, to fly the Somali flag on the day of the 1st of July. The order had actually been associated with a fine of US\$100 if the flag was not on the shops, but traders were also afraid of being accused of being supporters of HMS or militants themselves. At the same time, shop-owners were worried that if they flew the flags, HMS's militants would attack them, destroy their shops, or identify them as supporters of the government because of the belief that HMS are against whoever follows the orders of the government. To display the flags while keeping their shops closed was the strategy shop owners came up with. So the flags were hung, hence avoiding the fine, while the shops remained closed and were guarded from a safe distance in order to assure their safety. In the end, no attacks on shops where the flag was flying or their owners was reported and, a year later, the same flags were still hanging on the walls of the shops.

This vignette illustrates one of the strategies traders use when exposed directly to competing claims over public authority, as a creative way of circumventing orders without appearing to refuse them, a typical example of what Scott (1987) describes as the 'weapons of the weak'. Market committees in these situations become traders – who also appear to be caught in-between, forced to cooperate best by avoiding two competing projects to build public authority, SFG's and HMS's. This is a typical scenario in civil war situations where civilians are caught between competing

coercive parties, just as in Afghanistan between the Taliban and the Afghan army, or in Colombia between the FARC and the paramilitaries. Such recognition of competing projects is a characteristic of the way public authority emerges, as Sikor and Lund (2009) argue. In this case, the traders recognised the government's claims – and hung the flags which made the marketplace look like a victorious military field controlled by SFG. But also, they did recognise HMS's agenda and interests by keeping their stores closed.

'Since the government is back, taxes are back in town'

Taxation is another characteristic associated with the state, something that is also a major concern in marketplaces in general (see Nkuku & Titeca 2018; Roitman 1990, 2004). Tax collection in Mogadishu officially resumed in 2012, as a complex system which involves different kind of taxes from different bodies of the government: the Benadir regional government (*dowlada dhexe*) is entitled to impose direct taxes, which are collected at the borders and in the harbour; while the local municipality (*dowlada hoose*) collects indirect taxes on a six-monthly or yearly basis through issuing licenses (*iskaasho*), as well as a per day tax (*ardiya*).

On a day-to-day basis, the tax collection question brings up ambivalence, especially in the collection of the daily tax (*ardiya*) whereby tax officers collect a tax from every open business, something that happens to have resumed after the SFG was established. The municipality remains suspicious towards traders, especially in the light of the binary discourse of either with or against the state mentioned earlier. In fact, government officials and civil servants commonly assume that resistance to the government coincides with the interests of traders who oppose the growing influence of the municipality in regulating the market by taking taxes, delivering licenses and controlling the quality of goods.

The market is a public good. Everywhere there is a market, it belongs to the state. For example, the Bakaara market spread actually, and people who have plots there decided to trade there too but it wasn't planned that it spreads like this. Now it is part of three municipalities. We don't collect taxes there, we used to take it for about four months. But as we proceeded with it, our men were killed, three, four times. Most of the traders are Shabaab, so they are against paying tax. Every time the soldiers pass by, they call them, and they come and kill them. So two or three soldiers aren't enough, but it would require an army of 30 to 50. But all the other markets are ok. Traders accept us, they accept to pay taxes regularly.¹⁹

This quote from a civil servant associates the repeated killing of soldiers who collect taxes as conflicting with the interests of wealthier traders in Bakaara market. In other markets – like the ones I have been dealing with – the municipality collects taxes regularly. Her account illustrates a standpoint according to which traders' compliance with taxation is associated with acceptance of state power. In this logic, resistance to pay the tax is perceived as resistance to the state altogether, a classical

claim for which Tilly (1985) is well known, but also common in the interpretation of the role of traders in the Somali context (see for example Hansen 2003; Lewis 2003; Webersik 2006).

Just like in the opening vignette of this working paper, market operators seem to accept the state's claim to raise revenue/taxation, in the sense that it appears self-evident. Market committees, like market traders, associate tax collection empirically with state presence: where there is tax, there is a state. For instance, after talking about the financial contributions that market committees solicited from traders, I asked the committees whether these were taxes [*canshuur*]. They corrected me, saying they don't collect taxes because they consider taxation as 'something states do':

No, we don't collect taxes. When the state collapsed that's when it stopped. Since the government is back, taxes are back in town.²⁰

However, I suggest considering local resistance around taxation as encounters in which particular political subjectivities are created and negotiated. The following vignette illustrates such an encounter, in which traders perceive tax collection as unfair for the low-income traders:

Early one morning, Ahmed, a shopkeeper in his mid-30s, opened his shop, and left after asking his friend and me to let his customers know he was coming back. The shop was thus open. Suddenly, two men without uniforms came by and asked for tax money. The colleague told them that the owner was away, but if they returned later, they would find him. Then started a short bargain: one of the taxmen said that the shop was open for trade because both of us were in the shop, which was open, so we should pay. The colleague argued that the shop was open but none of us were working. After this quick exchange, the tax collectors left as quickly as they arrived. This short-lived visit happens every morning; two tax collectors – probably recognised as such because they come every day, pass by the shop. If the shop is open, and someone is working, they take 3000 shillings²¹ tax, give a receipt that the tax has been paid for the day and leave.

When Ahmed came back, we told him about the tax officer. He told me that this was no problem and that they will come back later anyway – as if he was bound to a daily promise. I didn't really think he left because the tax collectors were coming, because they do not come at any regular time. Also, he showed me all the receipts he had received for paying the daily tax, receipts that he kept in his shop as proof. Later, he explained to me different strategies he uses sometimes to avoid paying taxes. When I asked him why he goes to so much trouble to find ways not to pay, he explained:

They [tax collectors] are constantly bothering us. They are thieves. They are the ones eating it [using/taking it for themselves]. They come early in the morning, when you don't even have 1000 [shillings] in your pockets and tell you to pay tax. If you say 'wait, I have just opened, come back

later after I get some money', they refuse. They tell you 'close the shop!', 'qam!' they close it. They carry guns, and therefore, they believe they can do what they want.²²

Ahmed was, in fact, referring to an earlier encounter with a tax collector who had forced him to close his shop because he didn't pay the requested tax. Although he was allowed to reopen the shop later that day, Ahmed perceived this intervention as a pure demonstration of force. His narration of this incident evokes tax collection as something undertaken by a racket of armed people who extort money without negotiating the amount. In Ahmed's account the tax officer was corrupt and 'eating the money' as in keeping the tax for himself. This kind of situation looks like the 'cautious suspicions' Campos (2016) describes in Somaliland, here on both sides. The tax collector in the end, demonstrating in a violent way that the state can close a shop. But he was unable to come down too hard and allowed its opening later and that was because of the fear that the traders might call on HMS.

This mutual suspicion is how a particular kind of relationship is negotiated, a bit like the kind of negotiation Roitman (2004) describes for the way traders at the border in Chad Bassin refuse to pay tax, not as a refusal of state power altogether, but as the 'negotiation of a relationship that determines the fiscal subject as a particular kind of citizen and the rights and obligations established by these regulations' (Roitman 2004: 194). In our case, negotiation of tax occurs in a context of mutual fear and uncertainty, including the possibility of violent state intervention.

'A state that stands between us': ideals of neutrality

Another recurrent assertion of the state that Mogadishu based market committees have relates to ideals of neutrality. This idea of an entity to stand between traders, to mediate relations between traders, refers to violent confrontations that took place in Mogadishu after the state collapse. Actually, this idea of the neutral state is similar to what Marchal (2000) described in Mogadishu among ordinary people: an idea that the state is associated with a neutral entity that ensures a minimum of security allowing daily activities to resume.

This kind of reference to the state 'standing between' is quite recurrent, especially because the committees were created to act as entities that mediate between people as the municipality withdrew. Indeed, typically, as one of the founders of a committee explains:

As long as there was a state, well, there was a state between us. The municipality was standing between us with witnesses and all. If there was a problem, they [the municipality] dealt with it. When the state removed itself from between us, we had to create committees. The circumstances forced us to create committees.²³

Even though a number of scholars have illustrated the ways in which the Siyad Barre regime had a share in the violence and the manipulation of clan background (Samatar 1988), this idea of a state standing between people implies that ‘without a state we would fight for our clans’.

As another manifestation in daily life, state appears as an embodied structure that manifests itself in the form of a set of feelings. Indeed, in describing their role when substituting for the municipalities, committee members’ accounts transpired a vocabulary of helplessness when addressing why they created committees: one of being trapped into doing so, of being ‘forced’ to create committees, or again ‘the circumstances forced us’, the ‘problem created us’ to name the most common ones. In a way, it is a means of claiming that they had to do what they did, which they considered wasn’t legitimate because states should do it. These sentiments seem to act in a similar way to those Jansen (2014) describes, producing feelings of helplessness. Despite the relatively autonomous way in which the committees organised the marketplace, the state appears as the authority that should legitimise their actions.

The experience of the Siyad Barre regime, and the war itself, had an intense socialisation effect. The committee members and market traders whose views were collected all had experienced the Siyad Barre regime, either as children or already as market traders. That trading activities under Siyad Barre were clientelist and confined to restricted groups, ‘everyone knew them’, was a recurring statement. But the intense fighting which led to the fall of Siyad Barre and the immediate aftermath of recurring gun battles in the 1990s is also still a vivid memory for my informants. In their imaginaries the latter sharply contrasts with the Siyad Barre period, which is remembered as particularly peaceful, that is without the heavy fighting and armed confrontations. Compared to their early socialisation, the experience of the war seems to have emphasised the idea of state as positive expression of authority.

Direct experience of and stories about violence, particularly clan-related violence that happened in the 1990s, are indispensable to the formation and maintenance of state imaginaries. Wartime memories and stories of the violence of the early 90s serve as a ‘phantasmatic social force’ (Taussig 2007) that is integral to the establishment and building of chains of providence that overlap with chains of violence. For instance, even if in practice market committees govern daily lives in the marketplaces, in their discourse state appears as the entity that allows clans to coexist, because it has the means to do it, has the means to coerce. For example, in defining what market committees cannot do, what is outside their ‘power’, they define what states do, highlighting state as an entity that is able to sanction economically or physically:

If we can solve the dispute, we do it. If we can’t solve it, we reach out to it [the municipality], because else it can become a bigger problem later. So to prevent this and because we couldn’t deal with it ourselves, we forward it to the municipality so it helps us. Then if the law says it requires imprisonment they have the power²⁴ to do so. We don’t arrest

people. We also don't fine anyone. It is with the Somali language, and brotherhood²⁵ that we solve things, as well as with 'it used to be like this, or like that'. That is the way. More than that, the state deals with it. It will imprison the one that is wrong, and the others carry on with their work. That's it.²⁶

In the first part, the speaker refers to how committees solve immediate disputes, a role that is foremost preventive. In this case the committees were more or less successful in replacing and complementing the municipality and assuring the safety of the marketplace as they mobilised clan structure. This, though, is also the limit of their powers. Indeed, the committees cannot sanction, or physically exclude, anyone from the marketplace. Furthermore, the power of their members doesn't originate in themselves as individuals, but springs from their group, so they are expected to represent their own kin when mediating disputes. The committee 'invites' the municipality when they assess the situation could escalate, in a similar way to Lewis' (1961) description of the role of clan elder as point of contact with colonial power (Lewis 1961: 200). This illustrates the paradox of violence, that a 'state' that is involved in violence can at the same time appear as the remedy against violence. Even though the government was involved in the violence in the early 1990s, and today takes brutal forms in everyday life, stories of war in the 1990s simultaneously work as medium of domination, in which the municipality appears as a necessity, an integral part of the healing process. This idea is very important, because it serves to maintain the municipality as a significant actor within the power network of the marketplace.

'Power brings weight': recognition and intermediation

By 'power brings weight' I refer to the fact that formal recognition has ambivalent effects. As mentioned before, the committees remain central for the municipality which recognises the way they govern daily life in the marketplace, especially because they deal with aspects the municipality cannot cover. Local government perceives them as being close to traders, something a municipal governor expressed as *Ganacsatada ee nooga sokeeyaan*, 'they are closer to the traders than we are'. At the time of writing the Mogadishu municipality collaborated with committees and even sought to establish new ones in markets that did not have one. For the local governor it is important not to interfere in their autonomy, to cooperate when they seek out the municipality, and to have them as interlocutors on behalf of market traders.

Even though market committees engage with the municipality, they are not office holders with the exception of a few members of the market committees of Bakaara, the biggest market of Mogadishu. For instance, market committees I talked to refused to register, because they share the view that in doing so, they cross a symbolic line as they become 'normal law', that is state law. A chairman of a market committee explained:

We don't take anything [from the municipality or the traders], we don't take different things [among us], we haven't even thought of going into that business. We help those who encounter a problem. So there is nothing that weighs on us. So if we are... if we become normal law,²⁷ it is possible that that power brings other weight [*culees*].²⁸

The idea that 'power brings weight' illustrates the municipality's symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1994), in for instance awarding a particular title or function that is part of official/normal law and thus is associated with particular obligations. In fact, it would contradict the basis of their working: they assume that by registering they would lose the moral righteousness that characterises the committee's authority.

No we don't want to be registered at the municipality. It would create competition. 'Oh this one was given money. Mr So-and-So took so much'. 'He was invited there and there'. There would be competition. We don't request a salary, what we want is *ajir*.²⁹ That God gives us *ajir* for the good we have done. So thank God. That is how it is better.³⁰

The committee chairman is referring to competition in registered markets, such as in Bakaara where committee members compete over access to state salaries. This idea of competition among market committees is characteristic of the political field where competition and cooperation expose participants to envy and greed (Bourdieu 1994). In this context, power brings weight because it would bring competition within the committee and between different committees to have access to state resources, that is the resources of the municipality.

Moreover, market committees also keep a distance from the municipality because formal recognition exposes them to harassment and assassination by HMS. Indeed, just as prominent elders are constantly assassinated for being visibly associated with the SFG (see for e.g. *Garowe Online* 2017; *GOOBJOOG NEWS* 2017), there is only so long they can be very visibly associated with the municipality before being assassinated.

While market committee members refuse to be office holders and to join the government payroll, they are important actors in local politics in the same way as a state officials and civil servants are. They do seek to extend their networks of relationships to negotiate, manipulate and remodel access to state resources. In fact, although both committees are unregistered and emphasise the centrality of working collectively, their structures and models of representations to the municipality are quite different. One has a chairman and deputy chairman who have closer relationships with the municipality, and who call upon other market committee members. The other categorically rejects the idea of having one person to represent them in the municipality:

It is possible that the committee sends a part [of its members] to the municipality if we are sought, or it is possible that we all go. But one person, no. Something that we collectively know is better.³¹

However, this second committee without a chairman tends to turn to the municipality less and is less often called upon in comparison to the other one. Although the committee members I have interviewed do not receive a salary, those who are more often at the municipality have access to services of the municipality: they can use the municipality's offices for example, will know about when food is delivered, etc. This differentiated relationship of the committees with the municipality then depends on other factors such as the proximity of the marketplace to the municipal office, but also the personal relationship between committee chairman, local governor and other civil servants for instance. In the same way as networks of relationships around the municipality have been described (Blundo 2006; Nkuku & Titeca 2018), market committees also negotiate their role as part of a system of brokerage and intermediation. Increasingly the municipality is the sole interlocutor of the committees. It has established itself as the guardian of the guardians, or the broker of the brokers (See Hagmann 2016 on brokerage and intermediation), by controlling the access to the committees. In turn, the committees are the guardians of the traders, committee members define themselves as *Ahlul-ard*, [in Arabic] which literally means the 'people of the earth'. It is used here to refer to themselves as the ones who know about the market and its traders. This chain of actors, and the hierarchy between them, is particularly relevant for external actors such as NGOs, for whom the chain of gatekeepers is often described as: municipality – committee – market traders. For example, Amal used to work for an NGO that runs projects for the urban poor and targets in particular vulnerable market traders. She explained that reaching vulnerable traders was a long process of finding and negotiating with middlemen, namely civil servants at the municipality and market committees:

It is a challenge to reach them [the beneficiaries], because the municipality asks you 'what will we get', the local committee asks you 'what will we get', and you only want to reach out to the beneficiaries. We started the project once we understood each other.^{32,33}

Civil servants and NGO workers referred to the committees as 'a state behind the state' (*dowlad dowlada gadaasheet*), at times praising their help and at others expressing suspicions over their agenda, particularly as they negotiate their share of the available resources. In this sense, the market committee appears as a competitor to the local institution.

On the one hand, in refusing to register the committees recognise the municipality as the local instantiation of state and are at its disposal when needed to cover aspects it cannot deal with. On the other hand, a formal recognition, such as an incorporation into the state, would take away their 'twilight' character and actually undermine their ability to govern daily lives. This dilemma is illustrative of the norms and institutions that govern marketplaces in Mogadishu. Fundamental contradictions emerge within market committees, and as such their avoidance of becoming part of the state is particularly related to the fact that 'power brings weight'.

CONCLUSION

In this working paper, I have accounted for dynamics of state formation in marketplaces of Mogadishu by analysing perceptions and everyday practices of market committees. Focusing on traders and their market committees, I have highlighted different, sometimes contradictory ways in which market traders, well beyond the economic and political elites, contribute to and reproduce state imaginaries, as well as practices that support the institutionalisation of the state. They do so in many ways, particularly, by giving meaning to the idea of the state and thereby distinguishing the committees and themselves from the state in relation to key issues such as security and taxation. Unlike state officials, they do not claim taxes, issue fines, or receive a salary; they are not armed; and they do not want to be registered as committee members, since this would make them part of state law, as they see it.

The committees have carved out a space for themselves as an important authority in the marketplace and have been entrusted the role as the mediator in conflicts that arise in the market. Paradoxically, they contribute to maintaining the municipality as an important actor by recognizing its right to tax the traders. They realize their own limitations and emphasize the idea(l) of the state as a neutral arbiter that stands above the clan-lineages that they represent. At the same time, they characterize the state as having a certain 'weight'. If people perceive the committee members as a part of the state, they risk that this 'weight' makes them objects of suspicion and jealousy and deprives them of the moral righteousness that the committees enjoy as 'elders among traders'. In addition, due to the current situation of war between the state and HMS, they risk harassment and assassination by being associated with the state. Hence, the dissociation from the state is one of several tactics to uphold a space of negotiation between the SFG and HMS.

It is interesting to observe how the traders work to set the state off from society and sharpen the boundary between them, while in the 'anthropology of the state' literature, state institutions and employees are credited with this kind of boundary work (Hansen and Stepputat 2001).

The traders' relation to the state and the municipality, as its local instantiation, is ambiguous. As the traders' account of the history of the market committees suggests, they emerged in response to the collapse of the local and central state institutions and the deteriorated security situation in the 1990s. This experience of war and the absence of functional state institutions seems to have emphasised the idea of the state as a positive expression of authority, despite the occasional brutal forms of domination that traders see unleashed in the name of the state.

Understood as an analogy, the famous expression 'the King is dead, long live the King', even though the state collapsed in the 1990s, still lives and structures people's lives in Mogadishu. In this paper I have shown the different ways in which it produces and reproduces itself, through different types of ghosts – ideals of the state based on previous experiences of it, on wartime memories and stories, as well as on

the daily threat of HMS - which all contribute to producing the conditions that make the state acceptable, even desirable. If, in practice, the government and its different bodies exists as one public authority among others, it is the one that benefits from the state idea.

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END NOTES

- ¹ All informants, as per their request, have been anonymized and given pseudonyms.
- ² Unless, of course, that person is exempted from the duty of fasting by illness, pregnancy or for some other reason.
- ³ The aspiration for the return of the state he describes, that is associated with a return to normality, is similar to Hibou's (2017) account of desire for state in Tunisia. Furthermore, Navaro-Yashin explores how people in the Turkish Republic of Cyprus associate irony and humiliation with lack of recognition of state but, paradoxically, value and seek jobs in the civil service (Navaro-Yashin 2006).
- ⁴ Interview 17.07.2017
- ⁵ *Beenbeenatey* means 'something false' or 'lies' but it is also the name of a game, usually played with kids, of pretending something is true that isn't for the sake of diversion or entertainment. In this case, the transitional government is described as something false, a diversion, pretending to be something it isn't.
- ⁶ Interview 19.07.2016
- ⁷ *Beel* means 'community' a word that refers to an immediate sub-clan 'community' which has more positive connotations than *qabiil*.
- ⁸ Interview 30.10.2016
- ⁹ Interview 29.10.2016
- ¹⁰ Lewis uses 'clan family' for a kind of macro-clan or supra-clan, like Darood or Hawiye. And Schlee (2002) describes how alliances in Mogadishu in 1990 were at the level within these macro-clans, e.g. sub-clan-level (see Schlee 2002). I use the term clan-family here in the way my informants used it. My informants rarely named the clans they were talking about but used 'clan' as a generic term that qualifies the opposite warring clan entity irrespective of the level of genealogical aggregation. I translate clan family as the immediate clan community (it can thus overlap with the supra-clan level as is often the case when informants talk about the 1990s, or with the sub-clan level for localized/regionalized fighting).
- ¹¹ Interview 17.07.2016
- ¹² Interview 19.07.2016
- ¹³ Interview 23.07.2016
- ¹⁴ The informant quoted this in Arabic, in reference to the second verse of the fifth Sura of the Qur'an.
- ¹⁵ Interview 23.07.2016
- ¹⁶ Interview 20.07.2016
- ¹⁷ Interview 19.07.2017
- ¹⁸ Interview 17.07.2016
- ¹⁹ Interview 12.11.2016
- ²⁰ Interview 17.07.2017
- ²¹ 11,000 SoSh corresponds to approximately 50 US cents at time of research.
- ²² Interview 30.07.2015
- ²³ Interview 17.07.2016
- ²⁴ *ayaga aa awood u leh*: *awood* means 'power' in the sense of ability or capacity to do something.
- ²⁵ I translate *walaaltinimo* as 'brotherhood' but the word *walaal* includes both males and females in the same generation (compare to *waalidnimo* that means 'parenthood').

²⁶ Interview 17.07.2016

²⁷ The informant referred to 'normal law' as *sharci caadi ah*

²⁸ Interview 17.09.2016

²⁹ *Ajir/ajar* means 'blessings' or 'rewards from God'.

³⁰ Interview 17.07.2016

³¹ Interview 23.07.2016

³² She used the words *markaan is afgaranay*, literally: 'when we could speak the same language' – *a*'' being language or mouth, and *garanay* means 'understand'.

³³ Interview 07.07.2016