

# Space, Memory and the Politics of Reconstruction: Conflict-related Property Disputes in Mogadishu, Somalia



Surer Qassim Mohamed

Queens' College  
Department of Politics and International Studies  
University of Cambridge  
July 2021

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the politics of conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu, Somalia. Conflict-related property disputes are interpersonal disputes over private land and homes that are traceable to the violence that engulfed the city in 1991, and the mass displacements that occurred thereafter. An analysis of conflict-related property disputes reveals far more than simply disputes over brick and mortar. Instead, the central argument of this thesis is that claims to ownership *in* Mogadishu reflect and transform claims to ownership *of* Mogadishu, in a wider politico-historical sense. While disputes over conflict-related property disputes are fractious on their own terms, this thesis argues that these disputes also reflect wider social conflicts over the meaning of belonging and territoriality in the city through distinct historical stages. In this way, ownership and usage claims to empty plots, refurbished businesses, and reconstructed homes are reconfigured into salient political claims over the right to reside, engage, and belong in Mogadishu altogether. These disputes offer a view into the wider contested politics of belonging in contemporary Mogadishu which significantly predates the coming of urban war in 1991. Conflict-related property disputes reflect political claims to the city, and the right to shape its present and future. In the context of urban ‘reconstruction,’ conflict-related property disputes speak to the contested nature of space and memory in this deeply divided urban space.

This thesis explores how individuals engaged in conflict-related property disputes and those tasked with mediating them construct discursive claims to the city, before and after state collapse. Following an extensive desk review, data was gathered through a combination of life history and semi-structured interviews conducted in person in Nairobi, Kenya and across various communicative forms in recursive and accretive dialogue. Through this empirical material, the thesis argues that conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu become a site where divided urban communities in the aftermath of mass violence remember the past and make political claims on the present.

## **PREFACE**

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the Politics and International Studies Degree Committee.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All Praise to Allah (Subhanahu wa ta'ala) the Almighty, the Greatest and Most Worthy of Praise.

I owe a great deal more in thanks than I could ever possibly provide. I begin my thanks to the interviewees for this project. I am deeply indebted to all of you for your honesty and trust. My deepest gratitude is to those who did not live to see this project completed. May Allah raise your ranks in Paradise and widen your graves, Allahuma Ameen.

I could not have asked for a better supervisor than Dr. Adam Branch to embark upon this journey with me. I'm indebted to you for your guidance, your thoughtful and enthusiastic support, as well as your wise mentorship. Special thanks to my advisor, Dr. Devon Curtis, who extended a great amount of valuable insight and helpful contributions throughout this process.

I cannot begin to express my gratitude for my family. My mother, Shukri Aden Camey, served as research assistant, generous thinker, and counsel. I name you first not (just) because you asked, but because of the enormous role that you played in this project. My father, Qassim Mohamed Abdi, whose advice and constant encouragement inspired me to aspire to the Ph.D. in the first place. My sister and lifelong confidante, Saredo Qassim Mohamed, without whose encouragement and timely reminders this dissertation would only be thoughts in my head. Thank you all.

Special thanks to my Cambridge family, including (but certainly not limited to) Dr. Maimuna Mohamud, Dr. Njoki Wamai, Dr. Matthew Mahmoudi, Alice Musabende, Rumbidzai Dube, Niyousha Bastani, Sahil Shah, Georgia Appiah Frimpong, Adut Ayik, and everyone in the reading groups, writing groups, and friend groups I've been enjoyed during my time here.

My heart belongs to the scholars in the Somali Studies network who are seeking to disrupt, reorganize, and reimagine knowledge about the Somali people. You have made an intellectual home for me, and I'm grateful to know you all.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the generous support of the David and Elaine Potter Foundation, the Cambridge Trust, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am grateful for your investment in this project and in the fruits to come.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2013, Suuban (Interview, 2019 and 2020) placed down a prayer mat in Mogadishu and made *salah* in her newly reclaimed home. She had not seen the house in over two decades but knew from the state of the building that others had lived there in her absence. She recalls that she made *du'a* (supplications) for the nameless stream of people who had made home in her home for those intervening years. Although she did not know who they were or where they went, whether their stays in the home were transient or lengthy, or whether they even called the house their ‘home,’ the residue of their presence was now inscribed onto the house itself. Over the course of two decades of urban conflict, the main remnant of the old home was the distinctive tile flooring of black concentric circles on a cream-white background. That flooring was what she remembered from the home before the war, and its presence was in equal measure familiar and off-putting. Almost everything else – both inside and outside of the home – had changed beyond recognition.

Suuban’s experience is by no means unique. This dissertation traces an evolving axis of contentious politics in the Somali capital city of Mogadishu. It examines conflict-related property disputes, that is, disputes over the private ownership and use of property in Mogadishu that directly stem from the city’s urban war. Whereas ownership and access to property were tightly circumscribed in the colonial and post-colonial city, the urban war reorganized the landscape of ownership as former residents went into exile, others occupied the formerly used buildings and plots of land, and the coercive force of the state collapsed. During the war, newcomers to the city and new occupiers of abandoned or evicted lands created *new* emplacements in those spaces, materially transforming existing structures, renaming areas, and creating alternative genealogies of land ownership and use. These new formations of ownership were then contested with the “return” of pre-war urban denizens in the city, sparking contestations over ownership, space, memory and legacies of violence in the capital. Mogadishu’s contemporary “building boom,” where land speculation and a rush for property has led to hopes of urban post-conflict “reconstruction,” is riven through with these contestations.

This dissertation’s examination of conflict-related property disputes opens the opportunity to explore three core themes in Mogadishu’s historical and contemporary political landscape: the legacies of violence in the city, contested memory, and contested belonging in space. Taken together, this thesis argues that conflict-related property disputes are a site of *intimate territoriality*. Intimate territoriality is a political process of claims-making in the city that locates claims to

specific parcels of land (homes, lots, businesses) by reference to, and as a refraction of, wider claims of social belonging to the city or nation. The claims are intertwined – claims to belong in the city *reflect and transform* claims to particular plots of land and buildings, and vice versa. In this way, the micropolitics of the house, the street, and the stall become suffused with the complicated politics of belonging, memory, and legacies of urban violence. In Mogadishu, I argue, conflict-related property disputes are far more than “simple” contestations over the use and occupation of particular buildings. They are, instead, a window into how claims to belong, socially and spatially, are concretized in a conflicted city.

It is important here to make clear what kinds of disputes this dissertation does not examine under the remit of conflict-related property disputes. First, conflict-related property disputes are about *private* land and properties, or those lands and properties that were privately owned or demarcated for private use before the coming of the war. One of the significant consequences of state collapse was the rapid privatization of formerly public land in the capital, with these plots of land and former government buildings coming into new use. This is an important context for this dissertation but is outside the scope of the narrower definition of conflict-related property disputes under consideration here. Second, for the purposes of this dissertation, conflict-related property disputes are also not about intra-family property disputes or inheritance issues (*dhaxal*), even in the contexts where these disputes were informed by or significantly impacted by conflict. These quarrels offer limited insight into the nature and legacies of political violence in the capital and thus are excluded from examination. Therefore, this dissertation defines conflict-related property disputes as private property disputes that are not located in contested inheritance and that are directly related to the city’s urban war. It’s important, here, to briefly touch upon the themes that make up intimate territoriality in conflict-related property disputes and will continue to be the basis of the tensions in this dissertation.

### *Legacies of violence in the city*

Old cities like Mogadishu are ‘accretions with layers that survive from their past, cultural if not physical’ (Freund, 2006, p.69). Here, moments of transformation present greater or lesser ‘degrees of change’ (Freund, 2006, p.1) which interact in complex, and sometimes unexpected, ways with the layers of accretions that came before. This means that legacies of violence and dispossession in the city also live on, and as they form part of the physical and cultural accretions that endure.

Major transformations in Mogadishu's history – colonialism (1908-1960), autocracy (1969-1991) and mass violence in the civil war (1991-2012) – have left marks on the city that endure into the present, with important political consequences.

This dissertation unveils the ways in which Mogadishu has long been a site of violence and plunder – patterns that are refracted across the colonial, post-colonial, military, and conflict eras. This dissertation explores the multiple kinds of transformative violence that marked the shape and possibilities of ownership in the city, up to and including the war. Under the auspices of colonial transformations (Chapter 1), post-independence “modernizations” (Chapter 2), and urbicide through war (Chapter 3), this dissertation traces the ways that these legacies of violence organized and circumscribed the *possibilities of belonging* for urban denizens.

### *Memory and ownership*

The contested nature of conflict-related property disputes comes from the multiple different kinds of registers of ownership, occupation, and claims to belonging in contemporary Mogadishu (Chapter 4), some of which are mutually exclusive. Ownership claims derived from personal or familial occupation, sometimes from decades past, and validated by titles, documents and deeds come into friction with settlement claims justified by autochthonous discourses (Chapter 5). The *kinds* of ownership claims validated are justified through different readings of the past, different registers of ownership, and different conceptions of the city altogether.

In this way, land struggles both conjure up and confuse temporality. Land struggles make use of time, while scattering it in multiple directions. The affective power of a plot, a building, or a home is intimately intertwined with its use-value as a material object. In Nairobi, Smith (2019) makes the case that ‘residents turn to the material and social histories of their estate to find purchase on a political present and negotiate an uncertain future.’ In Mogadishu, I argue that claims to ownership (and belonging) over contemporary parcels of land *enlist* the past and future – the past is reconfigured to validate the claim, while the right to belong implicates the right to reside in and determine the city's future.

### *Belonging and space*

The central concept of this dissertation is intimate territoriality, which concerns how claims to ownership of particular material spaces are formulated through wider claims to belonging in the

contemporary city. Belonging, or put another way, the rebuffing of strangerhood, becomes a potent political force in contemporary Mogadishu. Taken together, this dissertation argues that contestations over land and property *in* Mogadishu map onto these contestations *over* Mogadishu in myriad ways. Conflict-related property disputes, therefore, become important sites through which to examine not just land ownership contests, but also the political landscape of belonging in a divided city, particularly in the context of urban “reconstruction.”

This dissertation connects and contributes to several dynamic strands of existing political scholarship including Somali Studies, contested memory and belonging, and urban conflict studies. This dissertation contributes to the field of Somali Studies, for which an accounting of land tensions in Mogadishu is an emerging site of consideration (Bakonyi, Chonka, and Stuvøy, 2019; Bakonyi, 2020; RVI, 2017). I expand considerations of land conflict in the capital through a consideration of the city’s legacy as a site of overlapping violence and contested memory.

This dissertation also contributes to the interconnected studies of memory and belonging to consider how urban identities transform and change due to processes of urbanization, globalization, and state and international politics. I situate Mogadishu’s conflict-related property disputes within this scholarship by demonstrating how the contestations significantly exceed the material concerns of the buildings and land, and are claims on the rights of belonging and governance in the reconstructing city. I relate this to urban conflict studies and studies of post-conflict urban reconstruction, which are critical emerging spheres of scholarship at the boundaries of peace and conflict studies, political geography, and architecture. As has been noted in studies of Sarajevo (Bădescu, 2015, 2017; Ristic, 2018; Bollens, 2001; Stefansson, 2007), Beirut (Fregonese, 2019; Sawalha, 2010; Naeff, 2014; Schmid, 2006) and other divided societies, urban post-conflict reconstruction in divided cities is a way to contest diverging understandings of the nature of the conflict, but also the state and society that preceded mass violence. Through this contribution, I hope to make new and important trans-continental connections.

## **Methodology**

This research project asks, ‘how do conflict-related property disputes reflect the contested politics of memory and belonging in contemporary Mogadishu?’ The first phase of data collection for this study began with desk research in order to trace the politics of belonging through land and property ownership in Mogadishu across the colonial, post-independence, and civil war periods. I conducted

desk research on the nature of Italian colonialism in Mogadishu and investigated the available scholarly literature on Somali statehood and post-civil war politics. I placed a particular emphasis on piecing together the legal structure of land and property ownership in the city from 1960-1991. I mobilized personal networks to gain access to unpublished primary documents that texture my understanding of the history of the city. This includes colonial- and independence- era planning maps of Mogadishu that were used in order to determine the shape and function of the city, as well as the *Bulletino Ufficiale/ Faafinta Rasmiga Ah* (official bulletins of Somalia) which registered land ownership across Somalia.

The second phase of data collection involved interviews conducted on a 5-month fieldwork trip to Nairobi, Kenya in 2019, a city that is home to a large Somali community and that serves as a key hub through a regular coming-and-going with Mogadishu and with the broader diaspora. I note the circularity and iterative nature of these discussions, as interviews were approached and revisited through different routes, and conversations were spread across multiple time frames and means of contact. I conducted semi-structured life history interviews with 16 individuals involved in ongoing conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu. Interviewees sometimes provided documents of their legal ownership and court cases, where applicable. With a life history interview, researchers can ‘examine the impact of political and social change on people’s lives’ (Bold, 2013, p.98) by asking participants to recount their experiences. As a method, life history research places a primacy on narratives that situate events in wider context, or ‘experience-centred narratives’ (Bold, 2013), rather than narratives that are focused on a single event. This way, researchers can understand how participants situate their contemporary lives in the light of their personal histories and in the context of the communities that they understand themselves to represent (Murray, 2018, p.267). Here, the individual participant is not subsumed by the collective, nor is any individual made to stand in for the communities of which they are a part. Instead, I studied the productive tension between individual narratives and collective discourses, as ‘narrative identities should not be understood as free fictions’ but rather as ‘the product of an interaction between cultural discourses which frame and provide structure for the narrative, and the material circumstances and experiences of each individual’ (Elliot, 2005, p.125).

I also conducted a further 17 semi-structured interviews with expert informants involved with the mediation of such disputes (such as attorneys, notaries, politicians on relevant committees, and clan community elders). I drew from personal and professional connections in Mogadishu

that have facilitated my fieldwork including numerous Members of Parliament, the Office of the President, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministries of Justice and Planning, the Mayor of Mogadishu and the relevant land dispute subcommittees, as well as many lawyers, notaries, and other individuals working in this space. Some of the consulted government officials are no longer in office at the time of this writing. I have spent a lot of time in Mogadishu during the course of my life, and my experience and personal knowledge of the city forms a crucial background to the project. In-person interviews were conducted in Nairobi, with some follow-up conversations via WhatsApp and other digital platforms. I am greatly indebted to my interviewees for making themselves available to phone calls, meetings, and follow-up conversations spaced over several sessions, and with a great degree of recursiveness. The willingness of interviewees to re-tread on worn conversational ground across multiple platforms has made possible a series of lengthy, cumulative, dialogues.

As a young Somali woman researcher, questions of ethics and reflexivity are inextricably bound. As neither “insider” nor “outsider,” I negotiated many specific hurdles when approaching the “field.” Elsewhere, I called my relationship to the “field” ‘situated research’ (Mohamed, 2020) as several salient characteristics defined how interviewees responded to me, which interviewees chose to emphasize or de-emphasize at their own choosing. These included my diaspora status and foreign passport, perceptions of my Somali language ability, my clan background, my education level, my womanhood, my youth, the manner of introduction (whether through first-hand or more extended networks), my manner of dress and attitude, apprehensions about the political sensitivity of my project, concerns about how or what I would publish, concerns about what I would ignore in my analysis, and so on. The fact that many of the interviewees are speaking about ongoing disputes, in which the personal stakes are extremely high and some of which may even involve the possibility of conflict or violence, has also led me to practice extreme caution in presentation of sources. In order to navigate these concerns, I set a number of ground rules: first, I have chosen *not* to publish any real names, identifying details, or neighborhoods of those who spoke to me. I have also left the dates vague to further anonymize the sources. All of the names in this dissertation are pseudonyms, in order to preserve the trust of those who chose to speak with me. I have omitted all possibly identifying details from their cases or accounts. I did not record my interviews, instead taking notes and offering interviewees the opportunity to give consent orally, as opposed to signing a document (which for many, created an atmosphere of distrust). All interviewees chose to consent

orally. I navigated these pitfalls with the help of friends, family, and elder scholars who advised me about how to manage these relationships in ways that allowed for mutuality and communication. I was surprised at the number of participants who mentioned that their participation in this project was ‘*waajib*,’ or obligatory, for them. I suspect that I was afforded a similar generosity as scholar Cawo Abdi (2015, p.23) who writes, ‘this perception that I am an ally, bound to Somalia and Somalis by birth, gave the research participants certain comfort in expressing themselves more freely than may have been the case with non-Somali researchers.’ Many interviewees noted things that “non-Somalis get wrong” about Somali politics, others went as far as to ensure that I noted particular processes and brought them to light. I endeavor to do so in this dissertation. However, the navigation of ethical concerns does not end in the field. In Somali Studies, the mode of data analysis, itself, can be an important site of ethical practice. I elaborate on this point further below.

### *Confronting clan: theoretical departures and the ethics of analysis*

Theorizing Somali politics is a fraught endeavor. This dissertation critiques strands of Somali Studies scholarship and policy research that treat clan identity as the central, overriding condition of Somali social and political formations. This tendency links back to the anthropological investigations of I.M. Lewis (1988) which characterized Somali sociality defined by agnation, or a segmentary lineage system, ordered primarily through clan. It has been taken up as a totalizing argument that makes claims not just about Somali pre-colonial social order but *also* has been engaged to offer some degree of explanatory value for the contemporary political landscape. As Lewis (1998, p.101) writes, this is because ‘the lineage system provides inherently oppositional and confrontational basic identities that are mobilized when competition and conflict develop’ whether the conflict is over ‘material resources, power, personal security, and reputation.’ While Lewis does allow for some degree of fluidity in how political identification is mobilized, particularly where it concerns the jostling of sub-clans when a unifying external threat is conquered, the analytical frame itself is one where clan is the *essential* feature of Somali social and political identity. There have been important critiques of this paradigm from Somali Studies scholars (see: A.I. Samatar, 1992; Gaas 2018; Besteman, 1998; Kapteijns, 2004) and indeed, this constitutes one of the paradigmatic fractures within the Somali Studies field. The #CadaanStudies movement (Aidid, 2015), and the community of Somali scholars that emerged from this



mobilization to reorder academic knowledge production about and through Somali frames, are deeply invested in rewriting these analytical approaches to Somali sociality.

However, the way one addresses the contentious and complicated issue of clan identity in relation to Somali communities has much farther-reaching implications than simply positioning an argument in an academic debate. This friction is closer to an epistemological question than an empirical one. Here, a scholar's approach represents a *political* orientation that forecloses or compels particular analytical possibilities. If clan is the center around which analysis of Somali populations must follow, this has important consequences for the subsequent analysis of statecraft, of other forms of inequality, of coloniality, of countervailing shifts in international structure. Clan, here, becomes its own reductive teleology. In this dissertation, following the work of pioneering scholars of Somali communities and across the African continent, I embark on a kind of political refusal to subsume all political analysis underneath clan. Critically, this dissertation does not seek to diminish the importance of clan as a social identity and political force in Somali life-worlds. In birth, in marriage, when ill and when in need of assistance, clan networks can become ways through which social obligations and community care are managed in the Somali territories and in the diaspora. Instead, this dissertation takes a critical approach to politicized, conflict-produced clan discourses. This dissertation assumes that these discourses are neither primordial nor all-encompassing and resists the anachronistic application of contemporary clan fissures back into all Somali time.

This political orientation has material consequences for this dissertation, both in form and analysis. I partially follow the example of Cawo Abdi (2015, p.24), who writes in *Elusive Jannah* that 'unlike most books written by non-Somalis, and in some cases by Somalis, there is no section that outlines the Somali clan structure.' Abdi does this for personal and analytical reasons. Personally, Abdi (2015, p.24) founded her decision to not elaborate Somali clan structure upon the fact that she 'grew up in an era when asking others their clan was frowned on.' However, Abdi also bases her refusal on 'the nonrelevance of clan as a topic of discussion in my own interactions with Somalis in all the settings covered in this project.' It is for this latter reason that I can only *partially* follow Abdi's example. Clan and its meanings are important to the political formations, contested memories, and issues of belonging raised in this dissertation. So, I must name clan. But how?

The work of Lidwien Kapteijns (2013a) suggests a way through this challenge. Kapteijns (2013a) offers a poignant reminder that there are important ethical concerns in how one approaches identity constructs, particularly when those constructs are implicated in political violence. Indeed, there is a very real possibility that scholarly analysis can become enjoined in the fray, emphasizing particular narratives, discarding others, and ‘couching plain old hate-narratives in the latest theoretical jargon’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.74). Moreover, this sort of analysis can collapse the actions of those who act *in the name of clans* with entire clan families themselves, ‘treating it as an unproblematic, “natural” category, and attributing agency to it as if it were a single body of a machine operating automatically’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.73). Kapteijns (2013a) helps to disrupt this process of scholarly reification through a useful typographical intervention. Kapteijns (2013a) stylizes the word “*the*” in front of the names of clans when describing arguments that ascribe intentions, actions, and political responsibility to all members of the group. This intervention visually and analytically disrupts attempts to totalize members of clan communities and will be employed throughout this dissertation when necessary.

This reification of clan, where large populations are condemned or commended for the actions of those who purport to lead in the name of the clan, is remarkably common in academic scholarship and in policy documents. This kind of writing causes analytical and political confusion, to be sure. But it has the even more troubling consequence of buttressing the very discourses that are used to mobilize violence against Somali peoples. This posture is also analytically troublesome. When conjuring these clan classifications in the present day, we run the risk of ignoring *where* and *how* clan identity surfaces in social life and politics, and how that has changed over time. The emphasis on the headstrong nomad as the mythic Somali figure can obscure how Somalis have *always* negotiated the meaning of clan and its salience in the context of the state (where it existed), in the context of trade (where it was done), and in the context of violence (where it erupted). This is also important because this dissertation centers on Somali urbanity, which does not fit neatly atop historical and contemporary accounts of Somali pastoralism. Where pastoralist social structures are understood to be decentralized, Mogadishu’s urban form has long included hierarchical and exclusionary structures of belonging. Scholars run the risk of both overemphasizing and underemphasizing the salience of clan - overemphasizing it to the exclusion of all other social, historical and contextual factors; and underemphasizing how clan can be a

malleable, potent tool of social connection. With this established, I will now outline the argument of the dissertation.

### **Space, memory, and the politics of reconstruction**

The following dissertation is made up of two substantive moves that build toward a single argument. I argue that claims to ownership *in* Mogadishu map on to claims of ownership *of* Mogadishu and its political possibilities. This dissertation begins with a **Theoretical Framework**, where I define intimate territoriality as the bounding of exclusive claims to the use of land and properties suffused with wider contentions of belonging in the city after war. The rest of the dissertation is made up of two sections: a mapping of the political histories of belonging in Mogadishu (1908-2012) followed by a thematic examination of conflict-related property disputes through the prisms of public authority, contested memory, and the politics of urban reconstruction. Throughout the whole dissertation, I refer back to the concept of ‘intimate territoriality’ as the political process of urban claims-making that validates *specific* ownership claims – for example, of homes and lots – by reference to claims of *wider* social belonging – to the city, or to the nation – in contemporary Mogadishu.

#### *The Political Histories of Belonging in Mogadishu (1908-2012)*

In the first series of chapters of the dissertation, I trace a political history of belonging in Mogadishu, from the colonial era to the present. I consider how Mogadishu’s spatial history through three periods – the colonial period, the post-independence period, and the civil war – reorganized the possibilities of belonging in the city, enacting distinct kinds of violence to police these boundaries. I argue that the issue of belonging in Mogadishu has been a site of contention in the city since at least the colonial era. I do this through three successive chapters.

**Chapter 1**, Colonial Transformations of Mogadishu (1908-1941), traces significant transformations in colonial Mogadishu, which I argue led to the centralization of power in the city and the shifting of the city's morphology to suit colonial ends. Through this, I find that colonial Mogadishu was a site of constricted belonging for Mogadishu’s Somali urban denizens, which was marked through practices of segregation, town planning exercises and eviction, and the impact of coloniality on Somali social structures. These transformations shifted the urban space into one

legible through colonial frames and have had enduring effects in the mnemonic contestations over the contemporary city.

**Chapter 2**, Post-colonial Modernities in Mogadishu (1941-1991), examines the series of political and urban transformations that occurred immediately before independence, during Somalia's brief democratic interlude, and the history of military rule. The chapter traces shifting grammars of nationalism and modernity. It does so to examine important and interrelated features of the post-colonial city, including urbanization, land registration and formalization, and the centralization of power and wealth in Mogadishu. I argue that while Mogadishu became home for many from across all Somali backgrounds, this "cosmopolitanism" was undermined by deep inequality and access to land and title in the capital was restricted to closed bureaucratic networks.

**Chapter 3**, Violent Line(age)s charts the urban civil war (1991-2012) through the analytical prism of 'urbicide,' or the killing of the city. I argue that the civil war ruptured and reproduced relations of belonging and ownership practices in Mogadishu. I find that the meaning of urban belonging substantively shifted through the propagation of urban political violence from a general nationalist utopic cosmopolitanism (underwritten with contradictions) to a metric of belonging that was explicitly and exclusively written through clan.

#### *The Lifeworlds of Conflict-Related Property Disputes (2012-2019)*

The second half of the dissertation considers conflict-related property disputes directly and considers how the political histories outlined above are made material through disputes over properties and land. The overarching argument here, linking both sections, is that disputes over property can be seen to be one way in which different conceptions of Mogadishu's past are made salient. They are a site in which different understandings of the question of belonging are made to conflict one another.

**Chapter 4**, Dispute Pathways and Public Authority in Mogadishu, explains conflict-related property disputes from an empirical standpoint and traces the "dispute pathways" or multiple kinds of engagements that individuals chart in order to make claims to parts of the city. Through an analysis of public authority, I demonstrate that conflict-related property disputes are subject to a multivalent political landscape and respond to many centers of authority in Mogadishu – in some cases producing and legitimating authority wholesale. These many legitimating authorities (the

Courts, “verification” actors, customary authorities, Al Shabaab) contest and buttress one another for public authority, creating a complex political landscape of property disputes.

**Chapter 5**, New and Old Mogadishans, traces the wider politico-historical narratives that govern belonging in the city. This chapter analyses different kinds of claims-making from the city that emerge from understandings of conflict-related property disputes. I utilize interview data to trace these contesting belongings to the city. It specifically thinks through two mutually exclusive claims to the city articulated through conflict-related property disputes: a “cosmopolitan claim” often forwarded by pre-war urban denizens and an “autochthonous claim” made by those who claim a belonging through birthright in the city.

Finally, **Chapter 6**, Urban Reconstruction in an Uncertain City, considers conflict-related property disputes in the context of ‘post-conflict urban reconstruction’ underway in the city. This chapter critically evaluates the contemporary ‘building boom’ in the capital as a site of multiple, contradictory kinds of political inscriptions occurring through the city’s built environment. In this context of ‘urban reconstruction,’ conflict-related property disputes figure as sites of transition and ways of negotiating what kinds of urban futures are possible.

In the end, this dissertation examines conflict-related property disputes as a way of engaging wider questions about the claims to belonging, contested memory, and the afterlives of violence on space in a contested city.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – INTIMATE TERRITORIALITY AND BELONGING IN MOGADISHU

Who belongs in Mogadishu? On what grounds? The central argument of this thesis is that conflict-related property disputes reveal the ways in which claims to ownership *in* Mogadishu reflect claims to ownership *over* Mogadishu in a larger politico-historical sense. While conflict-related property disputes are fractious on their own terms, this thesis argues that these disputes also reflect and transform wider social conflicts over the meaning of belonging and territoriality in the city throughout distinct historical stages. In this way, ownership and usage claims to empty lots, refurbished businesses, and reconstructed homes are reconfigured into salient political claims over the right to reside, use, and belong in Mogadishu altogether. I argue that these disputes offer a view into the wider contested politics of belonging, which reflects the afterlives of the Somali civil war in the capital, but also the deeply contested politics that significantly predate the coming of war. This dissertation's central argument is that conflict-related property disputes reflect and transform *political* claims to the city and the right to shape its present and future. In the contemporary context of urban reconstruction, conflict-related property disputes speak to the contested nature of space and memory in this deeply divided city. To trace the relationship between claims to ownership and claims to wider political belonging, I theorize conflict-related property disputes as sites of *intimate territoriality*.

I define intimate territoriality as the political process of urban claims-making that validates specific ownership claims (for example, of homes and lots) by reference to claims of wider social belonging (to the city). By ordering claims in this way, the politics of intimate territoriality is one of competing urban boundaries and discursive exclusions, rendered in space and legitimated through historical narrative. In Mogadishu, intimate territoriality comes into being through the bounding of exclusive claims to the use of land and properties when suffused with wider contentions of belonging in the city after war. Through these claims to belonging in the city, particular parcels of land become imbricated in the wider contested nature of the city after war and the politics of urban reconstruction that characterize it. And in the purposeful elision of competing claims, intimate territoriality is often also registered as a deeply potent political force in the context of urban “reconstructions” and state reconstruction. These are affective, embodied registers that make up the ‘urban imaginaries’ (Huyssen, 2008) of those who make lives in the city, which is why I call them “intimate.” I am tracing, here, the production of a politics of conflicted belonging

that suffuses material objects (buildings and land) with political and social meaning that reifies existing contests over space and history. In a simplified sense, it is the reading of conflict into the brick and mortar of the disputed home.

I developed the language of intimate territoriality through the consideration of two interlinked concepts: belonging and urban territoriality. I trace intimate territoriality as constitutive of three distinct elements: the contested politics of belonging, divided conceptions of urban use and ownership, and the politics of making claims on the city in the context of violence.

### **Making sense of belonging**

Much like the phenomenon it describes, ‘belonging’ is an untidy analytical concept. It is used to describe individual attachments to places (Antonsich, 2010), social structures, and political identities (Whitehouse, 2012). It can be scaled to describe the contested belongings of entire groups in wider political orders (Yuval-Davis, 2011), but it is also used to refer to questions of affective attachment (Probyn, 1996) and spatial order (Newman and Paasi, 1998). What belonging is, however, is less important for our purposes than what it does. For David (2020, p. 4), belonging ‘proclaims our existence beyond our corporal borders and subjective experiences’ it is the means by which ‘we conceive of our existence as social beings... it is the device that enables our sociability: the interaction between our subjectivity and the intersubjectivity that surrounds us.’ Belonging is the means by which individuals make sense of social structures, as well as the manner in which society attaches (or not) to people. This section will consider three ideas in sequence: first, considering belonging and its politics; second, introducing the specter of the ‘stranger’ and the politics of trespass; and finally, situating belonging in space and time in the context of urban violence.

David (2020, p.4) disentangles belonging into two discrete elements; it ‘is about *being* part of something and about *longing* to be part of something.’ The *longing* of belonging demonstrates its necessary ambiguity, as it ‘discloses a restlessness, or persistent motion, inherent to human existence that is captured between belonging that is and belonging that is wished, or imagined, or ought to be’ (David, 2020, p. 4). This imperfect and ambiguous element of belonging suggests belonging is an unfinished process. This anxious quality of belonging, in turn, generates the prescriptive politics of belonging and its rigid boundaries in need of maintenance or transgression. It is through this twin process (being and longing) that belonging can mean ‘a personal, intimate,

feeling of being “at home” in a place (place-belongingness)’ *and* encompass ‘a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)’ (Antonsich, 2010, p.645). This twinning is observed across the academic literature. David (2020) calls this the being-longing dialectic, Antonsich (2010) distinguishes between place-belongingness and the politics of belonging, Anthias (2006) separates informal and formal experiences of belonging, and Yuval-Davis (2011, p.10) differentiates between belonging (affective attachment) and the politics of belonging (the construction and bounding of collectivities). In all of these conceptualizations belonging is made through the affective attachments that individuals make to places and communities. Belonging is about ‘feeling at home’ where home ‘stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment’ (Antonsich, 2010, p.646). On the other hand, the politics of belonging is about the construction and formalization of ‘semantic borderlines between *us* and *them*’ (David, 2020, p.4).

Intimate territoriality traces how the physical home, the empty lot, and other private spaces across Mogadishu became the site of the ‘dirty work of boundary maintenance’ (Crowley, 1999, p.30) in the aftermath of mass violence. Through intimate territoriality, I consider how these new boundaries and existing orders from before and during war traverse and take up the material city, and how these ambivalent boundaries are subject to change as ‘boundaries can be more or less permeable and different people can find themselves on different sides of these boundaries’ (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran and Vieten, 2006, p.8). In order to understand how intimate territoriality functions in Mogadishu, it is critical to interrogate the politics of trespass.

### *The politics of trespass*

Belonging is often defined against its inverse – trespass. For Crowley (1999, p.17), ‘not to belong is to be constantly vulnerable to the accusation of trespass,’ particularly where the accusation of trespass itself is socially meaningful. Indeed ‘the natural counterpoint of informal, vague, discretionary criteria for access is differential suspicion’ where ‘some people’s right to be in a place is challenged – they are trespassers until proved otherwise – where others are *prima facie* welcome’ (Crowley, 1999, p.17). Accusations of trespass, and the political utility of claims of trespass, are critically important to our understanding of intimate territoriality. Intimate territoriality is a process of constructing claims to urban belonging in Mogadishu mediated through brick and mortar. In important ways, intimate territoriality is rendered necessary *because* of the proliferation



of accusations of trespass in the contemporary city. In other words, intimate territoriality is vital because it rebuffs alternative claims to belonging that would render oneself a stranger.

The figure of the stranger and the autochthon appear as opposing, mutually constitutive figures (Whitehouse, 2012). Whitehouse (2012, p.11) draws from Georg Simmel's definition to explain that the stranger is 'a paradoxical figure, integrally involved with a group but never attaining the status of true membership in it.' Strangers are continuously at the sharp end of the politics of belonging as they are 'simultaneously part of and excluded from society; they are not acknowledged as members but are essential to its functioning' (Whitehouse, 2012, p.11). The stranger exists in a constant state of trespass, or openness to accusations of trespass, even as they are woven into the social order in meaningful ways. This is contrasted against the figure of the autochthon, which are 'discourses of those defining themselves against strangers: autochthons, natives, of "sons of the soil"' (Whitehouse, 2012, p.13).

Claims to autochthony function as 'a kind of *ur*-belonging' (Geschiere, 2009, p. 2) as discursive appeals to being the first, and therefore legitimate, occupiers of space are underwritten by powerful mythic pasts and appeals to a natural order. Indeed, autochthony 'elevat[s] to a first-principle the ineffable interests and connections, at once material and moral, that flow from "native" rootedness, and special rights, in a *place of birth*' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001, p.635). That is to say, autochthony naturalizes claims to use and ownership, in both material and moral registers, through the claim of being "first."

The politics of autochthony is centrally concerned with the ordering of memory. As Bøås and Dunn (2013, p.17) argue, autochthony functions by 'enabling the speaker to establish a direct claim to territory by asserting that he or she is an original inhabitant, a "son of the soil."' Autochthony makes a *historical* claim, as it 'implies localist forms of belonging, referring to someone with a supposedly indisputable historical link to a particular territory' (Bøås and Dunn, 2013, p.17). And yet, it is the putative *indisputability* of the link between autochthony discourses and land that makes it a precarious claim. There is an inherent ambiguity in the figure of the autochthon as those claims can be unraveled by competing claims to being "first." This is because 'whatever the exact pattern in relation to nation and citizenship, autochthony always demands exclusion. Yet, the exact definition of who belongs and who is excluded can change dramatically and abruptly' (Geschiere, 2011, p. 323). Alternative chronologies, alternative readings of

boundaries, or alternative understandings of identity threaten to upend autochthonous discourses with dizzying speed.

What first appears to be a sorting mechanism driven by a simple appeal is revealed, in practice, to be a complicated endeavor. As Geschiere (2011, p. 323) argues, ‘the “true” autochthon tends to be constantly redefined at ever-closer range.’ Autochthony discourse, when mobilized as a politics of belonging, often engenders a ‘search for an impossible purity in a world marked by migration and mixing triggers both constant concerns about one’s own autochthony and an equally constant obsession to unmask the traitors residing in one’s native land’ (Geschiere, 2011, p. 323). For these reasons, autochthony discourse brings contests and anxieties about the past to the center of contemporary politics.

Autochthony is also, critically, about the relationship between place and territoriality. It ‘enabl[es] the speaker to establish a direct claim to territory by asserting that he or she is an original inhabitant, a “son of the soil” (Bøås and Dunn, 2013, p.17). It is a powerfully emotive claim which makes possible a ‘strong mobilizing impact’ by reference to ‘it’s apparent self-evidence’ (Geschiere, 2011, p.323). As a claim, autochthony attempts to supersede all other possible registers of claims-making as ‘how can one belong more than if one is “born from the soil?”’ (Geschiere, 2011, p.323). As such, autochthony politics serves to unmoor competing claims to space and power through the ordering of memory and space.

By this register, it is now possible to see how claims to autochthony can take place and become politically meaningful in an African city. I will investigate the politics of bordering in urban spaces in-depth in a later section, which considers urban territoriality and enclosure in the aftermath of violence. Autochthony is one *kind* of claim of belonging made salient in urban spaces. I argue it is a powerful under-riding claim in contemporary Mogadishu that seeks to supplant other ways of interacting and engaging with the city, which stems from its complicated political history. It becomes salient in the Somali territories by reference to political violence and histories of uricide. To understand this, we must move through Somali prisms of belonging.

### *Somali frames of belonging*

The classical image of precolonial Somali social order is that of the rugged pastoralist and egalitarian. Knowledge of “the Somali” from colonial anthropologists included the assertion that ‘each man [is] his own sultan’ (Walker, 1995, p.164) compelled into martial combat as warriors

(*waranle*) or religious leaders (*wadaad*). Decisions were taken under the practice of *shir*, where Somalis would congregate at length to discuss matters of the day. As Ahmed Samatar (1988, p.9) put it, ‘they have a common language, lineages which go back to a few common forefathers, share an Islamic faith, and a highly decentralized way of life that is overwhelmingly pastoral.’ This image of Somali life is most succinctly captured by Ahmed Samatar (1988, p.9) here:

[T]he Somali people are broadly divided into two categories based on their economic vocation - i.e., the partially sedentary southern communities (Saab), and the predominantly pastoral groups (Somaale) in the rest of the territory. Second, the Saab are composed of two clan-families (Digil and Raxanwayn); whereas the Somaale comprise four clan-families (Dir, Darood, Hawiye, and Issaq). Third, the clan-families break down into numerous lineage-segments that reach to even the third or fourth generation of a particular family. The classification of the Somali people into these clan-families and segments had (and still has) social functions. Traditionally, in the very different and highly decentralized pastoral settings, the lineage-segments were the mechanisms by which individuals came together to help each other. This was particularly germane in the open Somali territories where the struggle for very scarce resources - especially water and pasture - always carried with it the potential for internecine wars. The actual form this cooperation took was called the *diya* - a collective blood-paying programme.

This is an important starting point, but there are ways that this classic reading obscures characteristics about Somali sociality, then and now. Kusow (2004, p.3) calls attention to the racialized and caste-based exclusions of large communities within the Somali territories but are *not* conceptualized here as Somali, which are often placed outside of the ‘social boundaries of Somaliness.’

To contend with Somali visions of the politics of belonging, one must engage and make space for the role of clan. Beginning with I.M. Lewis’ characterization of Somali social structure as a ‘segmentary lineage system,’ there is a tradition of scholarly interpretation that sees Somali governance, social order, and belonging politics as necessarily (if not wholly) reducible to clan. Indeed, there is a strain of research which tries to trace a total genealogy of Somali clans, ordering and structuring disparate trees of descendants to make sense of mythic origin stories, clan composition, and territorial mappings (for example, Abbink, 2009). Here, the mythic image of the pastoral, ruggedly egalitarian, warring clan finds use as the archetypal structure of the Somali. While there is the notional acceptance that these clan structures were ‘mobilised situationally according to context and the machinations of local political impressarios’ (Lewis, 1998, p.102), these forms of theorizing leave little flexibility for new political mobilizations, organization, or

structures of solidarity. It is a total theorization, where even state collapse can be seen as Somalis ‘doing what they have always done – only with greater access to more lethal weapons’ (Lewis, 1998, p.101).

I.M. Lewis’ work would come to be central to academic conceptions of Somali social structures, and anthropology at large. However, the critiques of this thread of theorizing are incisive and useful. There is a regional specificity to these theorizations, as I.M. Lewis conducted his research in the northern Somali territories to the elision of southern social structures. Lewis’ fieldwork was exclusively conducted within the former British Somaliland, which was in the northern region of Somalia after independence. Other scholars critique the flattening and disregarding of national identity or other forms of social infrastructures (Besteman, 1998). But perhaps most usefully, there is the critique of the limited analytic capacity for statecraft (colonial and postcolonial) in shifting and reorganizing how clan is engaged in the Somali territories. Against these ‘primordial’ (Besteman, 1998) conceptions developed a ‘transformationalist’ (Samatar, 1992) thesis that speaks to the ways that clan was reorganized through British and Italian colonial rule and, later, through postcolonial statecraft. As Kapteijns (2013a, p.75) argues, clan was a ‘technology of power,’ mobilized by colonial rulers to mediate colonial governance, and then reorganized through postcolonial governance as a means of political organization and distribution of violence. Through the application of collective retribution *in the name of clans*, as well as the mediation of state authority through clan infrastructures, Kapteijns (2013a) argues that clan became a salient site of political conflict and was substantively *transformed* through colonial and postcolonial rule. Through this more nuanced theorization, we can see how clan transformed in meaning through time and space.

To understand what this means for the politics of belonging, we must first unpack *Somalinimo*, or Somaliness, as a concept. An excellent deconstruction of Somaliness comes from (Kusow, 1994; Kusow, 2004), who takes a critical look at constructions of Somaliness (*Somalinimo*) over space and time. *Somalinimo* is understood, here, as a frame through which the politics of belonging is enacted as ‘each dimension of the narrative constructs a social boundary of Somaliness that includes certain segments and clans and excludes others from the social boundary of Somaliness’ (Kusow, 2004, p.2).

Kusow differentiates between the nested series of exclusions that make up a sense of *Somalinimo* altogether. There are caste-based exclusions, which differentiate between ‘noble’ and

‘non-noble’ groups in Somali life, marginalizing the Yibir, Midgaan, and Tumaal communities, which ‘remain outside the social boundary of Somaliness’ (Kusow, 2004, p.3). There are racialized exclusions, mapped onto arrival narratives of Somali Bantu, mediated by the contested heritage of the Indian Ocean slave trade. And there are segmentary-based exclusions that distinguish between the mythic pasts of nomadic ancestors *within* groups understood to be Somali. As Kusow (2004, p.3) argues, these exclusions serve different functions, as ‘certain groups are explicitly and permanently placed outside this boundary,’ as in the caste-based and racialized exclusions, while ‘others are included or excluded depending on the prevailing political arrangements and power structures.’ Ultimately, Kusow works to disrupt Somaliness as a superordinate locus of identity and unveils how the idea of *Somalinimo* itself is riven through with contradictions and contestations.

By destabilizing *Somalinimo*, we can come to appreciate the contradictory tensions of belonging that exist *within* the bounded concept. One such tension is manifested between claims to belonging mediated by *u dhashay* (birthright) and *ku dhashay* (birthplace), where *u dhashey* (birthright) represents ‘the lineage narrative is conventionally seen as older and most closely represents the dominant ‘northern’ nationalist discourse in Somalia’ (Barnes, 2006, p.488) and *ku dhashey* (birthplace) ‘the territorial narrative is presented as a recent ‘southern’ perspective most evident in the aftermath of the civil war’ (Barnes, 2006, p.488). Even when abstracted from particular locations and the history of conflict, there are central contentions amongst Somali communities about which registers of belonging are legitimate – birthplace or birthright – as the appropriate manner through which belonging can be expressed.

When placed in the context of the aftermath of state collapse in 1991, this tension between *u dhashey* (birthright) and *ku dhashey* (birthplace) takes on a new valence, as space across the Somali territories was reterritorialized into political enclaves in the name of clans, but more precisely, in the name of armed groups *espousing affiliation* with particular clans. This superimposition of simultaneous lineage-based *and* territorial-based registers of belonging characterizes much of the political landscape of contemporary Somalia. As Barnes (2006, p.489) argues:

[In] the south, the focus of the instability in Somalia since 1991 the competing claims between ‘*u dhashay/ku dhashay*’ are most urgent and divisive due to the more heterogeneous history of expansion, settlement and territorial occupation. However, *the dual identification with lineage and territory is what has marked the*

*Somali-speaking areas after the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s, and the ‘u dhashay/ku dhashay’ formula has characterized the conflict ever since. [emphasis added].*

We can now bring this series of contentions to contemporary Mogadishu. On one hand, there exist the claims to autochthonic ownership of the city, articulated as *u dhashey* (birthright). Mirroring processes of territorialization in the name of clan elsewhere, Barnes (2006, p.490) argues, the history of the “*the*” Hawiye ‘Mudulood’ (or ‘Darondolla’) dominance over areas of south-central Somalia and indeed Mogadishu’ has served as the basis for ‘purported historical legitimacy for the continuing arguments over the ownership of the Mogadishu and south-central Somalia.’ Put another way, as Kapteijns (2013a, p.116) makes clear, ‘this philosophy of autochthony, a sense of entitlement based on being native to Mogadishu, would become even more politically charged in late 1990 and fuel the violence that was to take place.’ And yet, as Kapteijns argues, these series of arguments are not natural nor self-evident features of the Somali political landscape. Instead, they are the result of political machinations that long precede the civil war, extending into colonial history and post-conflict state action. And it is not, in any case, a claim pressed by every person in the relevant clan, but instead a claim pressed *in the name of* a community.

On the other hand, there are claims to belonging in the city that rebut these autochthonous claims. Chapter 5 will explore the “cosmopolitan claim” to Mogadishu, which draws from the history of heterogenous clan settlement in the city, particularly over the course of the twentieth century, and participation in the wider Mogadishian and Somali political project. These claims imagine Mogadishu in a distinctly different way than the autochthonous argument, often placing Mogadishu *outside* of the scope of the kind of territorial clan-based configurations at work in the rest of the Somali territories. What emerges from this “cosmopolitan claim” is a vision of Mogadishu as a distinct socio-political sphere, which cannot be drawn into claims to ownership.

While Barnes (2006, p.491) argues that ‘historical evidence suggests that (genealogically-reckoned) clan dominance over distinct territory has a history in Somalia that is not just an invention of colonialism and post-colonialism,’ it is important to argue that this does not necessarily imply that the ways that clan identity is invoked in contemporary contexts can be read backward through time. The calls to autochthony and counter-claims to belonging in Mogadishu are directly connected to the recent experience of political violence in the city and also attached to

different mnemonic battlegrounds. Thus, *whether* one can belong in Mogadishu is related to *how* one understands these contested registers of belonging.

Intimate territoriality is the process of enacting or contesting these contentious belongings through the use of material disputes over brick-and-mortar buildings, unused lots, or businesses. This is the central tension that this dissertation is concerned with – what registers of belonging matter in Mogadishu, and how do urban denizens make sense of this through conflict-related property disputes?

### **Owning (in) Mogadishu**

It is important, first, to appreciate that the city is more than an ancillary site of contest in this argument. The central contention of this dissertation is that through conflict-related property disputes, disputants make wider claims on Mogadishu. This begs the question, what does it mean to make a claim on *the city*? Why should the urban space be the site or the source of struggle? Here, I draw from the tradition in urban studies that centers the urban political formations of the cities in the global South (Simone, 2001; Mbembé and Nuttall, 2004; Robinson, 2005; Myers, 2011; Roy and Ong, 2011; Parnell and Robinson, 2012). While distinct in their particular sites of interest, these interventions have made critical reappraisals of urban political formations, such as urban “informality” (Roy, 2005), urban infrastructures as sites of political production (Simone, 2004a; Fredericks, 2018), and the search for liveability (Thieme, 2021). Following these scholars, I am interested in viewing the political processes in Mogadishu as more than simply derivative or degenerate forms of urbanism (Robinson, 2005). This provides generative opportunities to theorize how the city can be constituted through different configurations and offer the new ways that claims upon the city can be made.

What, then, does it mean to claim the city? Henri Lefebvre (1996, p.158) conceptualized the ‘right to the city’ which articulates a ‘transformed and renewed *right to urban life*’ centered on the urban as ‘place of encounter’ and with a ‘priority of use value.’ Lefebvre’s (1996, p.158) conceptualization is concerned with the life-worlds of ‘all those who *inhabit*’ the city against the structures of inequity that pervade urban living. As Purcell (2014, p.132) writes, this is an articulation of a ‘struggle to augment the rights of urban inhabitants against the property rights of owners.’ This argument is taken in multiple different directions by scholars, with Edward Soja (2010, p.7) taking up the right to the city to arrive at an analysis of ‘spatial justice,’ as ‘fighting for the right to the city...as a demand for greater control over how the spaces in which we live are

socially produced wherever we may be located, becomes virtually synonymous with seeking spatial justice.’ David Harvey (Harvey, 2012, p.xiii) reoriented the “right to the city” away from reformist visions back to its revolutionary potential by highlighting that the right to the city ‘rises up from the streets, out from the neighborhoods, as a cry for help and sustenance by oppressed peoples in desperate times.’ The right to the city is a critical framework to conceptualize urban claims-making, but it is by no means the only one.

The right to the city literature does not neatly transpose onto Mogadishu’s urban struggles. There are moments of useful parallel, particularly where the “right to the city” contrasts ownership and use, privileging the latter above the former. However, the superimposition of this theoretical architecture would ignore too much that is salient to Mogadishu’s context, and that enlivens the contestations over claims in the city. In my analysis, I emphasize the particularities of the legacies of violence in Mogadishu and, critically, how registers of belonging, ownership, and strategies of urban use shifted over a short period of time. I am interested in how these transformations shape how urban denizens construct and materialize their claims. Here, I am thinking about how Mogadishu is *made up* by these convergent claims, how dissonant readings of the city give the impression of different, incommensurable, Mogadishus. I follow the argument of Simone (2014, p. 27) in which cities are ‘a context for making claims, of figuring particular narratives of legitimacy that enable individual and collective groups to residents to access resources and opportunities such as land, services, participation in institutions, and other entitlements.’ A claim, therefore, is a ‘particular mod[e] of address...where residents “put themselves on the map” and seek to have particular identities and needs recognized’ (Simone, 2014, p. 27). This ‘putting [one]self on the map’ (Simone, 2014, p. 27) happens through discursive reconfiguration of the past (as memory), the present (through disputes over contested space), and anticipatory futures. As Lefebvre (1996, p.148) writes, ‘the past, the present, the possible cannot be separated.’

I argue that the city of Mogadishu is a site of struggle because of the bundled historical and political meanings accumulated there, which are made acute through its disparate history. In this way, my work dovetails with Smith (2019, p.182), who innovatively suggests we ‘think about a city as a landscape of accumulation, as a densely matted, felt place of pathways and plans, obstructions and aspirations, residues and endurances, offers possibilities for understanding urban change.’ In Mogadishu, the ‘residues and endurances’ of the past shape the ‘aspirations’ for



belonging, as well as the ‘obstructions’ that shape where belonging *can occur*. These obstructions, thought through as boundaries and territorialization, are considered below.

### *Boundaries and territorialization*

It is critical to interrogate territoriality and its intersection with the politics of belonging. This section attempts to bring together social contest (belonging) with its material contest (space and the city) through an appreciation of practices of bordering and enclosure. This section will show how the politics of intimate territoriality is not simply a discursive concern. Intimate territoriality reconfigures how understandings of belonging *shift* material space in the city. This brings belonging into a spatial process, situating contests about ‘who am I’ into the broader question of ‘where do I belong.’

Elden (2013, p.7) argues that territory is often an assumed concept in the social sciences, bereft of the kind of ‘historical, philosophical analysis that has been undertaken’ for other key concepts. The concept of territory must be ‘taken as a relatively simple and clear phenomenon’ (Delany, 2005, p.9) in order to make better sense of the central object of academic inquiry, which may be ‘political authority, cultural identity, individual autonomy, or rights’ (Delany, 2005, p.8). That is to say, the concept of territory is rendered constant in order to make it available to scholarly investigations into sovereignty and international relations, or land and conflict in Africa, or other concerns. By contrast, Elden (2013, p.17) makes the critical claim that ‘territory is not simply an object: the outcome of actions conducted toward it or some previously supposedly neutral area.’ Instead, ‘territory is itself a process, made and remade, shaped and shaping, active and reactive.’ Delany (2005) suggests there are nested series of contentious territories that operate at multiple scales – including state territories, but down smaller, intimate locations. What he calls the ‘micro-territories of everyday life’ (Delany, 2005, p.5) include the traversing of private and public property, neighborhoods, and other spheres of social organization.

Territoriality, however, is not simply about territory. As Sack (1986, p.19) suggests that territoriality is about ‘the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area.’ Edward Soja (1971, p.19) makes a similar claim when arguing that territoriality is ‘a behavioral phenomenon associated with the organization of space into spheres of influence or clearly demarcated territories which are made distinctive and considered at least partially exclusive by

their occupants or definers.’ In addition to the demarcation of space, this looks like ‘the confinement of certain activities in particular areas and the exclusion of individuals from the space of the individual or group’ (Soja, 1971, p.19).

It is critical to note that boundary-making practices, discursive and material, are the central concern of scholarly considerations of belonging *and* territoriality. Here, Crowley’s (1999, p.30) theorization of belonging as centered around the ‘dirty work of boundary maintenance’ gains concrete form. Struggles over belonging become manifested through spatial contention. As Soja (1971, p.20) argues, ‘from urban gangs and their “turfs” and the mosaic of ethnic and economic neighborhoods in the city (all involving fairly close personal contacts) to the patters of territorial regionalism and the system of nation-states into which the modern world is divided, dynamic patterns of human interaction are structured by a territorial organization of space which both expresses and helps to maintain the integrity of the group.’ This demonstrates that territorializations are imperfectly nested orders, messily and incompletely carving out spatial enclaves to materialize what we have earlier called the politics of belonging. Territorialization is, to a certain extent, the superimposition of belonging in space. In the following section, I will build an argument to show how intimate territoriality in Mogadishu cements claims to ownership of the city into disputes over property.

### *Bordering and belonging through property politics*

Perhaps one of the least discussed features of Somali state collapse is the transformation of property regimes that it engendered in the capital. At warp speed, state-controlled, bureaucratic understandings of ‘ownership’ were supplanted by new logics of settlement, use and legitimation. It is within this shift that contemporary conflict-related property disputes operate and generate meaning. In this section, I am concerned with envisioning how property disputes can be imagined, animated, and taken up for political use in Mogadishu in the aftermath of war. There is a wealth of legal and legal geographical scholarship that deals with land and property (Boone, 2003; Boone 2014; Lund and Eilenberg 2017), thinking of the emergence and consolidation of property regimes (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann, 2016), imaginations of property and its relationship to settler colonialism (Bhandar, 2018; Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2019). Apart from a theoretical conceptualization of property, this dissertation addresses what might be considered *actually existing property relations*. As Blomley (2016a) argues, ‘property scholarship of various

complexions makes strong claims concerning property's lived effects and ethical dispositions, yet spends little time documenting property's lived world.' I am interested, in this dissertation, in tracing a small corner of this lived world of property. In this way, I must draw a limit around what I mean when I say 'property.' I think of property in three ways, influenced by the social theorist Nicholas Blomley (2003; 2016a; 2016b), who insightfully theorizes property not simply as a "bundle of rights" following Enlightenment thought, but through its spatial manifestations. Here, 'land is both the site and stake of struggle' (Elden, 2013, p.9).

First, property is a social relation. Indeed, 'to have a property in land is to have a right to some use or benefit of land. Such a right is necessarily relational, being held against others' (Blomley, 2003, p.121). As Blomley (2016b, p.595) argues, 'property is not a relation between a person and land, but a relation between people, in regard to land...You can't sue an acre. Nor is a boundary dispute a dispute between you and a boundary.' Instead, property is about a nested bundle of agreements and disputes between individuals, the state, and society in regards to land use and ownership. The legal instruments and social meanings ascribed to these relations vary, but they are often centered around exclusive use (Lund, 2008, p.15). The language of trespass, used metaphorically at the beginning of this chapter to describe the figure of the stranger, acquires here a precise and material form. What both considerations have in common is the policing of bounded space and the defense of a social boundary imposed across material or symbolic space. That is to say, to trespass is to not belong. To trespass is also to not own.

Second, property is about a kind of territory. As Blomley (2016b, p.596) argues, 'property produces territory, polices its borders, frames its identities, and organizes its habits. Such territorializations, in turn, serve to materialize property in the socio-spatial world, while also obscuring many of its powerful relational effects.' To Blomley (2016b), property and territory are mutually constitutive social processes, and the territorialization of property serves three key functions. Classification, where 'territory presumptively preassigns ownership over all objects contained within it'; communicative, such that 'the person who encounters the boundary fence' needs only know 'that it does not belong to him'; and enforcement, implicating other social structures including the state (Blomley, 2016b, p.597). This is why Delany (2005) argues 'property cases reveal important aspects of how territory works in the world of experience,' as property networked into a series of micro-territories that people traverse and negotiate in everyday life.

Finally, property is performative (Blomley, 2013; Smith, 2019). The performativity of property emerges from the reconstitutions and social signals that mark how property is engendered through mundane everyday experience – the demarcation of boundaries, the social relations of invitation, and trespass. Here, ‘performances of property – like fence building – are both citational, referencing numerous other performances, and reiterative, entailing sustained forms of re-performance’ (Blomley, 2013, p.25). Smith (2019, p.81) traces these forms of property performance in the context of Nairobi, through ‘fence building, home maintenance and narrative making’ as ‘over time, these performances, which encompass people and things, ideas and actions, the official and the everyday, have developed into an identity (or claim to an identity) of “owner.”’ This articulation of property as *performance* is critical, as it opens the opportunity for multiple *kinds* of registers of property performance over the same material space. Distinct identities of “ownership” can grow from divergent narrative constructions, which sets the stage for the wider contest for belonging. Before we can move to property disputes as sites of social contest, and bring back the question of belonging, we must first consider how violence both maintains and transforms property as social relation.

### *Violence and property*

There is a way in which violence is an elemental feature of property. Blomley (2003, p.123) argues that violence ‘gives property a reason for being’ because of the central division between law and non-law, where property creates law and law implicates violence. This is encapsulated by the metaphor of the frontier, by which the expansion of law (and thus property) into heretofore ‘uncharted’ territory in settler colonialism. Violence is also inscribed into property as ‘at its core, property entails the legitimate act of expulsion, devolved to the state’ (Blomley, 2003, p.130). This kind of central feature of violence of property is essential, but not the only way in which violence and property interact. I am interested, here, in establishing what happens when property regimes are *undone* and reconfigured in the context of mass political violence. I am interested in what happens when the meaning of property and ownership is transformed through violence and reinscribed in ways illegible to these genealogies of liberal property regimes. I investigate what happens to property when the only violence is not simply the force of law.

As will be argued in the subsequent chapters, the coming of the Somali civil war transformed the meaning of urban belonging and property relations in Mogadishu in critical ways.

State collapse led not to anarchy, but new forms of social order prefixed by violence and new structural regimes that centered identity as opposed to title. This does not mean that the relationship between property and territorialization was entirely undone, however. I argue that it became attached to new forms of political and social order.

As Unruh and Williams (2013, p.3) argue, in the aftermath of mass political violence, ‘historical grievances can drive land and property rights into the fore over large areas, including urban centers, in a short period of time and for considerable numbers of people.’ This connection between historical grievance and reconfiguration of property is helpfully analyzed by Verdery’s analysis of discourses of land and property in Transylvania as *elastic*. In the aftermath of collectivization and the rush to restitution, Verdery (1994, p.1075) argues that social contests over the land make the land available to creative reimagination as ‘land that moves, stretches, evaporates – of land that acts.’ The elasticity of land is brought on by the incredible fluidity of changing circumstances, where:

people's conceptions of their world, the parameters of their long-standing survival strategies, their sense of who is friend and who enemy, the social context in which they had defined them-selves and anchored their lives all have been overthrown. Social institutions are in a process of re definition and flux, and once recognizable groupings and structural positions have lost contour (Verdery, 1994, p.1075).

In this flexible and ever-changing social atmosphere, discourses of land and property become, themselves, contingent and fluid. It becomes a nested series of struggles where ‘certain groups and persons to tie property down against others who would keep its edges flexible, uncertain, amorphous’ (Verdery, 1994, p.1075). Verdery (1994, p.1075) describes this as ‘a struggle of particularization against abstraction, of specific clods of earth against aggregate figures on paper, and of particular individuals and families, reasserting thereby their specificity against a collectivist order that had sought to efface it’ (Verdery, 1994, p.1075). Indeed, for Verdery (1994, p.1075), ‘the story of property restitution is a story of forming (or failing to form) potentially new kinds of social identities based on property and possessing.’

While in the case of Mogadishu large-scale property restitution is neither occurring nor on the horizon, I am interested in how Verdery marks out the reconfiguration of property relations *through* discursive contest, as the land and properties themselves become malleable and subject to transformation. Something akin to this is at play, particularly the ‘struggle...of specific clods of earth against aggregate figures on paper,’ which in this case can be understood as something like

the struggle between settlement and occupation (through three decades of use) and ownership (through historical use and title).

Bakonyi *et al.* (2019) trace a similar struggle with the politics of property and displaced persons in urban spaces in Mogadishu. They settle on a language of ‘propertying’ to describe ‘the practices of assembling material and immaterial relations that enact space, and their simultaneous generation of (layered) rights and obligations that guide those relations themselves’ (Bakonyi, Chonka, and Stuvøy, 2019, p.84). They argue that through Somali cities, one can see that a ‘competition for sovereignty may be executed through claims to property: land, real-estate, territory or, in some cases, people. The violence of these claims and the accompanying production of disposable lives are striking in the context of Somalia’ (Bakonyi, Chonka, and Stuvøy, 2019, p.83). While Bakonyi *et al.* are concerned with sovereignty, and I am interested in the politics of belonging, there is a strand of similarity in that through the reorganization of property regimes after state collapse, we consider mobilization of particular political visions inscribed in urban landscapes *through* property contests.

It is also important to deal specifically with property *disputes* as a site where contestations over property and its social meaning are brought into collision. As Lund (2008, p.3) argues, ‘individual and institutional contestants’ pursuit of control over land involves them, willy-nilly, in the competition over public authority – its consolidation, reconfiguration, and erosion.’ As will be argued in Chapter 4, it is not just the disputes themselves that are fluid and elastic, but also the formal and informal governance structures that arise to arbitrate them. In this way, disputes are not just negotiations between two or more interested parties about the use of a particular resource. They implicate political arrangements of governance, histories of the city, and, as will be discussed in the following section, diverging memory in the aftermath of urban political violence. It is the process of negotiating these different registers of contest through conflict-related property disputes that I call intimate territoriality.

### *Claiming home: memory, space, and urban violence*

As Unruh and Williams (2013, p.3) make clear, ‘the post-conflict reestablishment of ownership, use, and access rights is likely to be as complicated as the histories of the land in question.’ This is certainly the case in Mogadishu. I argue that in Mogadishu, property disputes are so fractious because they evoke contestations over memory, space, and belonging. This is because, as Blomley

(2003, p.122) argues, ‘in both property’s discursive and material enactments... space is powerfully present.’ This section will examine the discursive stakes in conflict through Mogadishu’s conflict-related property disputes – space and memory. I argue that the emotive ways in which property disputes are understood and discussed in the city demonstrate that it is not simply the question of the reestablishment of ownership and use, but also the critical question of how memory, space, and violence became inscribed into the urban landscape itself.

Memory is ‘a process of making sense of experience, of constructing and navigating complex temporal narratives and structures and ascribing meaning not only to the past, but to the present and future’ (Keightley, 2010, p.56). The question of historical memory in the aftermath of conflict has been widely studied across the social sciences, taking the alternate terms ‘collective memory’ and ‘social memory’ (Olick and Robbins, 1998), group ‘hate-narratives’ (Lieberman, 2006; Kapteijns, 2013a), and ‘mythico-history’ (Malkki, 1995). At its essence, collective memory ‘shapes the story that groups of people tell about themselves, linking past, present, and future in a simplified narrative’ (Bell, 2006, p.2). These narratives about the past are central to the production of collective identities, as they provide a script of ‘who we are,’ (Bell, 2006, p.5; Ray, 2006, p.140) at a level that orients individuals in their nested communities. And yet, collective memories are dynamic and mutable, replete with erasures, incongruities, and ruptures. They become manifestly political as they are ‘subject to revision, mobilization and recombination according to contemporary cultural shifts and politics’ (Ray, 2006, p.140). This is why Halberstram (2011, p.15) conceptualizes memory as ‘a disciplinary mechanism,’ as ‘it selects for what is important ... it reads a continuous narrative into one full of ruptures and contradictions, and it sets precedent for memorialization.’ In this way, memory becomes a potent political force.

The past is very rarely, if ever, reanimated for its own sake. Instead, as Hodgkin and Radstone (2003, p.1) maintain, ‘contests over the meaning of the past are also contests over the meaning of the present and over ways of taking the past forward.’ This places the meaning of the past squarely at the center of contemporary politics. Here, it is not a question of “how to interpret the past,” but also, “whose past?” These contested memories, which have become central to contemporary Somali politics, are narratives that ‘define clan identity exclusively in terms of long-standing victimization and exclusion’ (Kapteijns, 2018, p.58).

Mogadishu’s conflict-related property disputes are also contestations over space. This is apparent at both a concrete and abstract level. The concrete level is obvious – these are disputes

over brick-and-mortar buildings, over plots of land, and over the right to use and occupy these tangible materials. However, there is also a more abstract dimension at which these disputes are situated in space. Legacies of violence become inscribed in spatial fabric, as violence gives rise to ‘spatial reconfigurations’ (Schindel and Colombo, 2014, p.4) like the ‘destruction or disappearance of certain spaces but also the emergence and transformation of others.’ Moreover, in violence, ‘subjectivities, practices, and discourses involved in the production of space are modified as well’ (Schindel and Colombo, 2014, p.5). This means that identities in conflict are dialogic with space, and, as in Mogadishu, new registers of rightful territorial ‘ownership’ and belonging can be forged from violent conflict. These discourses occur in *bounded space* (von Benda-Beckmann, von Benda-Beckmann, and Wiber, 2009, p.15), where different generations of grievance are overlain atop one another in the urban fabric. Tracing these fragmented memories through a discursive history of the city becomes a meaningful way to consider how these narratives validate different understandings of belonging.

Memory and space are acutely linked in the wake of mass violence, and thus, it becomes necessary to consider them as mutually constituted. Much like a palimpsest, ‘space contains and accumulates several layers of memories proceeding from different historical times’ (Colombo and Schindel, 2014, p.4). Indeed, as Schindel and Colombo (2014, p.4) submit, ‘the ways in which subjects remember and dispute meanings about what happened’ is part and parcel of the ‘haunting effects emanating from the buildings and the practices of living and using the spaces in the aftermath of conflict.’ But space does more than just evoke memory; it is central to the *production* of identity narratives that orient individuals in their world. As Smith (2019, p.183) argues, ‘urban residues, traces and histories remain crucial to what the city can be; awkward endurances that can constrain as well as enable urban futures.’ For Schindel and Colombo (2014, p.7), ‘narratives of memory are central to the construction of imaginary geographies’ which ‘exceed the mere materiality of space.’ Violence brings about changes in the spatial landscape, and these ‘spatial reconfigurations’ (Schindel and Colombo, 2014, p.4) texture and animate contested historical memories of Somali political violence.

Significant national sites, like memorials, have served as important sites of inquiry for studies of collective memory, as researchers consider the ways in which ‘memory frictions’ can result from the collision of state-sponsored ‘official memory’ and ‘counter-memories’ (Shaw, 2007). However, ‘memory frictions’ do occur outside the realm of state-led memorialization, and



these kinds of memory practices still carry immense political consequences. In Somalia, it is the everyday ‘quotidian practices of memory’ (Ahmed, 2014, p.6) that guide political struggle. Thus, sites of personal significance, like a home caught in a conflict-related property dispute, can evoke more embodied forms of memory.

All of this comes to play in the central figure of the ‘home’ as nested in conflict-related property disputes. The figure of home functions in two ways here. As explored before, ‘home’ is a metaphor used to express belonging (hooks, 2009). The central metaphor of belonging as “being at home” is critical to the concept. Home can mean ‘a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment’ (Antonisch, 2010, p.646), contested as it is by feminist literature with underlying questions about the structures that make belonging possible (hooks 2009). Porteous and Smith (2001, p.7) argue that space is related to memory through personal hierarchy ‘my home; home neighbourhood; home city, home region, and home country’ and that centeredness of home is felt most keenly when home is lost.’ In many ways, home is the site of overlap between belonging and space as ‘the question “who am I?” cannot be isolated from the other question “where do I belong?”’ (Antonisch, 2010, p.646). These characterizations are also very relevant to the Mogadishu context.

On the other hand, what is at stake in conflict-related property disputes is the use or occupation of material homes. Much like in the former Yugoslavia, the civil war in Somalia’s capital acquired on the character of a ‘house war’ (Stefansson, 2006, p.118) wherein ‘the politics of house and home plays a central role, instrumentally as well as ideologically’ in the instigation and propagation of armed conflict in urban spaces. In this ‘ethnic politics of home’ (Stefansson, 2006, p.118), contested collective memories in Somalia come to bear on how people conceive of their intimately local spaces. As Tuan argues, ‘to be forcibly evicted from one’s home and neighborhood is to be stripped of a sheathing which in its familiarity protects the human being from the outside world’ (quoted in Porteous and Smith, 2001, 33). This shift in scale situates micro-level disputes over individual’s properties into wider conversations about post-conflict reconstruction and the meaning of the past.

Here, physical homes are sites of violent political contest in this context, bringing together all of our central concepts – belonging, ownership and territoriality – in the context of political violence. In many ways, it is not just *a* home that is at stake in these disputes. It is the ability to *create* home and political life in post-conflict Mogadishu, in a city changed by mass political

violence. This is why I refer to the process of wider claims-making through conflict-related property disputes as *intimate* territoriality. Homes become prefigured in the conflict as sites of contested belonging, bringing together the politics of territoriality and the politics of belonging. These are the contested politics that I am attempting to trace.

### **A city of many strangers? Theorizing intimate territoriality**

Intimate territoriality is about how claims to particular parcels of lands, adjoining lots, former homes and apartment buildings become suffused with the complicated politics of belonging. This happens through the affective politics of belonging, through appeals to autochthony as exclusive registers of belonging, through the material reconfiguration of the city through “urban reconstruction,” through the construction of new sites of governance through public authority, and through the invocation of highly emotive contested memory. All of these dimensions of contestation are superimposed onto conflict-related property disputes, making them far more than just contests over parts of the city. In important ways, they are contests *over* Mogadishu. It is the central argument of this thesis that conflict-related property disputes reflect and transform political claims to the city and the right to shape its present and future.

Belonging in Mogadishu has long been a contested concept, and the seeds of this contest of intimate territoriality are derived from the city’s history. The following three chapters will show that from colonial mapping and architecture, through to modernization and attempts to “rationalize” Mogadishu for a cosmopolitan elite, and urban war that reorganized belonging along strictly clan lines, the question of *who* the city was for informed its morphology and demographics for the much of the twentieth century. Depending on how these claims to belonging are mapped out, there are *multiple* ways to claim rightful belonging – as examined in Chapter 5. These articulations of “new Mogadishians” – either as strangers who usurped the city during the war or as strangers who seized the city from autochthons – derive meaning from different tracings of the city’s past. One could say that there are multiple ways of defining ‘strangerhood’ and ‘trespass’ in contemporary Mogadishu, evidenced by different registers of belonging. All of this has a bearing on how “reconstruction” in Mogadishu is understood and framed.

That these different kinds of orderings should come into conflict in this moment of urban “reconstruction” is, therefore, not surprising. In the context of urban reconstruction, conflict-related property disputes speak to the contested nature of space and memory in this deeply divided

city. More interesting, however, is the way that conflict-related property disputes can become a view into this ‘struggle of particularization against abstraction, of specific clods of earth against aggregate figures on paper, and of particular individuals and families’ (Verdery, 1994, p.1075). They are not simply economic contests, though they are that as well. Intimate territoriality is about the right to make use of, make sense of, and make home in Mogadishu in an expansive sense.

The following three chapters will trace histories of the politics of belonging in Mogadishu. It will ask how major ruptures in the city’s recent past – colonialism, military rule, and urban war – remade the meaning of belonging in Mogadishu across new lines, which were inscribed into the city’s spatial landscape. Making sense of this helps us to understand what discourses of belonging after war, made through the urban built environment, tell us about the political organization of social space in cities.

## CHAPTER 1 – COLONIAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF MOGADISHU (1908-1941)

The following three chapters trace Mogadishu's recent past through the prism of intimate territoriality, examining how histories of belonging figure in the shaping of Mogadishu over time. Through a consideration of the city's physical and demographic transformations over the course of the twentieth century, this dissertation traces how patterns of exclusion, strangerhood, and spaces of belonging were engendered and transformed over three rough periods: Italian colonial Mogadishu (1908-1941), transition, independence and military rule (1941-1991) and the coming of urban war (1991-2012). These experiences and structural transformations, this dissertation argues, will become the subject of material contestation through conflict-related property disputes in the contemporary period and sets the stage for belonging to become a site of contest in the city. Ultimately, I argue through this chapter that contestations over belonging in the city are rooted in Mogadishu's many (re)makings, and it is not surprising, therefore, that home and home-making become important battlegrounds for belonging in subsequent moments in the city's history. Put simply, belonging in Mogadishu has long been a fractious and contested enterprise.

Mogadishu was, at once, both marginal and central to the Italian colonial imaginary. On the whole, Mogadishu was a peripheral part of the Italian colonial project, particularly in comparison to other Italian colonial urban projects in Tripoli or Asmara. As Anderson (2020, p.167) makes clear, in the Italian colonial sphere, 'if Eritrea was conceived in part as both a conduit for militaristic actions and source of unprojected potential trade...Somalia was an outlier that, over time, became absorbed by a number of misdirected socioeconomic pursuits.' Mogadishu also did not shoulder the significance of becoming Italy's "Fourth Shore" as Tripoli did. But *within* the context of Italian Somaliland, Mogadishu was vital. In time, 'all of the colonial agencies were located' in Mogadishu, including customs and military, such that 'even all correspondence between military and civil authorities anywhere in the colonies had to pass through the governor's office there' (Puzo, 1972, p.62). This ambivalence, this paradox of simultaneous centrality and peripherality, marked the Italian colonial project in Mogadishu and had a concrete impact on how the city transformed under Italian rule.

A consideration of Mogadishu's past, emphasizing colonial urbanism, is a fundamental point of departure for this dissertation. According to Demissie (2012, p.6) architecture and urbanism made the empire visible and tangible as 'black mark[s] on white paper' and 'the world of drawing on paper' 'regulate[d] the daily lives, habits and desires of the indigenous people as

well as European settlers.’ Through this form of analysis, I consider how in Mogadishu, colonial mappings and town plans became concrete objects of colonial control, management, and transformation in the urban sphere. I trace, through an examination of these mapping exercises and urban transformations, the development of spaces of social and spatial segregation in the city.

This chapter traces significant transformations in colonial Mogadishu, which I argue led to the centralization of power in the city and the shifting of the city's morphology to suit colonial ends. Through this, I find that colonial Mogadishu was a site of constricted belonging for Mogadishu's Somali urban denizens, which was marked through practices of segregation, town planning exercises and eviction, and the impact of coloniality on Somali social structures. These transformations shifted the urban space into one legible through colonial frames and have had enduring effects in the mnemonic contestations over the contemporary city. This chapter proceeds in three parts: first, a background understanding of the conditions immediately predating Italian colonial rule, an exploration of Italian urban transformation in the capital by reference to the town mapping exercises, and a conclusion that considers how these transformations set the stakes for urban contestations over intimate territoriality and belonging.

### **Banaadir on the eve of the colonial encounter**

Most of what is known of Mogadishu's deep past stems from the work of travelers who documented their travels in the city, ranging from its 1228 description by Yaqut al-Hamawi as ‘the most important town on the Zanj Sea’ (Chittick, 1982, p.49) to Ibn Battuta's 1331 visit in which he meticulously documented courtly practices (Chittick, 1982, p.50-51). In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Mogadishu, connected as it was to the Indian Ocean trade network, appears in Duarte Barbosa's reflections as a sizeable and globally connected town, proffering valuables such as ivory and wax for export (Chittick, 1982, p.51). The oldest part of the town, Mogadishu's ‘stone town,’ was made up of two, and at times, separately governed halves: Xamar Weyne and Shingaani.

Over the course of centuries, however, Mogadishu's prominence began to wane. Portuguese incursion on the Swahili coast in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while not extending to Banaadir (Mogadishu and its outlying environs), changed the structure of the international trade on which the town's wealth depended (Alpers, 1983, p.442). The steady encroachment of new townsfolk from the hinterland changed the demographic constitution of the town, bringing about a ‘major transformation’ (Alpers, 1983, p.442) as well as ‘an apparent reduction in its total population’

(Alpers, 1983, p.442; Chittick, 1982, p.53). This culminated in the ascendance of “*the*” Abgaal Yaquub imams to power in Shingaani, which ‘remained in a state of constant rivalry and strife with Hamar Weyne’ (Chittick, 1982, p.53) and ‘largely in consequence of their quarrels, became less and less significant’ (Chittick, 1982, p.53). Waves of mobility and migration to the city, from the interior as well as from the Arab peninsula and Asia, have culminated in a vibrant Banaadiri coastal community called “Reer Xamar,” literally, the people of Mogadishu, which relate to Mogadishu’s long history of Indian Ocean mobility.<sup>1</sup>

Imperial encroachment from foreign shores in Mogadishu did not, however, begin with the Italians. The Omani Sultan of Zanzibar sacked the city in 1828 in response to a number of ‘insulting incidents’ (Alpers, 1983, p.445), including the imprisonment and ransom of an Omani fleet and the attempted sale of another Omani ship crew into slavery after they were stranded (Alpers, 1983, p.444). In response, the leaders of the town sued for peace and offered Seyyid Said ibn Sultan their submission, bringing Mogadishu and its adjacent regions under Zanzibari protection. The Sultan of Zanzibar appointed a Somali governor in Baraawe in 1843 (Lewis, 1988, p.38) through which he held a ‘vague and uncertain’ (Lewis, 1988, p.39) grasp over the Banaadir, especially when compared to the Somali Sultan of Geledi who was seated inland in Afgooye, who could claim more direct control.

The coming of plague and a prolonged drought complicated this political transformation. The resultant famine ‘ravaged the weakened population’ (Alpers, 1983, p.445), causing ‘considerable trauma’ (Alpers, 1983, p.446) for the town. Moreover, in what has come to be known as the Baardheere wars (1840-43), a group of religious reformers inland entered their ‘militant phase,’ aiming to end Sufi saint worship and ‘purify’ Islamic worship (Cassanelli, 1982, p.137). At its height, the reformed commanded a radius of almost a hundred miles, even reaching the shores of Baraawe, which they sacked and forced into submission in 1840 (Cassanelli, 1982, p.138). Their rebuke of the ‘impure’ elephant led these reformers to halt the critical trade of ivory in their expanding sphere of influence (Cassanelli, 1982, p.137). This severely dislocated the established interior trade routes to Mogadishu until the rebellion was put down by the Sultan of Geledi in 1843 (Alpers, 1983, p.445).

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the historical development of Mogadishu and the specific history of the Banaadiri community, see Hersi (1977); Jama (1996).

On the eve of the colonial encounter, then, Banaadir was a site of ‘political disaggregation, economic dislocation, and religious reorientation’ (Cassanelli, 1982, p.186). Ironically, it was the resolution of some of this political tumult that led to the erosion of the Geledi sultanate’s power (Cassanelli, 1982, p.189). The Geledi sultanate was established in Afgooye, a town two dozen kilometers away from Mogadishu. Power was wielded by the Geledi rulers through a patchwork network of local affiliates that pledged fealty to the Sultan. Anxieties provoked by ‘external’ threats had heretofore served to consolidate these disparate groups under an alliance guided by the Sultan, but in the absence of the Baardheere *jihad*, and with the slowing of the stream of northern nomads, the Geledi sultan’s authority began to wane. As Cassanelli (1982, p.190) argues, the Italians were initially wary of raising the ire of these groups, and thus, ‘a region-wide politico-military alliance that had persisted through much of the nineteenth century was not reactivated’ in opposition to Italian rule.

### *The coming of partition*

By the late nineteenth century, Somali-populated regions were pulled into the orbit of colonial contest. Britain, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, and Italy all laid claims to Somali-populated territories, with rivaling ambitions and differing levels of success. By the 1880s, treaties of ‘protection’ were signed by the British, French, and Italians with some Somali Sultanates, and by the close of the nineteenth century, the ‘partition’ (Lewis, 1988, p.40) of Somali-populated territories was all but complete.

It is important to note that the British, Italian, and French imperial powers had different purposes for their colonial projects in the Somali territories. The British were concerned with the protection of trade routes farther east and preventing the incursion of other European interests in the region. As Prunier (2010, p.36) makes clear, the general British interest was ‘essentially reactive, driven by long-distance trade concerns and indifferent to the territory itself.’ The Italian position was notably different. Deep-seated anxiety about Italy’s place relative to other European powers was the driving motivator for Italian imperial ambition. The fact that Italy, itself, had only achieved unification a few decades prior to its colonial venture meant that Italy was ‘a newcomer in the European concert of nations’ (Prunier, 2010, p.36). Italian politicians sensed this anxiety acutely. The Italian imperial project, then, was meant to rectify this perceived deficit in Italian prestige by demonstrating the power of Italian might and assuaging domestic anxieties vis-à-vis

other imperial powers. This sense that Italian prestige was at stake led the administrators to ‘rush into imperial action without any clear strategic plan’ (Prunier, 2010, p.37), and where ‘the main impression was one of confusion.’ In diametric opposition to the British goals to the north, Italians placed weighty symbolic importance on their Somali possession, which would later have consequences on the governance of the colony.

Guadagni (1979, p.84) argues that Italian designs in Somalia transformed over time. At first, ‘in the early Italian plans for colonial expansion... Somalia was primarily regarded as an important political and commercial area’ which was intended to connect the ‘fertile lands of the Ethiopian plateau’ with ‘Northern and Southern access routes.’ However, a series of mismanagements beleaguered the early Italian colonial project. In 1893, the Filonardi Company was granted administration and exploration rights over Mogadishu and its environs. As Italians ‘rarely ventured into the countryside’ (Cassanelli, 1982, p.202), they focused primarily on ‘continued and intensified...taxation of local trade’ (Guadagni, 1979, p.86). By 1896, the Filonardi Company was bankrupt and replaced by the Benadir Company, which also experienced severe financial concerns. Critically, the Italian army suffered a stinging defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians in Adwa in 1896, after which Italy ‘revise[d] the colonial policy in all its aspects: economic, social, administrative and political’ (Locatelli, 2003, p.101). In a bid to regroup, the Italians escalated an intensive policy of colonial “pacification” across their Eritrean and Somali possessions (Prunier, 2010, p.53).

As Cassanelli (1982, 231) argues, Italian colonial administrators discursively recast violent rebellion<sup>2</sup> against their rule as a defense of the institution of slavery, which ‘justified their presence while conveniently ignoring the fact that they were also threatening the Somali’s political autonomy and political integrity.’ As Cassanelli (1982) documents, decisions to reject colonial rule were made on the basis of local conditions, economic interest (including slavery), and

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<sup>2</sup> A series of uprisings occurred in opposition to Italian rule, including Biyomaal resistance in 1904 in the form of a blockade of Marka, the continual attack on caravans en-route to Mogadishu and the boycott of Mogadishu’s marketplace by members of the Wacdaan community, and Hintire clan’s fight in Mareerey in 1908. There were important religious forms of urban resistance to coloniality in other regions outside of Mogadishu, as Mohamed Kassim (2018) traces the resistance of Sufi orders in Baraawe. Like their counterparts to the north, Dervishes in southern Somalia also mounted resistance against Italian encroachment. By 1905, the Sufi orders in the Banaadir constituted a ‘wandering army’ in the south (Cassanelli, 1982, p.241), as increasing numbers of elders had pledged their fealty to the Italians, forcing dissidents to leave their villages and search for likeminded dissenters. These religious resistances to empire remained active opponents to Italian activity in the Banaadir region. After a period of relative calm in 1905-1907, the Banaadir was embroiled in large-scale uproar in August of 1908. In what would later be termed the “Year of the Dervishes,” a cross-clan alliance met the Italian army in combat. It was after this moment in the Italian “pacification” campaign that their colonial project moved inland. For more on anti-colonial uprisings, see Cassanelli, 1982; Kassim, 2018.



understandings of perceived threat. Communities reacted to the colonial presence in distinct ways, vacillating between the poles of conciliation and outright rebellion. While Italian presence was limited to the coast, groups that considered this as part of their traditional territory often turned to resistance. Partly in response to armed resistance and partly as an answer to the failures of both the Filonardi and Benadir Company, the Italians established more direct administration of their Somali possessions. In 1905, the Italians purchased the ports of Banaadir, and by 1908 the Italian Parliament passed a law to unite the Banaadir and other Italian protectorates into the newly formed “Somalia Italiana.”

This background helps to set the stakes for our understanding of the later Italian interventions into Mogadishu’s morphology. The early Italian imperial encroachment was beset by ‘contradictions’ (Prunier, 2010, p.38) and mismanagement – the failures of Filonardi Company, the Benadir Company, and the failure of the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa in Ethiopia. Anti-colonial resistance was understood to require arbitrary violence and recrimination against whole communities, as well as the bribery of elders in exchange for compliance (Prunier, 2010, p.38). As Angelo del Boca argues, ‘the *mission civilizzatrice* was often reduced to *politica forte e corruzione* (a strong arm and corruption policy)’ (quoted in Prunier, 2010, p.38). The consolidation of Italian Somalia, with Mogadishu as its central region of administration, would have a marked impact on the morphology and centralization of power of the city in the years to come. As will be demonstrated in the next section, this was mediated through the power of town mapping as a political exercise in Mogadishu.

### **Mapping Mogadishu: Urban transformation as colonial governance**

Around the time of the consolidation of Somalia Italiana in 1908, there came series of successive attempts at creating cartographic representations of the cities under the Italian colonial fold. The founding of the *Istituto Coloniale Italiano* in 1906, headed by the President of the *Societa Geographica Italiana*, reflected the consensus that ‘maps [were] imperial artefacts par excellence’ as they represented the epitome of rational, scientific knowledge as well as facilitated territorial acquisition (Atkinson, 2005, p.16). This project served practical as well as symbolic ends. Practically, the Italian military and civil colonial administration partially blamed ‘inadequate cartographic materials’ (Dirar, 2007, p.259) for their stinging defeat at Adwa and were convinced never to repeat the mistake again. Symbolically, the power of cartography to representationally

capture the colonial domain allowed colonial administrators to ‘transform *terra incognita* into measured and knowable territory: rendering space governable in practical terms as well as capturing it symbolically’ (Atkinson, 2005, p.19). It is unsurprising, then, that almost immediately after the “pacification” campaigns in Eritrea and Somalia were concluded, extensive geographical expeditions were organized and dispatched (Atkinson, 2005, p.19).

These new cartographic materials, however, were far more than simple reproductions of the relative locations of existing buildings, markets, and thoroughfares. Instead, these cartographic representations doubled as city plans for the purpose of urban development, marking out which transformations of the urban environment were required, which were already underway, and whether the existing structures were constructed by Italians (Fuller, 2007, p.68). These urban plans, ambitious and often revealing in their nature, can help to understand how attempts at Italian colonial governance were practiced through the medium of the built environment. Before considering the first of these plans for Mogadishu, Governor Giacomo Di Martino’s map in 1912, it is important to first reflect on the place of colonial cartography in the Italian colonial project while also considering parallel cartographical experiments in Italian East Africa.

#### *What does a map do? Imagined geography and the power of the plan*

There is an extensive literature around comparative colonial urban planning sub-Saharan Africa, tracing the diffuse influences of planning law, zoning regulations, land ownership codes, and segregation across the continent, and these readings of the impacts, typically in respect to the French and British colonial spheres (Nunes Silva, 2015; Njoh, 2007; Njoh, 2009; Myers, 2003; Demissie, 2012; Dirar, 2004; Locatelli, 2007). The motivations that inspired Italian urban planning were related to, but distinct from, the more widely-known stories of French and British colonialism. Many of the concerns that drove the Italian cartographic enterprise had to do with issues that provoked anxieties in the minds of all colonial administrators alike, as building entirely new colonial cities, overtaking existing ones, or building in an ambivalent parallel to existing cities carried important practical and political implications (Fuller, 2007, p.5). And yet, the particularity of the Italian colonial project also brings to bear different kinds of implications on the cartographic materials that were produced, including in Mogadishu.

Italy’s colonial cities, to an inordinate extent, were made to bear the ‘burden of [Italian] national self-construction in the colonial context’ (Fuller, 2007, p.6). The unification of Italy had

only been achieved decades prior to Italy's colonial endeavor, and many felt that the work of the project of defining the Italian nation was languishing. A key feature of metropolitan anxiety that was reflected in colonial ambition was the aim of demographic colonization – or the attempt to create and provide new homes for Italy's poor and unemployed in the colonies. This was meant to remedy a growing panic about a wave of emigration in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, contributing to a fear of the specter of Italy's poor moving *en masse* to areas outside of Italian state control and protection (Ben-Ghiat and Fuller, 2005, p.3). Compounding this anxiety was the fact that the metropolitan project of “modernizing” and “developing” Italy was still very much underway, as the state confronted challenges such as ‘nation-wide poverty, cholera epidemics, sanitation problems, illiteracy, and social instability’ (Fuller, 2007, p.6). These understandings about Italian domestic “backwardness” left Italy vulnerable to the threat of foreign encroachment, explicitly described as being available for colonization, meaning that imperial expansion ‘would act as a bulwark against disintegration and a possible loss of autonomy’ (Fuller, 2007, p.6). These many metropolitan anxieties formed the bulk of the reasoning for the colonial project, and they found direct expression in the ways in which colonial administrators sought to craft the urban spaces newly under their control.

As Fuller (2007, p.14) argues, the understanding of the “historicity” of a particular colonial city under the Italian fold distinguished between the kinds of architecture and urban planning projects that were undertaken in Tripoli, Asmara, Mogadishu, and much later, Addis Ababa. “Historicity,” here, was determined by the ability to trace a mythic line back to the Roman empire. Whereas Italian colonial cities in Libya could be understood as “historic” due to myths of their proximity to the Roman empire, this claim could not be made for cities in East Africa. Here, readings of the historic value of a colonial city valorized Italian understandings of a mythic Roman past and read a continuous line between this past and the present – leading to claims that ‘local vernacular [w]as “already” Italian’ (Fuller, 2007, p.5). This reading of historicity adhered closely to Italian understandings of “reclaiming” Italy's stake in the Roman empire in areas where this claim could be laid. This was particularly true in Libya, which inspired a wider push to recognize the convergence of “Mediterranean” architecture (Anderson, 2006, p.242). This connection to a glorified Roman past underwrote Italian colonial understandings of civilization, or *civiltà* (Fuller, 2007, p.14). In Tripoli, therefore, this colonial imagination of the city led to a general disposition to “preserve” what was ancient and historic about the urban space (Fuller, 2005, p.131).

While understandings of the historical were connected to *civiltà* in Tripoli, leading to a general policy of ‘preservation,’ (Fuller, 2005, p.131) the reverse was true for colonial cities in East Africa, such as Asmara and Mogadishu. The cities of East Africa were deemed to have ‘little or nothing of historical or exotic value’ (Fuller, 1996, p.493) and were therefore open to extensive renovation and even wholesale reconstruction. As Anderson (2006, p.22) claims in the case of Asmara, these renovations were meant to ‘reveal the modern city, while also concealing its past.’ The supposed ‘emptiness’ of these cities provided ample opportunity to conduct various experiments in social engineering and demonstrate the might and grandeur of the Italian colonial project through building infrastructure and architecture. These transformative initiatives began with the inking of town plans and maps.

### *The first transformations*

It is now that we can return to Governor Giacomo Di Martino’s 1912 town plan of Mogadishu, with an understanding of the significance that a plan of this kind represented. This town plan follows many of the features found in earlier mapping exercises in Italian Somalia and Eritrea. A comprehensive report on Baraawe in 1907 included a plan that ‘distinguished between pre-Italian and Italian constructions by color-coding’ and ‘described official’s intentions for future construction’ (Fuller, 2007, p.70). The Mogadishu plan of 1912 did, as well. But the critical innovations that would substantively change the morphology of Mogadishu are better understood through comparison with the Asmara town plan of 1908. This Asmara plan, for the first time in Italian colonial cartography, was explicitly designed with racial classification in mind. Asmara’s plan in 1908 was the first to ‘delineate different quarters for Europeans and colonial subjects’ (Fuller, 2007, p.70) and, like Mogadishu, called for with the construction of a new urban space, the *villaggio indigeni* (or, indigenous village).

As a consequence of the perceived lack of historicity and *civiltà* of Mogadishu, the centuries-old quarters of Xamar Weyne and Shingaani were understood to be available for, and in need of, “modernization.” This round of development ‘radically altered the character of the old city’ which had a ‘somewhat radical influence on its future development’ (Ali and Cross, 2014, p.16). Until this point, Italian colonial administrators had resided in the old heart of the city, and now, the ancient core of the city was refashioned to be the center of colonial power. This is in stark

contrast to the implementation of colonial planning in Tripoli, where a parallel form of urbanism was constructed alongside the pre-existing walled city.

As part of Governor Di Martino's plan, the space between the twin moieties of Xamar Weyne and Shingaani became the site of a new 'administrative area' consisting of colonial residences, government offices, and a Court (Ali and Cross, 2014, p.16). This administrative area directly abuts a new barracks for contingents of *askari* (colonial military), and further from the historical center, a command for radio and telegraph was constructed. New roads leading into and out of the city were connected further along to coast in order to make accessible the new hospital and jail. These roads jut into the established ancient city, cutting through the heart of Xamar Weyne. A planned railway and the construction of a new pier were also a part of this wave of development. In the end, this series of planning initiatives 'radically altered the morphology of the old city by breaking it up and carving out more open, European-type city spaces' (Ali and Cross, 2014, p.16).

The development of the *villagio indigeni* deserves special consideration. This 'native city' was composed of a building style called 'tukul' or 'tucul,' which the Italians considered to be 'the native house – even though there were many other dwelling types – and used to house East African Others in new urban "quarters," marking their cultural, ethnic, and/or racial separateness from Italians (although not from each other) (Fuller, 2007, p.83). In the style of Ranger's "invention of tradition," Fuller (2007) notes that these essentialized caricatures of East African dwellings had the effect of *producing* this type of dwelling in the region as "traditional," where Eritrean custom mostly favored the sturdier wooden *hüdmò*. The same can likely be said of the *tukul* when compared to traditional Somali dwellings or even the stone houses that the Italians, themselves, had commandeered.

It is helpful to consider these *villagio indigeni* with reference to existing scholarship across other African colonial cities (Bigon, 2009; Home, 2012; Locatelli, 2003; Njoh, 2007). The creation of these "native" urban areas were notable features of African colonial urban spaces across the continent. According to Myers (2003, p.5), 'the spatial separation of Africans in "native locations" set apart from the colonizers and others, most dramatically in towns, became part and parcel of how the colonial enterprise operated.' The creation of spaces like these *villagio indigeni* were places where 'officials forcibly removed the native population in areas outside the city and established racialized and highly policed zones which became... known as "native locations" or

“native towns”, sites of congestion, poverty, and exploitation’ (Demissie, 2012, p.2). The symbolic meaning of these divisions was materialized through those spatial orders. As Nuzzaci (2015, p.131) argues, the creation of these separate cordons of urban existence in East Africa was meant to impose ‘a clear division between the dominant and subordinate cultures and therefore towards ethnic separation within urban centers, leading to the building of two separate entities, the European and the native town’ (Nuzzaci, 2015, p.131). This required the reorganization (eviction, demolition, reconstruction, and commandeering) of “native” spaces within the city and their reconstruction through the colonial vision on the city’s periphery. These colonial evictions will emerge later in discursive depictions of claims to the city, underwriting the autochthonous claim in Chapter 5.

Outside of Mogadishu, colonial administrators experimented with the transformation of collective land rights in order to facilitate colonial agricultural exploitation. While these transformations in land tenure in agricultural regions were not directly replicated in Mogadishu’s urban center, these transformations give context about the colonial project in a broader sense. These legal incursions into the agricultural regions south of Mogadishu *also* made important distinctions between the “native” and Italians in terms of the use and ability to manage land.

With the Royal Decree of 1911, after the consolidation of the colonial project under the Italian crown, that a distinction between ‘native’ and ‘citizen’ ownership is described, wherein ‘recognition was granted to citizen’s land rights on the basis of the legal requisite (title), while for the natives the material element (cultivation) determined their recognition of their land rights’ (Guadagni, 1979, p.132). As Guadagni (1979, p.132) notes, ‘unused land, for instance, would have been subject to confiscation when belonging to natives and not when belonging to citizens.’ These distinctions were pushed even further through Governor Di Martino’s 1912 regulations, through which customary rights beyond even ‘native occupation.’ As Guadagni (1979, p.139) argues, Di Martino’s regulations introduced a test of ‘effectiveness’ to determine whether customary land rights would be preserved at all. These regulations sought to balance ‘the exigencies of colonization with the real needs of the various groups, toward the concurrent aims of improving land and protecting the native economy’ (quoted in Guadagni, 1979, p.139). These interventions to circumscribe collective rights to land represent deep interventions into structures of land tenure in the Somali territories – across urban and rural spheres.

### *The coming of colonial fascism*

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Italian colonial urbanism in Mogadishu was primarily in the mode of the ‘dual city,’ whereby the pre-existing city was left more or less intact while surrounding parallel constructions left the indigenous urban space functionally obsolete (Fuller, 2007, p.9). Several significant changes were set to occur in the 1920s that would alter both the morphology and demographic make-up for the city for much of the twentieth century. Foremost amongst these changes was the rise of fascism to power in Italy during the Interwar Period, which lasted until the end of the Second World War. The colonial fascist experience is often periodized around two key moments: the rise of fascist power and governance in 1922, which was followed by the 1935 occupation of Ethiopia, and the 1936 creation of *Africa Orientale Italiana* or Italian East Africa. In this section, I argue that the coming of colonial fascism brought about changes to Mogadishu’s material shape (in the construction of fascist monuments and the imposition of a rigid orthogonal grid) and space (in the segregation of people within the city).

The link between Italian fascism and empire was clear from the outset. As fascism was predicated on a mythos that sought to revive the glory of the Roman empire, Italy became engaged in a project of aggressive colonial expansion. This began with Italian attempts to impose their rule in all corners of Somalia Italiana. In 1923, the coming of fascist rule in Italy entailed a new set of colonial governors, and Cesare Maria De Vecchi assumed control of Somalia Italiana. To bring Italian colonialism in line with fascist imageries of Roman colonial expansion, De Vecchi placed an inordinate amount of emphasis on extending effective (rather than *de jure*) colonial rule across the entire territory of Italian Somalia. By 1927, De Vecchi had a grasp on the entire territory under Italian control (Fuller, 2007, p.32-33).

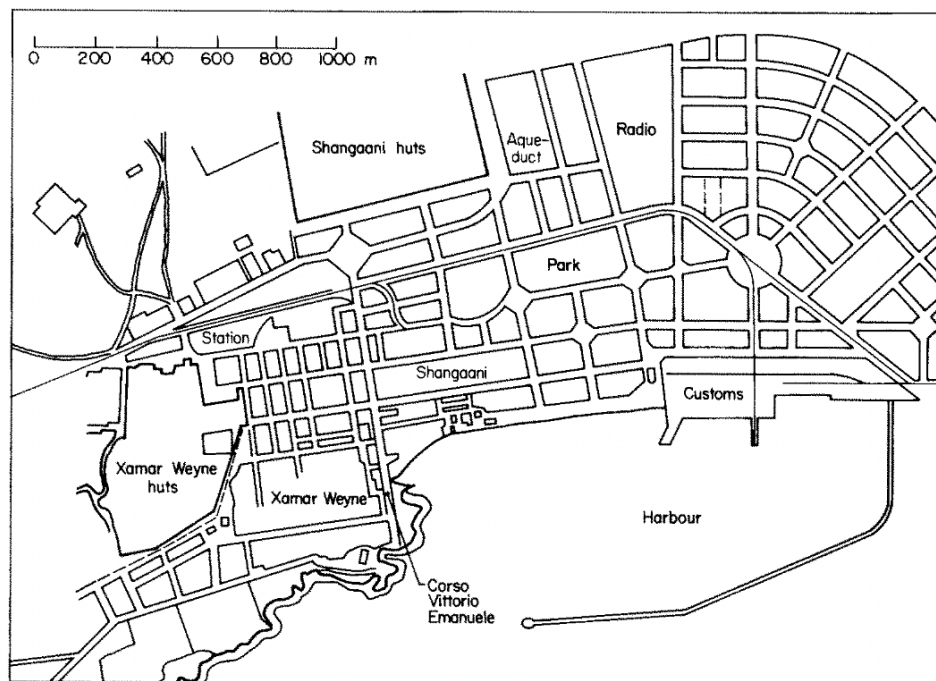
The rise of fascism fueled the growth of a new intellectual movement within the Italian discipline of architecture. ‘Urbanistica’ came to represent a preoccupation with the form and spatiality of the cities under the colonial fold. As a leading colonial architect called Ottavio Cabiati wrote, ‘all construction by a colonizing people must speak a very clear language. There should be no doubt about the character and civilization of the nation that has erected those buildings’ (Cabiati in von Henneberg, 1996, p.373). With urbanistica, ‘architecture in the colonial domain “stood for” Italy and described it, as both a nation and a state’ (Fuller, 2007, p.9). This had important impacts on how the city was imagined, and indeed, reshaped under fascist rule.

Fascist prescriptions had massive implications for the morphology of Mogadishu. Under the fascist vision, Mogadishu was redesigned from a 'dual city,' under which parallel Italian urban sphere was erected, to a new form of colonial urbanism known as the 'imperial city' (Fuller, 2007, p.11) In an 'imperial city,' racial segregation was the cornerstone of the planning endeavor, and the cohabitation of Italians with non-Europeans was strictly prohibited. The imperial city's center was designed to visually represent the dominance of the colonial project, symbolizing in brick and mortar 'the power of the conquerors' (Nuzzaci, 2015, p.131). As such, a number of ambitious architectural projects were begun and completed over the course of the 1920s in the center of Mogadishu. Principal among these was the Catholic cathedral, which was designed 'in total indifference to its local environment,' as 'the church's 37-meter bell towers... dwarf[ed] the old compact Arab style city' (Ali and Cross, 2014, p.16). These were later followed by the erection of the classical-style Roman Arco di Triomfo in the city's center, as well as the famous Croce del Sud Hotel in the 1930, and the Villa Somalia (which continues to be the Somali Presidential palace). These projects reflected a strategy that Garth Myers (2003, p.195) calls spatial 'enframing' whereby colonial administrations reified their rule through the use of space and territory. The buildings serve the specific purpose of 'codifying and maintenance of a visible hierarchy of spatial order, of container and contained,' or, put another way, the spectacle of these buildings was the *point*. When taken together, these buildings and monuments reshaped the cityscape of Mogadishu to valorize colonial power and relegate Somali populations to the outskirts of town. And yet, even the form and nature of these supposedly 'indigenous villages' was determined by the colonial power, not by those meant to reside within them. Through the practice of 'defining the geographical order of "native" areas... the colonial state sought to cement its dominance within them' (Myers, 2003, p.195).

Following the erection of these buildings, a second series of town plans were created in 1929, and this series of urban transformations were even more radical than the last. A version of this plan, drawn up by the local office of public works (Nuzzaci, 2015, p.139), is depicted in Figure 1 (below). As in other cities under the Italian colonial sphere, this new town plan was predicated on the 'clear division between the dominant and subordinate cultures and therefore towards ethnic separation within urban centers' (Nuzzaci, 2015, p.130). A new European urban quarter was imagined that would overtake the ancient district of Shingaani (Ali and Cross, 2014, p.15). In the spirit of rationalism, a rigid orthogonal grid was superimposed on the ancient city, cutting the core



into 60 rectangular lots (Ali and Cross, 2014, p.15). As Ali and Cross (2014, p.15) write, the plan ‘only tolerated the remains of the old city by concealing it behind the reconstructed seafront and cenotaph.’ In determining which parts of the city were historical, the ancient mosques on the seaside, as well as the old houses of local nobles and aristocrats, were excluded from consideration (Ali and Cross, 2014, p.15). As Anderson (2020, p.172) argues, ‘with construction, it seems, there was also a profusion of destruction created in the guise of linking and locating parts of Mogadishu’s historic center, including Hamarweyne and Shingaani, to outlying districts that were being developed, especially for Italians.’ These transformations, as Anderson (2020, p.172) argues, were the ‘superimposition of technologies and (colonial) architecture’ which was ‘a means by which Italy assured its visual dominance.’



*Figure 1: Corni Town Plan (1929). Reproduced with permission from Arecchi (1984)*

In some ways, the creation of an imperial Mogadishu required the destruction and denigration of the city that stood before. The rationale behind this transformation is explicitly articulated by Governor Guido Corni, as he writes:

The concept which has inspired it is the creation of a new European city, totally separate from the indigenous one. The line of separation between the new European centre and the old indigenous quarter was laid down in Corso Vittorio Emanuele. A study was immediately arranged of the clearance needed to permit the

construction of wide streets and tree-lined squares in the indigenous quarter of Shangaani, which consists of foul huts and constructions which are so irrational and unhygienic as to be unfit for habitation by Europeans. After the huts of the areas to be reconstructed had been emptied, they were transported and re-erected in a well-ordered and healthy village built on the dunes to the north of the city (1929)... In a later stage the expropriation and demolition of the ruins of the indigenous houses was started, in order to make space for the new streets connecting the new city with Viale Vittorio Emanuele (quoted in Arecchi, 1984, p.224)

The description of Governor Corni treads on well-worn colonial spatial tropes of spatial and racialized hygiene. Here, we can observe how the interpretation of Mogadishu's lack of "historicity" gained a concrete form – through the *material* reordering of the city in the name of "modernization." As Fuller (2007, p.23) argues, through concrete reshaping, the 'progress of the arts' of fascist architecture gained concrete form. This is how 'colonialism pervaded all aspects of the built environment' (Demissie, 2012, p.2), even those aspects that pre-existed colonial rule. Through the categorization and reordering, re-assignment, and shifting of even pre-existing structures, the entire urban built environment became conscripted into the colonial project. Thus, not only *new* city forms can be seen to inherit a colonial legacy, but also those who survived or were reordered through colonial rule.

It is helpful to depart from Mogadishu for a moment to consider these urban transformations alongside the violent expansion of land alienation in the agricultural region to the south of the city. Italian fascists were fervent in their hope to expand agricultural exploitation in Italian Somaliland. While these legal and economic interventions were distinct from the practices of transformation occurring in the colonial capital, they offer critical insights into how Somali land practices were conceived under the fascist practices.

With the coming of the fascist era, there were renewed interests in interventions that would bring about 'the dissolution of the tribal collective land tenure system' and 'preparing the conditions for a new form of ownership, individual and foreign' (Guadagni, 1979, p.142). The *Società Agricola Italo-Somala* (SAIS) project was commissioned by the Duke of Abruzzi and began its first irrigations in 1922 (Cauli, 2018, p.224). It was based on the *compartecipazione* (joint participation) system, under which 'the state... would provide estates on which Somali farmers would grow both commercial crops and sufficient land to support their families, with a range of medical, social, and agricultural services, and with a secure market for the commercial crops when they grew' (Cassanelli, 1988, p.275). This model supplanted the classic mode of

European plantation farming under which large concessions would be granted to Italian owners, who would then hire Somali labor. Cauli (2018, p.224) notes that the project was intended to cultivate cotton for export, sugar, and tobacco for local consumption, and corn and sesame for subsistence. However, faced with critical labor shortages, the Italian colonial administrators turned to forced and exploitative labor practices. This enforced existing Somali racial hierarchies as ‘plantations were worked exclusively by emancipated slaves and conscripted Bantu natives who were virtually expected to supply their labor to the Italian colonial government. The Italian agricultural schemes would not have succeeded without the collaboration of non-Bantu [Somali] ethnic groups (the ex-slave owners)’ (Eno, 2004, p.146-147).<sup>3</sup>

Aidid (2010, p.106) draws insightful links between and across urban and rural formulations of land dispossession. As imperial Mogadishu was made available to redivision and reorganization and reorganization on the basis of “modernization,” the imperial agricultural process led to the dispossession of farmers and racialized forced labor in agricultural regions. Racialized orders, through distinct between the rural and urban contexts, mediated colonial labor and space across Italian Somaliland.

### *Mogadishu under Mussolini's empire*

The fascist occupation of Ethiopia in 1935 was quickly followed by the declaration of a single Italian super-colony consisting of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Italian Somalia, *Africa Orientale Italiana* (Italian East Africa). This change came with massive demographic and social implications for the city. As Ali and Cross (2014, p.15) argue, by this time, out of Mogadishu's 50,000 residents, 20,000 were Italian. With this in mind, I am interested in considering how fascist prescriptions reordered embodied spatial relationships in the city. As Aidid (2010, p.107) argues, the presence of this enlarged Italian community *literally* constrained the movements of Somalis ‘through enforced practices of segregation, which prevented native access to certain neighborhoods, restaurants, theatres and even sidewalks.’ This went hand-in-hand with the spatial transformations of the city, wherein ‘planning a suitable colonial city in Africa entailed dehistoricizing the actual site to re-historicize it in such a way that Italy was the only subject present’ (Fuller, 1996, p.413).

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<sup>3</sup> For more on colonial plantation labor and its relationship to Somali social hierarchies, see Urbano (2017); Cassanelli (1988); Eno (2004); and Besteman (1999).

The erasure of the indigenous structures, then, complemented the containment of Somalis within the city, itself.

There is scholarly consensus around the fact that Italian policy in AOI in the late 1930s constituted ‘apartheid’ (Fuller, 2007, p.54; Nunes Silva, 2015). Somalis could no longer enter local businesses, and Europeans could not be seen where Africans congregated – this culminated in the creation of segregated social spaces such as theatres, bars, hotels, and restaurants (Fuller, 2007, p.56). With the construction of wholly divorced spheres of life, segregation was achieved through the implementation of ‘pass laws’ which ‘prevented Somalis from moving freely in Mogadishu and most were not allowed to stay in town after sunset’ (Marchal, 2006, p.206). Miscegenation and racial codes were implemented in order to define the correct sort of conduct between the races. Even that most basic of elements, air, was subject to the strictures of segregation. Just as in space, public services were also regulated. As Safia Aidid (2010, p.107) argues, ‘public education was virtually nonexistent in the colony, with only thirteen elementary schools’ which Aidid argues was due to ‘Italian fears of creating the “native intelligentsia that was a folly of Britain.”’ As Fuller (2007, p.146) notes, some colonial architects endeavored, as much as possible, to construct indigenous villages downwind, such that ‘whites would breathe first before releasing it downwind to the natives.’ In 1937 and 1940, laws proscribing miscegenation and encouraging ‘social hygiene’ were implemented in *Africa Orientale Italiana* (Barrera, 2005, p.97).

As Abdoumalik Simone (2004b, p.137) argues, colonial urban spaces in Africa were marked by a deep sense of ambivalence, as ‘urban connections have often been understood as a function of proximity. In other words, if people exist side by side, then somehow they have something to do with each other.’ But this proximity also allowed for the introduction of new social, normative, communal mixing, both interpersonally and at a structural level. The kinds of mixings, or ‘metissage’ (Simone, 2004b, p.137) that featured in colonial urban spaces made apparent the discontinuities and paradoxes of colonialism, but also resulted in anxieties about the precise boundaries of ‘the urban and rural, the customary and civil, the traditional and modern’ (Simone, 2004b, p.137). These anxieties resulted in attempts to clearly demarcate physical and social relationships – ranging from the rules of intimacy, habitation, and navigating day-to-day relations. In the urban sphere, and particularly in the fascist imperial city, the lines were drawn such that hierarchies were rigidly constructed, but also often contested. Owing to the deeply racist

sentiment of the time, the third and final series of town planning measures in Mogadishu were the most drastic. This map can be found in Figure 2.



Figure 2: “Piano Quotato di Mogadiscio” (1937). Image courtesy of Suuban (2019 and 2020). Reproduced here with permission. Not for further duplication or reproduction.

Following from the plan in 1929, the plan that was approved by the local public works department in 1937 aimed to appropriate the Shingaani quarter. When this plan was sent to administrative quarters, in Addis Ababa, however, the General Inspectorate of Addis Ababa ‘put forward criticisms on practically the entire plan’ (Nuzzaci, 2015, p.140). The first bone of contention was the decision to allow the mosques in the Italian quarter to stand. These technicians argued that while ‘justified on political grounds,’ this violated the laws ‘principles of defence of the race,’ need to be demolished (Nuzzaci, 2015, p.140). The gradual razing of these mosques, and their reconstruction far away, was the only manner in which the two principles could be reconciled.

A revised plan, this time developed in Addis Ababa in 1940, argued for the wholesale destruction of the Shingaani quarter, where it would be rebuilt in Italian form. This suggestion represented the ‘total elimination of the original settlement...which saw the construction of a completely new town as political symbol of the conquerors’ (Nuzzaci, 2015, p.140). Mogadishu-based colonial architects resisted this plan, favouring more ‘gradual transformation’ of the quarter (Nuzzaci, 2015, 140). Ultimately, the plan to demolish the historic quarters, in whole or in part, was postponed due to the high costs of its realization (Arecchi, 1984, p.224). All that was accomplished in this attempt to strip the old town was ‘the opening of a wide street which lacerates the [Shingaani] district’ (Arrecchi, 1984, p.224). As it happens, *Africa Orientale Italiana* would

never find the funding to continue the project, as Italy joined the Second World War in 1940 on the side of the Axis powers. By 1941, Italy had lost the entirety of its East African colonial possessions to the British Military Administration. We will trace the next stages of this history in the following chapter, Chapter 2.

It is important to note that Mogadishians were not merely subjects of these etchings on paper, these practices of demarcation of urban space through town planning. Rather ‘Africans as subjects of these architectural and urban planning schemes responded’ through ‘subversion, accommodation, appropriation, neglect and destruction’ which were ‘hidden transcripts to contest the hegemony of colonial architecture and urban planning schemes’ (Demissie, 2012, p.5). These kinds of urban contestations, resistance to colonial urban order, will be explored in the following chapter as part of the rise of an urbane nationalist project.

### **Intimate territorialities and possibilities of belonging in colonial Mogadishu**

It is important to consider together how the practices of colonial transformation came to shape colonial Mogadishu under Italian rule. Anderson (2020, p.176) makes the compelling case that ‘the afterlives of fascism in Mogadishu, in Somalia, point to a paradigm for architecture and urbanism in which the postcolonial does not necessarily suggest stable meanings.’ Mogadishu’s legacy of colonial fascism is one of ‘an undefined temporality, perhaps still unfolding, marked by untold violence and the dismemberment of a society and cities in constant transition for which failure is a burden at every scale’ (Anderson, 2020, p.176). It is critical to think through how Mogadishu’s transformations created and *negated* possibilities of belonging.

These transformations included the superimposition of an orthogonal grid in the center of town, the development of a native periphery (*villaggio indigeni*) alongside the appropriation of the center for increasing numbers of Italian settlers, as well as the embodied practices of segregation in the city. Taken together, this has significant consequences for what kind of *possible* spaces of belonging there were for Somalis in the city, and how these experiences of dislocation would be reappropriated in the contemporary era. However short-lived, however “mismanaged,” the Italian colonial enterprise, I argue that colonial intervention left a material and political imprint on Mogadishu’s transformation and trajectory. This is marked by three key legacies: the reorganization of urban space, the centralization of power in the capital, and the governance of peoples through clan as a technology of power. This conclusory section will consider these in turn.

First, as was argued at length in this chapter, the reorganization of urban space in the capital over the course of Italian colonial rule took many forms – it restructured both the shape of the city in real terms, as well as its demography. Freund (2006, p.70) argues that there is a tendency to miss the marked shifts of colonialism in ‘old cities’ in Africa that predate colonial contact, as continuities in the city’s form can mask the radical changes that take place under the surface. As was argued here, these myriad attempts to reshape and configure Mogadishu in accordance with the dictates of both liberal and fascist forms of Italian colonialism had a remarkable impact on the morphology of the city. The shape of the city speaks deeply to the kinds of pathways Somalis could chart through movement, or make claims upon through placemaking. The long echoes of these histories of displacement, grievance, and segregation are unearthed and reformulated find voice in the contemporary “autochthonous” claim in the contemporary period – even as that autochthonous claim makes tenuously exclusive claims on just *who* can claim to have been dispossessed by colonial rule. This will be explored at length in Chapter 4.

Second, the centralization of power in Mogadishu is an important legacy of colonial administration, one that has left a powerful mark on Somali statehood post-independence. Understanding how Mogadishu became the center of the colonial project and the center of administration helps to give an understanding of how Mogadishu (and tensions over the city) became touchstones in the nationalist and violent politics to come over the rest of the twentieth century. The relationship established here, between a direct colonial administration projecting its force outwards from the urban center, will become a critical through-point which forms the place that Mogadishu as a city (and contestations *over* Mogadishu) come to have meaning. This tension will be explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

Finally, one of the most salient and enduring legacies of colonial rule across the Somali territories is the deployment of clan as a ‘technology of power (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.75). Kapteijns (2013a) argues that the clan as a social construction was transformed through colonial and post-colonial administration through the use of collective punishment as well as the inscription of clan as a mediator between individuals and the state. Across Italian Somaliland, ‘whole clans or sub-clans were punished for the transgressions of individuals’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.75) which made clan a site of social control, surveillance. Clan identity mediated individual relations with the state, particularly as colonial administrators ‘continuously reinforced this group identity both through its courts and its policy of collective punishment’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.75). Moreover, colonial

administrators sought to construct intermediary relationships through patronage with clan leaders. As Guadagni (1979, p.222) argues, ‘local chiefs exclusive powers vis-a-vis the administration in relation to group interests in land, attributed to such chiefs a greater authority than that which they actually enjoyed under customary’ social organizations. These figures, called ‘*capi stipendiati*’ in the South acted as “local authorities” vis-à-vis the foreign administration rather than having effective power within the group they represented’ (Guadagni, 1979, p.58). Thus, while clan-based social structure in Somalia is documented to have preceded the state formation process by multiple centuries, the argument is not that clan was *produced* by colonial intervention, but that its meaning and structure were materially transformed through colonial and postcolonial governance.

These three legacies of colonial intervention have bearing on how intimate territoriality comes to make sense of conflict-related property disputes in the contemporary era. The spatial reordering of the capital under colonial rule finds voice in narratives of ownership and autochthony. The centralization of power in the capital gives rise to histories of Mogadishu as *the* principal urban space in the Somali territories, as will be discussed in the next chapter. And the deployment of clan as a technology of power through the colonial and postcolonial periods presages the kinds of political machinations of identity that would eventually transform belonging in the city *through* clan. It is these competing claims to the city, then, echoing back and forth through contested memory, that imbues conflict-related property disputes with their base level of contestation: namely, who *can* belong? In subsequent chapters, I will consider the impact of these spatial sortings and how they appear (or are obscured) through social memory. In the next chapter, however, I will the creation and consolidation of a nationalist project in and through the city, and the ways that state violence eventually led to the city’s undoing.



## **CHAPTER 2 – POSTCOLONIAL MODERNITIES IN MOGADISHU (1941-1990)**

This chapter traces Mogadishu's political and physical transformations over the course of the struggle for independence (1948-1960), the short-lived democratic interlude (1960-1969), and the period of military rule (1969-1991). I argue that through the political transformations in this time, Mogadishu became not only the capital of the new Somali state, but also the site and center of contestations over what the nation could become. This argument unfolds through an analysis of several interwoven processes: the rise of a nationalist project that would mobilize through the city itself, the centralization of power in the would-be capital of the independent state, and the coming of an elite-led bureaucratic politics of land use and control in the city. Through these processes, I emphasize two kinds of inequalities that were woven into the fabric of the city. First, Mogadishu became marked by a significant spatial inequality, as the former-colonial structures were appropriated by the elite, and an emerging shantytown developed on the city's periphery. Second, the concentration of wealth and power in the capital meant that there was a significant inequality between Mogadishu and the rest of the country. Taken together, these inequalities underwrote the national project in the country's capital.

Contemporary articulations of this moment in Mogadishu's history surface in what I call the "cosmopolitan" claim to the city in Chapter 5. These articulations about Mogadishu emphasize how the city was a place that people from all corners of the Somali territories could call home. Indeed, the waves of urbanization that peopled the capital meant that the city had indeed become "cosmopolitan" in terms of clan, creating new relationships that cut across clan identity and perhaps generating, for some, a distinctly "Mogadishan" lifeworld. As Kapteijns (2013a, p.6) makes clear, 'a good part of the middle class had chosen to emphasize a more cosmopolitan and shared identity over ethnic or clan-based ones.' However, this "cosmopolitan" ethos was underwritten by the inequality in the city, which I consider through the state's attempts at "modernizing" land titling and registration in the capital meant that legal ownership was out of the bounds for many would-be urban denizens. Inequality shaped the contours of ownership the city and claims of "cosmopolitan" belonging there.

A central theme of this chapter is the emergence of a discourse of modernity in Mogadishu, which underpinned the emergent Somali national project and transformed through the struggle for independence, and into the postcolonial state. I investigate how these discourses of modernity,

underpinning the Somali national project, became a distinctly *urban* question, located in Mogadishu. As the emergent nationalist project was to bring to bear a state which represented a ‘a homogeneous ethnic group, inhabiting a large territory, and united by culture, religion, and tradition’ (Touval, 2013, p.29), I think through how this manifested in the contours of Mogadishu, and eventually in the embodied experiences of those who lived in the town. I am interested, here, the role of the *caasimad* (capital) in representations of Somali modernity and unity. This chapter tries to think through how striations within Somali identity (clan, region, and elite status) mediated relationships to the political projects that attempted to bring Somali nationhood into being. In this, I think of how Mogadishu became the epicenter of not just state power, but also how “the city” came to represent these nationalist ideals and contests over the state.

This chapter examines how Mogadishu was a site of class formation and hierarchy, expressed through access to ownership of land in the capital, but also social networks that could access bureaucratic state apparatuses. In this way, I engage but divert from a specifically Marxist construction of Somali class analysis, as viewed through the prism of Ahmed Samatar’s (1988) seminal *Socialist Somalia*, which is somewhat wedded to its time and insufficient considering later political transformations. I also divert from what might be termed an “instrumentalist” conception of Somali class, offered in de Waal’s (1996) ‘Class and Power in a Stateless Somalia.’ While I agree that ‘the description of the Somali civil war as a war between clans obscures the very important ways in which control of resources lies at the heart of the conflict,’ (de Waal, 1996, p.1), I find the analysis that class in Mogadishu expands beyond ‘the legacy of the patronage power of the former state’ (de Waal, 1996, p. 7). In this dissertation, I am interested in tracing what Dowling (2009) calls a ‘landscape of class’ in Mogadishu, thinking about how class was produced by access to the state, but also how class was *embodied* and experientially understood by residents of the city. This comes through in performances of *ilbaxnimo*, or urbane “sophistication,” which I examine at length in Chapter 5. In this chapter, I want to consider how the city itself – its history of vital urbanization from across the Somali territories, spatial inequality, experiences of statecraft *outside* of patronage, as well as closed bureaucratic networks – was a site of class formation and experience. This helps to underscore how ownership in the capital and access to bureaucratic networks were not simply instrumental, but embodied and subjective experiences that constituted important sites of identity construction for many interviewees.

This is important to understand contestations over contemporary conflict-related property disputes, as the affective registers over disputes come from the transformation, through violence, of the “cosmopolitan” character of the city. In describing the city before the war, as one interviewee (Interview, Nasrudin, 2019) put it, ‘Mogadishu is different’ from the rest of the country as it was ‘the emotions, historic capital of Somalia.’ These interventions, and attempts at *reclamation*, come through in contemporary contestations over the post-independence period.

This chapter will first examine the pre-independence period, tracing how the coming of Somali nationalist politics was located in and mobilized through Mogadishu in the British Military Administration and U.N. Trusteeship eras. This chapter will then consider the aftermath of independence, and how the politics of centralization of wealth and power in the capital fused “modern” imaginings of the city with conceptions of the nation. Finally, this chapter will consider the spatial contours of inequality in Mogadishu and the bureaucratic politics of access to land ownership in the capital and will consider how these inequalities underwrote the city’s “cosmopolitan” ethos. Ultimately, this chapter argues that belonging in the capital in the period after independence *was* “cosmopolitan” in terms of clan composition but was riven through with structural inequalities that foreclosed access to land and access to the city for those who did not have access to elite, bureaucratic networks.

### **Postwar possibilities**

By the end of the Second World War, there was palpable sense that from devastation, a new world order could be born. The futures of Italy’s former colonial possessions, including ex-Italian Somaliland, remained an open question. The entire of Italian Somaliland was captured by the British by 1941, and Italian Somaliland came under ‘British Military Administration’ (BMA), where the War Office was charged with its governance (as opposed to the Colonial Office). As historian Safia Aidid (2010, p.108) writes, with the coming of the BMA, ‘the most direct and interventionist colonial rule Somalis would experience came to a close with Italy’s defeat.’

Even as it moved through a series of seismic political and demographic changes, Mogadishu retained roughly the same material contours. From a morphologic perspective, Puzo (1972, p.83) argues ‘little occurred to alter the city in any significant way while the allies decided what to do with the former Italian colony.’ However, this physical stasis is not reflected in the vast demographic shifts that occurred at the end of the Second World War. After the fall of Italian East

Africa, many Italians abandoned the colonies. From a sizeable number of 20,000 Italians on the eve of World War II, 'after the war, their numbers declined to the point whereby they accounted for just a few percent of the total population' (Puzo, 1972, p.87).

At the same time, Somalis from the hinterlands flocked to the city, even in spite of high levels of urban unemployment (Cassanelli, 1988, p.280). The British Military Administration took active steps to suppress this in-migration to Mogadishu as 'the excess labor and problems of administration were unwanted by the British and thus many of the Somalis encamped around the city were expelled to the interior' (Puzo, 1972, p.87). The BMA's intervention is better understood when considered alongside British colonial urbanism as a whole. Myers (2003, p.69) traces a similar surge in urbanization in colonial Lusaka during the Second World War and suggests that the British concern for 'detrribalization' meant that 'British colonial development policies tended to be "anti-urban".' Burton (2005, p.224) argues that in colonial Dar es Salaam, the British saw 'the "evils and dangers"' of rural-urban migration as 'the lure of petty crime' and 'urban alienation.' Smith (2019, p.39) makes a similar case in Nairobi, arguing that the British demonstrated a 'decidedly ambiguous attitudes towards Africans' urban presence' as, 'in theory at least urban Africans were not meant to exist at all.' In any case, this British intervention into the urban sphere had the effect of maintaining a numerical equilibrium in Mogadishu's Somali population until after Somalia's independence.

Even so, Mogadishu was on the verge of a tectonic shift – political, if not physical. The central question was about what would become of Italy's former colonial possessions. The United Nations set out to decide what would become of Italian Somaliland, and this became a central point of Somali political mobilization. Somalis began to mobilize to imagine visions for the post-war future. The foremost of these developments was the 1943 establishment of the Somali Youth Club (SYC), which first 'acted as an urban self-help club organization mostly restricted to Mogadishu' (Barnes, 2007, p.280). The club's aim was to 'confront and break down the pervasive clan system of Somali society and end divisive clan disputes and promoted education and social improvement programmes' and was made up of a new Somali urban middle class (Barnes, 2007, p.281). The SYC soon mobilized to support the unification of *all* Somalis territories under a single administration, the idea of a 'Greater Somalia.' This was the aim to unite Somalis in former British, French, Ethiopian, and Italian spheres under a single administration. The SYC was reconstituted as the Somali Youth League (SYL) in 1977 and expanded rapidly across the Somali territories,

with 93,000 active members and 79 branches outside the capital city by 1948 (Samatar, 1988, p.53).<sup>4</sup>

The Mogadishu incidents of January 1948 happened on the eve of the Four Powers Commission delegation to Mogadishu. At stake was the central question of whether Italy would be allowed to return to Somalia as part of a United Nations Trusteeship, to oversee Somali independence.<sup>5</sup> The incidents of 1948 were a catalyzing moment that demonstrates that Mogadishu had already become site and center of contestations over what the nation could become. Aidid's (2010) careful oral history with women present shows that tensions and divisions within the city flared in the weeks prior to the arrival of the United Nations delegation that would decide Somalia's fate. In the final days of the delegation, a large SYL demonstration to reject the return of Italian rule came into contact with Italians and their supporters in the city. As Aidid describes:

First to come under attack was the SYL headquarters, where Italians armed with weapons attempted to set the building on fire. Mohamed Hirsi Nur, one of the thirteen founding members, was killed when he stood in the doorway to ask the men to leave. Upon hearing his yells, [Hawa] Taako came to his aid with a club she had found in the room, before she too was "speared through the heart." Demonstrators were met with bullets, hand grenades, and arrows as the unauthorized Italian community and its supporters "thronged in lorry loads into the town." Within two hours, 51 Italians and 17 Somalis had been killed, countless numbers injured, the city placed under military curfew, and many thrown into prison camps as the British Military Administration attempted to contain the violence and looting (Aidid, 2010, p.114).

The political salience of the 1948 incident has been inscribed into the core of Somali nationalist imagery is, itself, riven through with contested memory. Even so, memorials and iconography of this struggle became cast in stone became landmarks across Mogadishu's skyline after independence. This landmark event marks a significant moment, as Mogadishu became the site of struggle over the future of the nation.

The nationalist ethos of SYL was based on a specific kind of "modernity," one which hoped to forge a coherent Somali identity from disparate Somali structures of Somali identity. The SYL

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<sup>4</sup> In 1946, the British Foreign Secretary (Ernest Bevin) promoted the idea of a 'Greater Somalia,' the consolidation of *all* Somali territories under a single administration. This 'Bevin Plan' for pan-Somali unification was shared by the BMA with Somali associations in 1947, where it was also announced that 'a special investigative commission of the UN was soon due to visit Somalia in order to decide upon future dispositions' (Urbano, 2016, p.330).

<sup>5</sup> Other political groups emerged in parallel, including a coalition of parties later termed 'pro-Italia' because of their support for a return to Italian administration. This coalition, the *Conferenza della Somalia*, was made up of groups with a range of political aims, national and local.

aimed to achieve the end of “tribalism” through the construction of a nested identity, where Somali unity superseded extant clan affiliation. This was intended to appeal ‘to the transcendent *brotherhood* of Somalis, uniting those of different clan and lineage’ (Lewis, 1988, p.210). It was, however, oriented around an urbane middle class. As Ahmed Samatar (1988, p. 56) argues,

What was the social base of the nationalist parties of North and South, and how did they relate to the Somali masses? Neither the victorious SNL and USP in the North, nor the SYL in the South were based on the nomads or the peasants. We have already identified the essential elements of the parties in the Protectorate; as for the South, ‘the core of the Somali Youth League was made of small merchants, traders, artisans, the literate elements employed by the state, and a few educated religious leaders’ - no *grande bourgeoisie* (Samatar, 1988, p.56).

Ahmed Samatar makes the case that these contradictions, the urbane and middle-class tilt of the nationalist leadership, had an impact on their ability to bring to bear the possibilities of decolonization. Here, ‘the accomplishment of that very desire’ of independence ‘depended on the mobilization of urbanized groups’ (Samatar, 1988, p. 57). As ‘almost all the parties... were primarily urban bound,’ Ahmed Samatar (1988, p.57) argues that ‘most aspects of “modernism” which spread from the cities barely touched the surface of people’s lives.’ One can see, here, how this “modernity,” this nationalism, this particular mode of ordering Somali social relations did not just emanate from the cities but was deeply rooted in Somali urbanity. Mogadishu was the epicenter of these urban movements for independence and played an important role in defining the “national” character of the would-be state.

#### *AFIS and after: preparing for independence*

Even with this impassioned political action, the SYL was defeated on its two central organizing aims: the attainment of a Greater Somalia (the unification of all Somali territories under a single administration) and preventing the return of Italian rule. In November of 1949, the United Nations decided on a ten-year U.N. Trusteeship under Italian administration, the *Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia* (hereafter, AFIS). Even so, the countdown to independence had begun.

The ten years of AFIS under Italian administration was given five core duties: the construction of a government organization, economic development, education, social progress and welfare, and ‘shifting of power from the administration to the local government’ (Tripodi, 1999, p.53). The Somalization campaign, under which Somalis were incorporated into administration,

with the expansion of basic education and an attempt to ‘offer the small intelligentsia already existing in the country higher education; and to promote the formation of a new, well-educated elite’ (Tripodi, 1999, p.59). This elite, which Ahmed Samatar calls Somalia’s *petite bourgeoisie*, came to have an important impact on Somalia’s political trajectory.

In Mogadishu, ‘nothing more was accomplished in Mogadishu other than the construction of a few factories and a very gradual increase in population’ (Puzo, 1972, p.84). There was little in the way of major urban reshaping during this period. While the Somalization process proceeded, however, economic development lagged and ‘the territory’s economy exhibited growing dependency and fiscal crises deepened’ (Samatar, 1988, p.55).

There were two principal political contradictions that marked the AFIS era. First, even with the deposing of fascism in the metropole, former colonial administrators continued to shape AFIS policy. Tripodi (1999, p.59) quotes the AFIS administrator at the time, as saying Italians in Somalia ‘do not want to accept that they are not the masters any longer.’ These interferences created roadblocks in the “development” process, which Abdi I. Samatar (2016, p.54) notes was related to the administrations’ ‘attempt[t] to accentuate tribal division among the population in order to undermine the SYL’s civic project even in 1952.’ Indeed, a contemporary advisor for the U.N. Trusteeship reported:

Tribal differences are being emphasized to prevent development of a sense of unity among the population of the Territory. It is for that reason that the Somali Youth League has espoused the idea that in any relation the question of tribes should never enter. And yet, in the first contact between Administration officials and any member of the Somali Youth League, in courts or any other proceedings, the first question that would be asked of the member of the Somali Youth League would be: “To what tribe do you belong?” (quoted in Samatar, 2016, p.54-55).

This was reflected in the second contradiction of AFIS rule, the proliferation of struggles for rule between Somali leaders. Samatar (1988, p.54) argues this was fractious discontent ‘between various *petite bourgeois* leaders and factions, based mainly in Moqdishu.’ These squabbles over leadership ‘gradually overtook the anti-colonial struggle against the Italians’ (Samatar, 1988, p.54). As the Somalization process proceeded (with Somalia’s first-ever local elections held in 1954, and local provinces and districts run by Somalis by 1956) these political contradictions became the central focus of would-be leaders, contesting control over the nascent state. In the end, these internal political contradictions would shape Somalia’s short democratic interlude.

### **The blessed daughter of Africa?**

The coming of independence marked a ‘new vitality for Mogadishu’ where ‘significant changes occurred in the city in terms of new projects and a marked increase in the population - encouraged by the prospect of new opportunities in Mogadishu’ (Puzo, 1972, p.84). With the independence of British and Italian Somalilands from colonial rule (on June 26th and July 1st, respectively), the two former colonies united to form the Somali Republic. While the Greater Somalia ideal of unification of all Somali territories under a common flag was not to be, the Somali Republic’s flag represented those “lost” territories. Atop a blue background was the white five-pointed star, which represented the five Somali populated-territories of the Horn: Italian and British Somalilands, French Somaliland (Djibouti), the Northern Frontier District (Kenya), and the Ogaden (Ethiopia). Compared against peer African countries who were busy cobbling together nations from a patchwork of ethnic and religious communities, Somalia was thought to be fortunate - a single people, with a common language, with a capital city in Mogadishu.

In many ways, the hopes for a united Somalia were frustrated by the distinct colonial inheritances from British and Italian imperialism. The Somali Republic inherited two distinct colonial languages, two distinct legal structures, and two very different modes of imperial intervention. The elevation of the capital of the former Italian Somaliland, Mogadishu, to the status of national capital meant that the former capital of British Somaliland, Hargeisa, was ‘relegat[ed]... to the status of a provincial city’ (Samatar, 1988, p.61). These were not simply power struggles over the seat of government, but reflections of apprehensions about the role of regions outside of Mogadishu in the emerging national project. As Ahmed Samatar (1988, p.61) argues, those from the former British Somaliland worried ‘with some prescience, that in time Mogadishu would monopolize most state activities and that given the distance – over 500 kilometers of dirt road – between the two cities, their region would be disadvantaged.’ These tensions were about the meaning of the postcolonial state, who would participate, and how that would be materialized in spatial terms. In the end, the nascent state, which was limited in resources and capacity, substantiated these concerns. In many ways the centralized project of state administration *from Mogadishu* became a key feature of the postcolonial state.

Ahmed Samatar (1988, p.65) takes a dim view of the early years of the Somali Republic, arguing that ‘in terms of social development, the first four years of independence were not



impressive.’ Notwithstanding a number of distinct contributions (a Mogadishu hospital, a teacher’s training college in Afgooye and a road linking Mogadishu to Afgooye), Samatar (1988, p.65) makes the case that ‘these achievements...mainly benefited the urban population’ while the government ‘made no tangible efforts to establish dialogue with the majority of Somali citizens, the rural population.’ In this way, Samatar (1988, p.65) marks a continuity between the colonial and early independent state, particularly in its direct poll taxes of nomads as a site of state intervention, with little interest in expenditure that directly impacted those populations. Samatar (1988, p.63) suggests an inward-looking bureaucratic elite with ‘little or no pre-independence analysis of the nature and direction of the economy to guide them,’ who ‘unquestioning[ly] accept[ed] the structures of the Somali colonial economy based on banana exports and livestock.’

It was in the context of these contradictions and discordances that Somalia experienced the first peaceful democratic transfer of power in Africa, which was also the last in Somalia’s history to the present moment. The Presidential transfer of power on June 10th, 1967, represented ‘the height of Somali democratic practice’ (Samatar, 2016, p.186). This elected President, Abdirashid Ali Shermarke, was assassinated by his own security officers a mere two years later. This event marked the start of the Somali revolution.

### ***Kacaan in the capital: urbanity in revolutionary times***

The military coup of October 1969 transformed Somalia’s political, social, and historical trajectory in myriad ways. The imprint of military rule under the autocrat Maxamed Siyaad Barre forms the basis of the very language of statehood in contemporary Somalia. The contours of the “scientific socialist” project shifted during the three decades of military rule. The newly-styled “Somali Democratic Republic” suspended the constitution ‘particularly, those parts which are contrary or incompatible with the spirit of the Revolution’ (Ganzglass, 1981, p.9) namely, civil and political rights. It dissolved Parliament, executive government and the judiciary and transferred those powers to a Supreme Revolutionary Council. From this, a number of edicts nationalized oil distribution, foreign banks, and all schools (Samatar, 1988, p.102). These interventions were justified in the name of the consolidation and construction of a coherent Somali identity, economy, and state. It’s important, therefore, to examine the kind of Somali nationalism on offer and think about the place of the capital city, Mogadishu, in these configurations.

*Grammars of nationalism: constructions of Somali “modernity”*

In many ways, “modernity” was the axiom that drove both the democratic (1960-1969) and military (1969 onwards) eras. How modernity was to be brought about was a subject of vigorous debate. In both cases, however, the search for modernity was paramount. As Bakonyi (2015, p.246) argues, as in much of the postcolonial world, ‘modernisation was conceptualised as a pathway of (linear) progress leading a society from a traditional past into a modern future. Tradition was thus framed in direct opposition to modernity, and practices attributed to it denounced as backward and as obstacles that had to be overcome.’ In the Somali postcolonial state, the prime “obstacle to modernity” was clan identity.

An important through-line between different iterations of Somali nationalist projects has to do with the critique of clan identity in favor of a cohesive Somali identity. Where the SYL hoped to achieve the end of ‘tribalism’ through the construction of a nested identity (where Somali unity superseded clan), the Supreme Revolutionary Council instead ostensibly sought to *replace* clan with an ‘undifferentiated, nationalistic Somali identity, in which traditional divisions were totally annulled’ (Lewis, 1988, p.210). The introduction of the 1970 Law for Social Protection is a case in point. Under this law, ‘all forms of tribal association, rights, and privileges, including rights over land and water, were abolished and claimed by the state’ (RVI, 2017, p.33). In an elaborate ceremony in 1971, the government declared tribalism ‘which was associated with nepotism and corruption were symbolically burnt or buried (Lewis, 1988, p.209). However, the even while the military state ostensibly declared a “war on tribalism,” the state continued to rule *through* clan politics in important ways, as will be discussed later.

This form of Somali nationalism was not simply state policy – through experience in the capital it took root and defined how many Mogadishans identified themselves and their place in the nation. As Lewis (1988, p.217) argues ‘the closely linked goals of modernization, nationalism and independence are here all combined’ and I argue, constructed a class of new urbane *citizens* within recent living memory. There are important interventions in this time that shaped the lived experiences of those who were educated in this nationalist upbringing and which are sometimes remembered wistfully (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020; Interview, Ahmed, 2019 and 2020; Interview, Sahro, 2019). The standardization of the Somali written language in 1973 and the integration of the Somali language in state-run life had a profound impact, attempting to halt the

creation of disparate Italian- and English-speaking intelligentsias in the country. The 1974 *bar-ama-baro* (learn or teach) literacy campaign sent ‘a huge taskforce of some 30,000 secondary school students to the interior’ in order to teach those outside of the city ‘to write their own language, hygiene, modern animal husbandry methods, basic civics and the aim of Scientific Socialism’ (Lewis, 1988, p.217). The coming of the 1974 Organization of African Unity Summit held in Mogadishu, for some, constituted a high-water mark in Mogadishu’s development. These landmark experiences marked the youth and adolescence of many respondents and are situated firmly within living memory. Nationalist politics did not simply become (official) state policy but was also integrated in community understandings of urban belonging. As this chapter will now show, these “modernizations” in the military era were underwritten by two principal contradictions: inequality and political violence.

### *Ordering urban growth*

Mogadishu was steadily becoming not only the political capital of the nation, but also the manifestation of this “cosmopolitan” ethos. New urban denizens flocked to the city from across the Somali territories, and with them came the construction of entire new neighborhoods. These ‘spontaneous settlements’ occurred largely ‘in the absence of urban land-use policy’ (Marchal, 2006, p.208). The city was expanding rapidly, at some estimates up to 7% annually (Puzo, 1972, p.142). By 1970, the city had grown to a population of 255,000 from a base of just 55,000 residents in 1950 (Puzo, 1972, p.142), with the highest period of growth in the first decade of independence (Puzo, 1972, p.146). This influx is demonstrable in Figure 3, below.

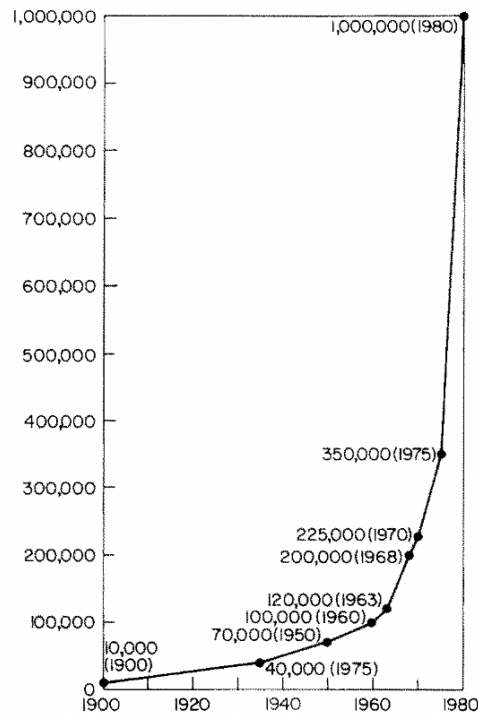


Figure 3: Population growth in Mogadishu (1900-1980). Source: Arecchi (1984), reproduced with permission

Urbanization in Mogadishu is deeply important for our purposes. This in-migration to the city, which quickly outstripped state attempts at urban planning, created a *spatial* as well as material kind of inequality in the city. Before long, ‘the city had become akin to a ‘historical centre built to host a limited elite population [...] surrounded by a series of less planned urban peripheries, with limited service installations, and quasi slums linked to the last poverty-triggered movements’ (Grünwald, 2012, p.S108). Contrasted against the auto-constructed settlements on the periphery of the city, what Puzo (1972) calls ‘European-style dwellings’ (holdovers from Italian constructions or new constructions in that style) and ‘Arab dwellings’ (historic buildings in Xamar Weyne and Shingaani) are clustered in the centre of the city. Thus, these inequalities of Mogadishu were visible in the shape of the town.

While urban unemployment was high, Puzo (1972, p.165) suggests that the ‘attraction of the city itself’ was likely a cause of urban in-migration. These ‘attractions’ include ‘imagined economic opportunities, the social life, the relatively cosmopolitan character and ‘bright lights,’ the gradual evolution of pride in the new national capital, the advantages of limited public services and urban amenities, the presence of relatives in the city’ (Puzo, 1972, p.165). Indeed, according to the 1965 census, 76% of residents of the Xamar Weyne and Bondheere neighborhoods were

born *outside* Mogadishu, and for the city at-large, over 60% were born outside of Mogadishu (Puzo, 1972, p.166). Thus, the city's culture and customs were all *in the making* in the early years of independence and even military rule, as nearly everyone was from "somewhere else."

While there is not yet a robust analysis of how these new city-dwellers characterized and integrated their experience as new Mogadishans vis-à-vis the places they left, we can here consider the comparative experiences of other African cities. Urbanity provided new opportunities, sites of intermixing, and the creation of new identities just as people brought traditions and understandings from the hinterlands. Freund (2006) traces how Kinshasa 'retains a typical city centre but its inhabitants very largely live in *les annexes*, the outskirts, that have been created through negotiations with local chiefs and contain a life of their own that connects very little with that of the centre.' Meager (2010, p.27) thinks about how 'hometown identities' transformed into social networks and relation features of informal associational life in Nigerian cities. As Geschiere (2014, p.50) argues, these transformations showed flexibility and that even for 'first-generation urbanites, relations with the village' and, by extension, rural ways of life, 'became ever more complicated.' These fissures of interactions between town and evolving countryside, are important sites of future research for scholars of Mogadishu.

This influx of new urban denizens quickly outstripped the city's capacity to absorb them. The city expanded in planned and unplanned directions, sprawling into the outskirts. Many of the urban migrants constructed their own dwellings on the periphery of the constructed town. Puzo (1972, p.123) describes a number of different kinds of housing styles in Mogadishu's periphery, made with varying degrees of permanence. The traditional dome-shaped nomadic *aqal* home structure and the *arish* (a rectangular home with a metal roof) are both auto-constructed homes made from branches and mud (Puzo, 1972, p.90-104). Other styles include the *baraca/ casa matoni*, which is 'identical to the arish in the plan of its construction' but is constructed with 'boards instead of branches and are usually supported by a foundation of stone and concrete' (Puzo, 1972, p.107). Expansions to homes can come through the solidification of these buildings and their reconstruction. As Puzo (1972, p.104) notes, nearly all *aqals* and *arishes* in the city had no access to water and electricity, even as these were the most disadvantaged urban denizens.

The military regime saw 'ensuring the orderly, planned development of the capital' (Arecchi, 1984, p.225) as a governance challenge, and in a bid to modernize the capital endeavored upon numerous paths: state-led housing developments and rationalization of the city through the

imposition of a grid, and registration. Planning measures would attempt to both organize existing auto-constructed communities and provide upgraded spaces for people to live. The Five-Year Plan of 1970 ‘envisaged new residential settlements on the high ground to the north, between roads to Afgooye and Balcad’ (Arecchi, 1984, p.225), and planned extensions to the city followed (Figure 4). After this, 300 apartments were constructed in *Casa Popolare* from 1972-74, but the new improvements only served to ‘favo[r] the middle class, which could afford the initial investment’ (Arecchi, 1984, p.225). The attempts to construct and establish land policy were ‘overwhelmed’ (Arecchi, 1984, p.227) by the auto-constructions, which were then termed *abusiibo*, and faced the threat of demolition.

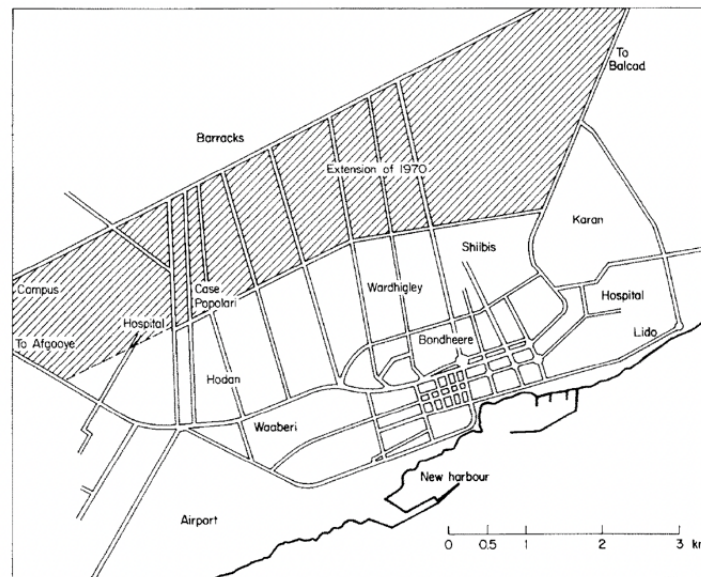


Figure 4: Planned extension of Mogadishu in 1970. Source: Arecchi 1984, reproduced with permission

These new constructions (and the roads created around them) were a source of some consternation for some of the residents of the informal periphery surrounding the town. Attempts to re-organize the auto-constructed peripheries of the town meant that ‘large numbers of families living in the *aqals* and other houses are forced to move out of the path of the proposed streets’ (Puzo, 1972, p.98) often without compensation. Urban newcomers on the periphery were often treated with suspicion, and ‘the army, the paramilitary forces and the militias often intervened violently in their neighborhoods, which radicalized them’ (Marchal, 2006, p.210). In these informal spaces on the periphery of town, the new urban residents came into contact with state power often for the first time through taxation and the threat of removal (Puzo, 1972, p.98). As Puzo (1972, p.98) argues,

‘they particularly resent the ... the fact that they are rarely able to derive any direct benefit from municipal institutions. Nevertheless, these neighborhoods are periodically reorganized according to the evolving city plan.’ These insecurities compounded the spatial inequalities of Mogadishu which were visible in the shape of the town.

### *The politics of paperwork: registration and formalization*

These inequalities also mapped on to the experiences of registering legal access to land in Mogadishu. This section develops an argument about the politics of paperwork. I emphasize the way that the “modernization” of urban land through registration, formalization, and legalization of land ownership was mediated by access to closed bureaucratic networks. These laws were not simply apolitical “advances” in the goal towards land tenure modernization in the capital, but they had the effect of compounding the spatial inequalities that I traced in the previous section.

The first intervention of the military regime into urban land and property usage came with the 1973 Urban Land Law.<sup>6</sup> Article 7 underscores that ‘land in the Democratic Republic of Somalia, regardless of who uses it, is public property’ (PADCO, 1983, p.38). Individuals and families are only allowed to register land for a single plot, and these renewable leases are for 50 years (PADCO, 1983, p.3). The leaseholder must construct on the land within two years on penalty of forfeiture. There were two broad “types” of urban land in the view of the law. The law distinguished between urban land for permanent (*daminyaale*) and temporary (*munishibaale*) use. As the Rift Valley Institute (2017, p.35) notes, ‘*daminyaale* land included all land adjacent to the city’s primary tarmac thoroughfares at the time’ whereas *munishibaale* land, or land for temporary construction, could not be constructed on without transferring the land to *daminyaale* (PADCO, 1983, p.41). It’s notable that the law would mark this distinction between temporary and permanent construction and even grant its authority to distinct authorities for zoning and regulation purposes. Indeed, the law introduces fines and penalties for buildings that do not comply with zoning codes (Article 25) or is not properly registered (Article 27). Importantly, land designated for ‘national security purposes’ or *Dan Guud* could be limited by Presidential decree (Article 8), and any land

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<sup>6</sup> Draft laws to regulate and reform the use of land were written in 1960, 1967 and 1969, but never passed (RVI, 2017, p.33). The first major intervention into the reform of land use came with the 1970 Law for Social Protection, under which ‘all forms of tribal association, rights, and privileges, including rights over land and water, were abolished and claimed by the state’ (RVI, 2017, p.33). This was significant because it vested ultimate authority over land rights to the state and delegitimized customary systems of land tenure outside the city.

*later* designation to be ‘required for national use’ could be nationalized with compensation (Article 9). The political uses of this designation will be discussed in deeper terms later.

In 1974, the city of Mogadishu was divided into 13 *degmooyin* (districts) ‘which were further sub-divided into departments (*xaafado* or *laamo*), sections (*waaxyo*) and finally neighborhoods (*tabeelooyin*) comprised of between 50 and 250 households’ (RVI, 2017, p.35). These attempts at rationalization helped to *distribute* un-developed land, as well as served for the classification and governance of existing developed areas of the city. The only significant change to urban land law comes in the 1980 Amendment to the Urban Land Law, under which responsibility for the management of *daminyaale* (permanent) land is moved from the Ministry of Public Works to the Mogadishu Municipality. As in the 1973 law, ‘All Somalis over the age of 18 years were to receive equal access to land a fixed price per square meter, unless they already owned another plot in the city’ (RVI, 2017, p.34). Some further clarifications came later, that mostly dealt with clarifications on processing of title deeds and record keeping and returned some authority to the Ministry of Public Works (RVI, 2017, p.34).

In reality, access to legal land ownership in the capital was far more complicated, bureaucratic, and favored those with favorable relationships with state actors. These constraints allowed for the construction of a parallel shadow market with an exploitative mark-up.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the cost of registration – up-front costs, taxes, and further fees – were often prohibitively expensive even for those who were in *use* of the land. According to the Rift Valley Institute (2017):

Access to the formal property market to all but the political and economic elite in Somali society was, however, almost impossible. The extremely bureaucratic process of buying land through the municipality, combined with the high price of buying land on the open market—once a building had been constructed on land purchased from the municipality it was eligible to be sold privately—limited the opportunity to purchase city plots to the very few who had the right political connections or significant capital. Once access to the property market was granted, however, significant profits were to be made. With no taxes collected on resale, property owners were reported to be selling at an increased value of between 500 to 1000 per cent within a few years. [...] Bureaucracy, corruption and greed often

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<sup>7</sup> This same problem of systemic corruption and the bureaucratic maneuvering for legal title beset the 1975 Land Law, which shifted land regulations for those outside cities. This law mandated registration for agricultural land for legal use for periods of 50 years. As Besteman (1994, p.497) argues, land registration for farmers in Loc (Middle Juba Region) was prohibitively expensive, often required travel to Mogadishu, required familiarity with the law and literacy, and contravened existing patterns of land use and development. This created a context wherein those with the financial liquidity to purchase land were able to claim land (often, remotely from the city) could do so while having little or no connection to the land. This land expropriation was a serious threat to farmer livelihoods as ‘a person could appear in the village and claim ownership to land which included villager’s farms, and the villagers had no recourse if the title had been granted’ (Besteman, 1994, p.499). These contradictions were not simply an unintended outgrowth of the land registration process, but central to the kinds of access-politics of the regime.



prevented individuals from purchasing land through official ministry channels, forcing them to turn to the private market. This market was, however, largely dominated by government officials or their relatives, who had little incentive to address inefficiency and corruption in either market.

To illustrate the bureaucratic politics of land ownership, it is helpful to trace two paper pathways. In the following vignette, this chapter will examine the documents of Fartun and Hamda's process of acquiring land in Mogadishu. Fartun is a composite character of two individuals with similar stories in acquiring *munishibaale* land<sup>8</sup>, while Hamda is an individual in search of *daminyaale* land<sup>9</sup>. These stories help to demonstrate the deep divisions in land ownership in Mogadishu before state collapse.

In the late 1980s, Fartun wrote a petition to request a plot of *munishibaale* land, reproduced in Figure 5. As this was after the transfer of authority from the Ministry of Public Works, her letter is to the Mogadishu Municipality. Fartun writes to confirm that she is a Somali citizen living in Mogadishu, that she is living in a rented home where she cannot afford the rent and requires space due to her large family. She writes that she hopes the Land Allocations Office (*Xafiiska Dhulbixinta*) accepts her petition for a home.

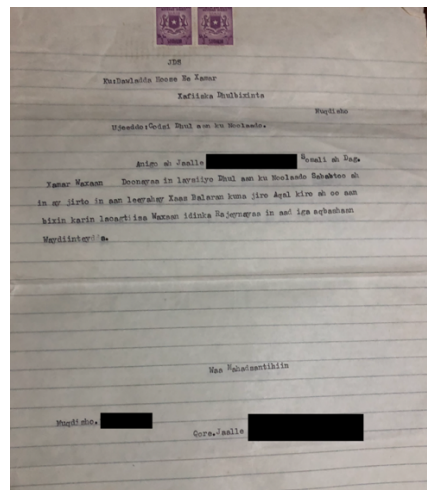


Figure 5: Fartun requests a home from the Mogadishu Municipality

As was affirmed by interviewees, this kind of formal petition was the necessary starting point for acquiring land in the capital – *munishibaale* or *daminyaale*. As one interviewee said ‘When areas

<sup>8</sup> Documents provided by Ahmed (Interview, 2019 and 2020) as the inheritor of both deceased individuals who petitioned for land (here, considered together as a single composite called Fartun). Ahmed is the current owner of these documents.

<sup>9</sup> Documents provided by Hamda (Interview, 2019 and 2020).

are designated for distribution, people hear about it and make a request. They request for a place to live' (Interview, Ahmed, 2019 and 2020). This is the case even when petitioners have connections to important individuals (*hoos-hoos*) as this creates the necessary paper trail for the intervention of connected bureaucrats.

Diverting briefly from Fartun's example, Figure 6 shows a landowner's copy of a secret letter between the then-Mayor and his administrators ordering that the petitioner's letter be accepted, and that land should be allocated to the landowner. The Mayor has, here, overridden the approval process. It is at this stage that the intervention of powerful and well-connected people can shift the balance of land allocation in newly developing areas of the city. *Qarsoodi*, or secret, is stamped across the top of the letter. The letter in Figure 6 refers directly to the landowner's petition, and the Mayor orders the administrators in the department to fulfil it with an allotment of land in the capital.

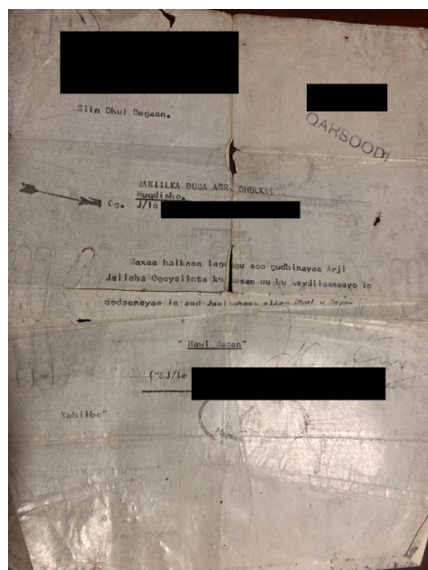


Figure 6: Secret letter between Mayor and land administrators ordering that land be offered to a petitioner

After a petition for land is approved, the would-be landowner is invited to the Municipality to pay a deposit for the search of land. After this point, they receive a receipt for that payment (*warqadda lacagbixinta*) and await the registration of their lot. This document affirms that they have been allocated a piece of land and have paid the deposit but does not reveal *which* lot they own, as showed in Figure 7 (below).

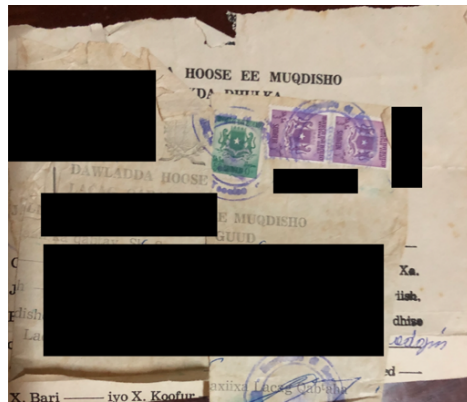


Figure 7: Warqadda laxagbixin. This document certifies that an individual is in receipt of a plot of land and has paid a deposit.

After an appointed time, sometimes up to several months, the registration of plots of land is completed within the Municipality. At this point, Fartun is invited to return to the Ministry to receive *Warqadda Lahaanshaha Dhulka*, or the Land Ownership Document (Figure 8), and is taken with a land surveyor to see, measure, and mark the plot of land. The document stipulates the exact size of the plot, what is constructed around it to the East, West, North and South (other plots or streets) and contains a series of allotment numbers that will be inputted into the registry. The document stipulates that Fartun has 12 months from the date of this document to build on the land, or it is subject to repossession.

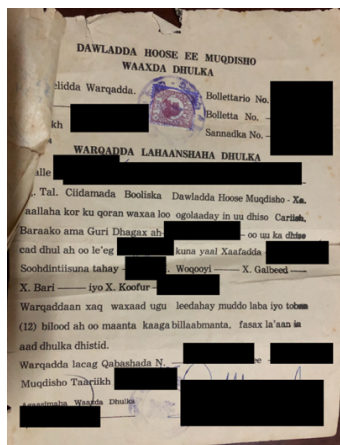


Figure 8: Warqadda Lahaanshaha Dhulka, Ownership document for land

From interviews, it seems that the actual distinction between *munishibaale* (impermanent) and *daminyaale* (permanent) land diverged in practice from its legal definition. Individuals did construct permanent structures on *munishibaale* land and did so regularly. An interviewee marked the distinction this way: ‘if the government wants to nationalize *daminyaale*, you get money back

– everything you built including the taxes. If you only have *munishibaale*, they come with a bulldozer and say leave in three months’ (Interview, Ahmed, 2019 and 2020). *Daminyaale* land seems to have given landowners a security that *munishibaale* status did not.

Hamda set about upgrading her home from *munishibaale* to *daminyaale* land. The process for registering new *daminyaale* plots was similar to that of *munishibaale* land, but at an increased cost. After registering the land as *daminyaale* and paying a fee, the owner receives zone plan with neighboring plots numbered, which is shown in Figure 9. The owner’s plot is marked in red ink, and the surrounding plot numbers are noted as well.



Figure 9: Excerpt from Hamda's zoning map, her plot is marked in red

Hamda also receives a receipt of payment, as well as an official title document (Figure 10) which notes what is on the East, West, North, and South of the home on a further page. In Hamda’s case, two of the sides were streets, while the other two sides were occupied by other plots.

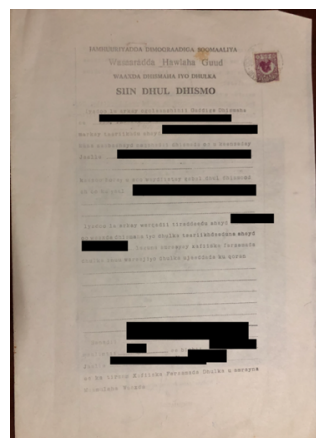


Figure 10: Land ownership for Hamda

This examination of Fartun and Hamda’s paper pathways affirms the complicated and bureaucratic politics of land ownership in Mogadishu. Each one of these movements shifted the balance of land ownership towards those in elite circles, even as it did open pathways for non-elite access to land.

The writing of the petition required literacy, or at least access to someone who was literate. As well, these petitions had to be timed to the registration of new *degmo* for urban development, which often required insider knowledge of future state actions. For land to be “searched” on your behalf, one had to pay a deposit – and thus one had to have access to a sum of cash. Within months, a would-be landowner had to be able to pay more in order to acquire the land, and then construct on the plot within the required terms. This bundle of conditions meant that those able to access the property system in Mogadishu were those who already had access to insider information, flows of cash, and at least some education. Ownership, here, was constrained by class and access to the state bureaucracy.

### **Violent transformations**

Menkhaus (2014) makes the compelling case that with the coming of conflict in 1991, political violence was *transformed*, not simply conjured out of thin air. An analysis of these ‘sharp variations in political violence’ (Menkhaus, 2014, p.558) is important to set the context for the urban war that breaks out at the end of the twentieth century. From the start of the military regime, coercion and violence was central to the state’s political project. At the time of the coup, government officials from the democratic government were jailed, in some cases for many years. As the revolution progressed, Ahmed Samatar (1988, p.109) writes of the infighting within the Supreme Revolutionary Council, and the 1972 execution of formerly-high level members of the Council, General Cainaanshe and General Gabeire due to “counter-revolutionary ideas” marked a watershed in the revolutionary project. Samatar’s (1988, p.110) interviews with members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council reveal that these executions owed General Barre’s own ‘insatiable drive for power and dominance.’ The public execution of 10 sheikhs in 1975 in the aftermath of the Family Law also marks an important turning point. This came to a climax in 1975 when the religious leaders challenged the Family Law, which gave equal rights to men and women in inheritance and other legal infrastructures (RVI, 2017, p.66). These public executions were ‘the definitive indicator that government in Somalia had become a reign of terror’ (Menkhaus, 2014, p.567).

In Mogadishu, surveillance marked the lived experience of the revolution in urban spaces. The *guulwadeyaal*, urban unemployed youth organized into ‘quasi-military formations’ acted as ‘the “eyes and ears of the Revolution” and guard[ed] against “counter-revolutionaries”’ (Samatar,

1988, p.110). As Balthasar (2018, p.154) makes clear, the tens of thousands of members ‘collaborated closely with the revolutionary councils that could... arrest anyone suspected of subverting the revolutionary government.’ The state inculcated an image of the President which reached ‘unprecedented heights of veneration,’ and charges of sedition or treason were met with severe consequences (Samatar, 1988, p.110). This atmosphere of mutual suspicion and fear of state reprisal marked the embodied experiences of those who lived and worked in the capital.

These regimes of violence in the country’s periphery also found their way back to the capital, as those reputed to be allied with disfavored clans came under scrutiny – notwithstanding their own individual actions. As urban land could be nationalized by Presidential decree, some interviewees suggested that urban land was sometimes claimed in the “national interest” for political purposes (Interview, Sahro, 2019). When clan groups became informally disfavored by the regime due to countervailing political circumstances, those interviewees stressed the difficulties of contesting state repossession (Interview, Sahro, 2019 and 2020; Interview, Hawa, 2019). This politicized use of *Dan Guud*, or land nationalization, brought contestations about national politics into the embodied space of the home and street and brought some landowners into friction with the state.

### *Distant violence*

To give context to the widespread state violence against civilians that marks the late twentieth century, it is critical to understand the ill-fated 1977-78 war with Ethiopia and its aftermath. In search of a ‘Greater Somalia,’ the Somali state ventured into the Ogaden to support the Western Somali Liberation Front. After a brief series of victories, the Soviet Union withdrew support from the Somalis in favor of the Ethiopians, the Somali National Army was quickly overwhelmed. Refugees from the Ogaden region poured into Somali territory, and became the subject of deep contestation in the Northeast where many were settled (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.84). As Kapteijns (2013a, p.84) argues, international aid (that was not diverted) afforded these refugees ‘better services than the local population’ while also rendering them ‘vulnerable to pressures by the government to be recruited into its security forces and army.’ These contests heightened the stakes for the state violence that came after it. Critically, the Ogaden War lost Somalia its Cold War patron – the Soviet Union. In this context, the country sought support from the United States, and while it received military aid from the Americans, the country underwent structural adjustment.

This served to ‘trigge[r] the devaluation of the shilling by more than 90 percent, brought further cutbacks on state employment and social spending, and worse[n] the trade balance’ (Samatar, 2000, p.58). These structural transformations created severe economic dislocations for those without the means to withstand them.

There were deep disparities in wealth and resources between Mogadishu and its peripheries. As Kapteijns (2013a, p.77) notes many regions in the country, even ‘the so-called home areas of even the highest state officials’ remained ‘*lamagaaraan*, regions where nothing ever reached.’ Kapteijns traces a twin disparity in ‘power and wealth – nationally between Mogadishu and the rest of the country, within Mogadishu between haves and have-nots’ which expanded as ‘the construct of clan obscured the nature of the class privilege of the new elite’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.77). In this way, clan discourse was mobilized to *cloak* relations of inequity in the postcolonial state. Kapteijns (2013a, p.76) argues that through the use of clan as a ‘technology of power,’ the Somali state ‘the state used [clan] to manage groups of subjects whom it did not want to engage as rights-bearing individuals’ and created a context through which ‘subjects used it compete with each other for the benefits or protection from harassment that might be obtained from the state.’ In other words, clan discourse was useful to the state when managing potential dissent, when it could be wielded to suppress, divide, and reorganize alliances amongst the citizenry. As Kapteijns (2013a, p.79) put it, counter to claims that Barre used state offices to inordinately enrich his own clan, ‘Barre did not rule for the benefit of any clans but through them for his own benefit.’

The centralization of wealth in the capital trickled to Somalia’s peripheries through systems of patronage. Kapteijns (2013a, p.77) writes of how this patronage ‘toward some of their clients deceived (as players in the lottery are misled) as well as divided-and-ruled the common people.’ Clan, therefore, was mobilized as a political instrument both ‘to mediat[e] the relationship between government and subjects’ as well as ‘among the subjects themselves’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.77). In the hands of the military regime, the colonial practice of the collective punishment of communities as retribution for perceived dissent was taken to new extremes – state-sponsored clan cleansing.

Kapteijns (2013a) traces two episodes of large-scale state violence through which the transformation of clan into a ‘technology of power’ was further entrenched. After a failed coup in 1978, the state attributed responsibility to “*the Majeerteen*” and ‘of the seventeen men who were put to death, all but one were of this clan background’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.81). The Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) militia was created in this aftermath, after which the state

adopted a violent strategy of retaliation. The government policy enacted collective punishment in return – destroying wells and access to water, destroying food supplies and whole villages, and rampant abuses of individuals including rape and torture (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.82). These massacres were ‘a classic case of collective clan-based violence against civilians as a government technology and instrument of state power’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.83). This deep violence against Somali people would be repeated, at unprecedented levels, a few years later.

In the 1980s, after the failure of the Ogaden War, ‘*the* Isaaq’ came under collective disfavor because of the creation of the Somali National Movement (SNM) militia. The SNM succeeded in capturing two towns in the Northwest (the former British Somaliland), and the military regime responded with extraordinary brutality – bombing the urban centers of Hargeisa and Burco from the skies while attacking and brutalizing the civilians who tried to escape. Thousands were murdered in what Human Rights Watch (1990) later called ‘a government at war with its own people.’ For those who lived through it, and their descendants, this state-sponsored violence was nothing less than an attempt at extermination.

Ultimately, these trails of state violence against whole clans would rebound upon the city through urbicide, reordering Mogadishu’s spatial and demographic contours and bringing about the collapse of the state. The memories of this political violence is intertwined with discursive depictions of the pre-war state, and sets the stakes for contemporary memory politics.

### **Intimate territoriality in postcolonial Mogadishu**

Taken together, Mogadishu’s rapid tectonic political shifts in the twentieth century had a marked impact on the city and its many meanings. In a way, the change from the colonial to the postcolonial city is about a shifting of urban enclosures – moving from an overtly racial distribution of space to one mediated by access to the state, political networks, wealth. This, too, is reflected in how belonging in Mogadishu segmented across class lines, through access to closed bureaucratic networks, and through the capacity to own in Mogadishu. The ever-present question in this dissertation of ‘who can belong’ in Mogadishu, and ‘who can own the city’ reveals an important answer. While anyone of any clan could ostensibly make life in the city (and many did), the structural realities of urban life constrained land ownership and use to those who had access to closed bureaucratic networks. This has concrete implications on the discursive slippage between owning *in* Mogadishu and *owning Mogadishu*, the central contestation of intimate territoriality



that this dissertation examines in the contemporary era. This chapter argues three central points: that the Somalia's political and historical independence was characterized by a centralization of political power and wealth in Mogadishu, that land ownership in the city was circumscribed by class difference, and that these class distinctions were spatially mediated (made up the contours of the city, from the center to the periphery).

First, the centralization of political power and wealth in Mogadishu outlined in this chapter came through the designation of the city as the national capital, the legacy of centralized governance inherited from colonial administration, and the directives of the postcolonial state. This centralization of power and wealth in the capital of the country has clear implications for city-making more generally, but also the *meanings* engendered by violent and non-violent conflict over space in the capital. The city was, in some ways, the site of the nation. Mogadishu represented a space in which the political ideal of Somali modernity, defined here as social solidarity across clan identity, was in fact embodied in a material way. The city engendered a tradition of "cosmopolitanism" that was very much real, even as it was riven through with inequality. This centralization of power in the capital, as well as these deep affective registers of what the city *represented* in the context of the nation- and state-in-the-making, are important sites of analysis because it helps to contextualize the reason why claims to Mogadishu are so fractious in the contemporary moment.

Second, this chapter made the case that legal land ownership in the capital was circumscribed by access to elite, bureaucratic networks. This is important because with the coming of the urban civil war, the close relationship between access to the state and land ownership in the capital not only unravels, but also becomes a site of political contestation. These papers become sites of intimate territoriality as they become the anchoring points for claims to ownership for those forwarding the "cosmopolitan claim" while simultaneously becoming demonstrative of the *illegitimacy* of ownership during military rule through a narrative construction of mass corruption under the "autochthonous claim." Even as pre-war urbanites who had access to these elite structures often understood themselves as *Mogadishans* first and foremost, with little interest in clan distinctions, this kind of "cosmopolitan" identity was forged through, and required an elision of, the deep seated inequalities in urban space. These arguments will be made in full in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

Finally, this chapter considered the spatial politics of urbanization in the city, and the development of an informal urban periphery. As was the case in this dissertation's consideration of the colonial era, planning law and legal instruments are mutually interpolated. The legal system and the planning system collaborate in producing those who *cannot* access land, who *cannot* be a part of the state project. Through the rationalization of the land tenure system, 'modernity' gained a new meaning. Land titling and registration formalized new relationships of visibility between the state and the land user, in the urban and agricultural setting. This was true whether or not one registered a parcel of land. When registered, the state could tax, fine, and verify plots of land and property for specific usage. When unregistered, the state had the power to coerce, demolish, and evict one from land that did not comply with zoning mandates, was not properly registered, or was not constructed upon or cultivated within the appropriate amount of time. Even so, deep inequalities between those who had *access* to these distribution networks, and those who did not (the poor, the illiterate, the distant) mediated the land distribution process itself at an elemental level.

The kind of politico-historical contested memories evoked by conflict-related property disputes, as examined in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, emerge from the discordant relationships to land, property, and belonging in this era, but also in the colonial era that preceded it and the conflict era that came after. Taken together, narratives about contemporary ownership of Mogadishu are tangentially related to the legal politics of ownership as proved through titles and deeds. Instead, the complicated political history of plunder (both colonial and postcolonial) bleeds into understands of what kind of ownership, and what kind of belonging is even possible.

### CHAPTER 3 – VIOLENT LINE(AGE)S: URBICIDE IN MOGADISHU

This chapter will discuss what has come to be the most well-known aspect of Mogadishu's political history in the twentieth century – the coming of state collapse and the outbreak of mass violence in the streets in 1991. In many ways, *because* of this notoriety, it is critical to reappraise what is known, what is yet to be known, and what substantially changed in the months and decades that followed the war.

This chapter concludes the tracing of belongings in Mogadishu's past (1908-1991), which I argue were made and remade through the colonial spatial order (1908-1960), through postcolonial rationality and 'socialist' bureaucratic modernity (1960-1991), and now through the many orders that arose through war. In some ways, this mode of historicization of these critical junctures conceals far more than it reveals. The splicing of time into distinct decades, each analyzed with its own mode of being, can imply that the preceding landscapes of ordering simply dissolved away into nothing. Instead, I argue that these political formations and ways of being in the city left their mark on the city and its denizens. It is this urban residue – tangible and intangible, concrete and cultural, material and mnemonic – that is at stake in the conflict-related property disputes that will be analyzed in the following chapters. These violent and exclusionary heritages come up in unexpected ways. Like a palimpsest, 'space accumulates and contains sediments' (Freund, 2006, p.69) from these different eras and orders of being in Mogadishu. What legacies are taken up and what parts are obscured remain the core of the political project of state reconstruction, urban reconstruction, and public memory.

The civil war threw into disarray a bureaucratic and political order premised on an exclusive and autocratic state. The centrifugal force that pulled apart the centralized state could be described as anarchy only to the extent that it occurred in the absence of the state. Political violence in Mogadishu, even at the height of the civil war, was *organized* around particular through-lines, which had to do with the city, its place in the nation, and erecting a new politics of belonging. I argue this case through the invocation of the theoretical concept of urbicide, a critical theoretical tool that speaks to violence done to undo the city, and to some degree cityness as a whole.

The civil war ruptured and reproduced relations of belonging and ownership practices in Mogadishu. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the civil war and analyze it through the theoretical frame of urbicide. I find that the meaning of urban belonging substantively shifted

through the propagation of urban political violence from a general nationalist utopic cosmopolitanism (underwritten with contradictions) to a metric of belonging that was explicitly and exclusively written through clan. The logics of territoriality and “clan homeland,” applied to the city meant that the urban polity was rewritten to match the new political programmatic of the city. The following chapter will first unfold the argument of urbicide, connecting it clearly to the politics of the belonging. It will then trace, through the distinct phases of the Somali civil war, how urbicide and clan cleansing reorganized key conceptions of belonging and territoriality in Mogadishu in line with the tectonic shifts that were occurring across the whole of the Somali territories.

### **Making sense of urbicide**

The first contention of this chapter is that while all violence in Mogadishu was tragic, not all of it was random. One must begin with an assumption of the *political* nature of this violence, in contrast to popular imagery that surrounds the outbreak of mass violence in 1991 as indiscriminate violence of greed and personal ambition arising amidst the breakdown or absence of politics. In order to accomplish this, I will situate the violence that occurred in Mogadishu, particularly in the early years of the war, as urbicide.

To begin, it is important to locate urbicide within a wider transnational academic literature at the intersection of political geography, urban studies, and architecture that examines political violence in urban spaces. What might be termed a broader “war in the city” literature considers how conflict is enmeshed and reproduced within and through urban space. Studies of ‘divided cities’ and ‘contested cities’ (Bollens, 2001; Bollens, 2012) think through how spatial and social frontiers mark the propagation and aftermath of urban violence in cities like Jerusalem (Shlay and Rosen, 2015; Pullan, 2009) and Sarajevo (Ristic, 2018; Bădescu, 2015). These considerations examine how the formal outcomes of peace agreements as urban frontiers became material manifestations of conflict in the everyday through the creation of boundary markers and other kinds of divided urban infrastructure. Here, the issues of ethnonational or religious conflict are read through, and with, the urban landscape in order to examine how ‘conflicts which stem from larger fields of ethnicity, nation and religion become reinterpreted at the urban level’ (Pullan, 2013, p.4).

An even more broad consideration of studies of urban violence destabilizes the division

between urban conflict and more “mundane” political violence. The “wounded cities” literature examines urban spaces in the aftermath of political disaster, economic restructuring, terrorism and trauma (Till, 2012; Schneider and Susser, 2003). This dovetails with attempts in urban studies to investigate state violence and abandonment alongside the governance and violence of non-state actors, such as studies of police violence in Brazil (Denyer Willis, 2015), townships in South Africa (Murray, 2011), and gangs in Pakistan (Gayer, 2014). These interventions are critical to understand how urban political violence mediated by state and non-state actors suffuses the built environment with tensions over territoriality, identity, statecraft (or absence), and their everyday navigations. In this dissertation, I consider the changing patterns of urban conflict – from outright war through to “mundane” violence – and think of how it transformed claims to belonging in the city. To do this, I engage the theoretical conception of urbicide.

The concept of urbicide gained its current theoretical meaning during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, particularly with reference to the role of the destruction of the built environment in Sarajevo and Mostar (Coward, 2008). Architects, town planners, and geographers noted the ways in which immense violence was done to the built environment and began to conceive of this as a distinct category of analysis that exceeded considerations of collateral damage, concerns about cultural heritage, or urban destruction as ‘a metaphor for certain concepts and values’ (Coward, 2004, p.159). Instead, these scholars began to think of this violence as something wholly distinct, with its own logic and practices. The language of urbicide has since been expanded to include readings that engage contested cities such as Aleppo (Stanley, 2017) and Beirut (Fregonese, 2009).

Just what is killed in urbicide? What exactly does the term ‘urbicide’ denote? Shaw (2004, p.145) makes a critical distinction between war *of* the city and war *in* the city, which are not mutually exclusive. Urbicide implies war *of* the city, in which ‘the viability of plural... urban life was a key issue’ (Shaw, 2004, p.145). Similarly, Coward (2009, p.39) speaks of urbicide as the ‘destruction of heterogeneity’ or even more interestingly, ‘the destruction of the possibility of heterogeneity.’ Urbicide is violence done to the built environment to bring about a ‘foreclosure of the possibility of the political... a violent foreclosure of the heterogeneous political arena that precedes the determination of society according to one single political program’ (Coward, 2009, p.43). Put another way, where urbanity is understood to represent a sort of agonistic pluralism, urbicide is the use of political violence to force the unweaving of those nodes of connection. The

built environment is undone in order to force ‘the destruction of urbanity for its own sake’ (Coward, 2009, p.43).

Urbicide is not simply about the destruction of the built environment, but also critically about the destruction of spaces of ‘being-with-others’ (Coward, 2009) that the urban represents. Theories of urbicide push away from anthropocentric conceptions of wartime in urban spaces, and reject the impulse to see the destruction of the built environment as *allegorical* for the destruction of the community that it once contained (Coward, 2004, p.164). Instead, considerations of urbicide invite us to consider the politics of the destruction of the built environment in their own right, asking what kind of spatial politics are enacted through urban conflict. In this way, urbicide speaks to the fundamental dialectic between warfare and the city.

I argue that the concept of urbicide holds a great deal of analytical value for the study of urban war in Mogadishu. I hope to contribute to the extensive scholarship considering the outbreak of war in the capital from multiple interventions. Kapteijns (2013a) considers how Mogadishu’s war featured “clan cleansing” as a central feature, with those associated with the ousted Barre’s clan targeted for exile and bodily harm. Menkhaus and Adawe (2018) consider how the war led to a loss of “inclusivity” in urban spaces, as the war reterritorialized cities as sites of “clan homelands,” while Grünewald (2012) examines the disbursement of aid in the conflicted city. I am particularly interested in contributing to studies that consider the unfolding of a distinct politics of urban destruction (Marchal, 2006), looting (Bakonyi, 2010) and property-related violence (Bakonyi, Chonka and Stuvøy, 2019), I hope to consider this violence through the city and transformations to cityscape and boundaries around urban living. Through these considerations, I trace the connection between violence done to the built environment and the larger national-level politics of political violence committed against emblems of the state and the city’s denizens. In this chapter, in connection with the analyses in previous chapters, I draw out the import of Mogadishu as a city, and not just as a backdrop for battle. Through the theoretical intervention offered by urbicide, I link together the urban geopolitics of violence, the distinct politics of urban violence mediated through space, and the implications for who can and cannot belong in the city. Through the targeting of thoroughways and cafés, the carving of martial boundaries through enclaves and green lines, and the destroying of some monuments and erection of others, the city is itself becomes enjoined in the fray of warfare (Fregonese, 2009). This reordering of the city

towards martial ends engenders new ways of understanding, belonging in, and relating during and after urbicide.

What follows is an examination of the war, followed by an analysis of key factors of the war through the prism of urbicide including clan cleansing, mass looting, property destruction and theft, and the systematic destruction of anything reminiscent of the state. In doing so, it will establish that urbicide reorganized the meaning and possibilities of belonging in Mogadishu, setting the stakes for contemporary contestations over intimate territoriality.

### **Mogadishu's unraveling**

In one sense, the story of the Somali civil war is a story of rapid decentralization. From a centralized state ordered from a single capital city, the state was fractured into a secessionist state (Somaliland from 1991), an autonomous region (Puntland from 1998) and a large swath of shifting patchwork territories in “South-Central Somalia” that would eventually form into varying degrees of functional federal units in 2012. The state’s centralized coercive power, which was used to brutalize civilians in the remote regions in the 1980s, comes rapidly and spectacularly undone.

By the late 1980s, eruptions of violence across the wider Somali territories were coupled with stagnation and economic decline. The Barre regime brazenly embezzled and redirected international aid, lining their own coffers and those of their increasingly precarious supporters (Marchal, 2006). As considered in the previous chapter, the state brutally repressed dissent with the collective punishment of “*the*” Majeerteen civilians in Mudug for the formation of the Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SSDF) militia in 1979. The state also attempted all-out clan based slaughter against “*the*” Isaaq in present-day Somaliland to suppress the Somali National Movement (SNM) militia. With the formation of “*the*” Hawiye-based United Somali Congress (USC) militia in 1987, the regime tried to engage the same kind of clan-based collective retribution. However, by the beginning of the 1990s, Barre was derisively referred to as the ‘mayor of Mogadishu’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.117), as he had lost his hold over the country outside of its capital. Soon, Mogadishu would become embroiled in this violence as the USC would come to depose Barre himself.

It is important to consider why Mogadishu would become the epicenter and the site and source of struggle over the coming, tragic decades. This dissertation has traced, over the colonial and post-independence periods, deepening enmeshment between the capital and control of the

state's power and wealth. State power, state investment, and perhaps *stateness* was centered on the capital to an inordinate degree, reducing most regions outside of the capital to '*lamagaaran*' or 'regions where nothing reached' (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.77). This enmeshment would come to have a tragic impact on the progression of the war and the fractious violence waged for and *through* it, because of the significance of the city to the state and to the nation. One interlocutor described Mogadishu as 'a capital city...has been a city where everyone lived. Two hundred years of government, every *qabiil* (clan) put their land in Xamar (Mogadishu). There was a change at the war. There was a run away at the war' (Interview, Bashir, 2019). This pulls together a reading of Mogadishu as peopled in a distinct way in the Somali territories – once ordered by an ethos of cosmopolitanism and the possibility of cross-cutting ties across clan, forming a Mogadishan identity that sat alongside, and in some cases superseded, clan identification. This possibility was somewhat extinguished during the coming of clan-based violence and uricide. What was being fought over was not simply control over the state, in some basic martial sense. The war in the city was, in a central way, about control over the state and national project, fought through and over the material of the city.

It is important to have a sense of the distinct phases of the urban war in the capital, before explicating the distinct ways in which these processes transformed the demography and shape of the city for its denizens and for the wider country. Similarly, Grünewald (2012) demarcates between Mogadishu's *wars* in the city, making the case that the changing trajectories of urban warfare held distinct political meanings over time. Marchal (2006, p.210) suggests that 'the urban war is generally periodized by the leading personalities that were targeted for toppling.' In the next section, however, this dissertation will trace the punctuations and major turns in the urban war to build a foundation for our consideration of uricide.

### *The fall of Barre*

According to Kapteijns (2013a, p.102), by the late 1980s, as 'power had shifted away from the country as a whole, so this shift occurred in Mogadishu.' She carefully traces a widening, expanding circle of state violence and counter-violence mediated through the city. A wave of state repression followed student demonstrations in Mogadishu in 1989, which in turn sparked open rioting, which was quelled through force (Bakonyi, 2010, p.444). As Kapteijns (2013a, p.117) notes, 'both the regime and the armed opposition contributed to making the city ungovernable even



before the Battle for Mogadishu began on December 30, 1990.’ There was rampant state violence as Barre ‘could no longer control or pay the army whose competence and morale he himself had actively undermined’ which was coupled with the violence of the USC militia, which intended to ‘provoke the civilian population further and thus ensure its full popular participation in the armed struggle against the regime’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.117). These clashes, increasing in number and intensity, led to the Battle for Mogadishu in the closing days of 1990, which would eventually oust Barre at the end of January, 1991.

Kapteijns (2013a) describes the Battle for Mogadishu as a dizzying series of simultaneous events. The proximate cause for the general riot which led to the deposing of Barre was the discovery that members of the Presidential Guard, the Red Berets, had been responsible for the murder and robbery of a Hawiye businessman (Bakonyi, 2010, p.444). As the army attempted to tamp down the uprising through lethal force, the crowds grew in size and ferocity. As Bakonyi (2010, p.444) and Kapteijns (2013a, p.121) both argue, parts of the USC militia were in position to capitalize on this spontaneous outpouring of anger, but not necessarily in control of the growing crowds. Simultaneously, the USC launched its ‘all-out final military assault on Mogadishu’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.121) after successive waves of fighting that ‘slowly but surely moved on the capital’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.120). Indeed ‘rather than controlling the mass violence or leading the fights,’ Bakonyi (2009, p.444) argues, freshly arrived incoming insurgents from USC and SPM ‘contributed to sustaining the urban violence against the state.’ Eventually, Barre fled Villa Somalia at the end of January, 1991, after the failure of many rounds of negotiations. This was not, however, to be the end of the conflict in Mogadishu.

### *Violent line(age)s*

Barre’s ouster marked a palpable shift in the violence in Mogadishu. Bakonyi (2009, p.445) argues that in this moment, ‘initial political goals were successively replaced by clanist claims’ as the nature of the violence shifted in meaning and scope. In the first waves of looting that accompanied the public uprising against Barre, public properties such as ‘offices, banks, state-owned businesses, cinemas’ were destroyed through popular uprising and organized looting (Bakonyi, 2010, p.445). After Barre’s flight from Mogadishu, however, the forms of violence and looting changed. As Bakonyi (2009, p.446) argues, ‘the main targets... soon shifted from “the seats of power” to the “residences of wrongdoers”’ as the blame for state actions was placed at the feet of all those in

Barre's clan, 'regardless of their real position or status within the political system.' This shift in looting politics maps on to the patterns that Kapteijns traces through the analytical tool of 'clan cleansing.'

Clan cleansing represented a 'key shift' in the scale and meanings of clan-based political violence, marking both 'a transformative political moment and, in a Foucauldian sense... a momentous shift in the dominant public political discourse in Somalia' (Kapteijns, 2013a, note 1, 243). In 1991, Kapteijns argues, there was an important discursive and political transformation in the political uses and configurations of clan-based violence. Rather than assessments of the Somali civil war as a return to some primordial forms of social organizing and warring, Kapteijns (2013a, p.1) argues that this key shift towards 'clan logic' was 'analytically, politically, and discursively something new,' an important transformation in the organization of political violence, political space, and its inhabitants. Kapteijns (2013a) traces the lineage of clan cleansing in Mogadishu through the use of clan as a "technology of power" through the colonial era, through the autocratic era, and into the rupture of the civil war. The politics of clan-based collective punishment enacted by the colonial regimes in Italian and British Somaliland and continued through military rule engendered collective grievance, humiliation, and reified clan identities and the relationship to power. As the political violence organized by the state raged on, militias cobbled together in the name of clan families sought to legitimate their violence and gain adherents through the propagation of clan hate narratives (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.79).

Kapteijns (2013a, p.2) argues that when clan cleansing materialized in 1991, 'USC fighters and civilian supporters adopted a politics that defined as mortal enemy all Somalis encompassed by the genealogical construct of Daarood' and through this discursive definition even though 'the vast majority of these individuals had not been associated with or benefited from the regime...the were nevertheless targeted for elimination and expulsion' from Mogadishu and surrounding areas.' Clan cleansing was a manifestly political project, with militia and other political leaders exercising this call to violence in order to impel the participation of civilians, and to reorganize politico-spatial power in the city. In the following section, this chapter will return to this moment of clan cleansing as a key feature of uricide.

The start of what Marchal (2006, p.211) calls the "second war" of Mogadishu came with the fracture of the USC into opposing factions headed by Cali Mahdi Maxamed and Maxamed

Faarax Caaydiid<sup>10</sup> in November of 1991. The ‘hurried appointment’ of Cali Mahdi to a contested interim Presidency ‘precipitated a split among the loose alliance of opposition movements that had fought to overthrow Barre’ (Bradbury, 1993, p.14). And after reconciliation attempts failed, intensive fighting between the groups cleaved the city apart into several unequal and inaccessible quarters (Marchal, 2006, p.215).

By spring of 1992, a ‘shaky ceasefire’ (Grünewald, 2012, p.S110) had come over Mogadishu, and the city was split into unequal halves separated by a ‘green line’ over which individuals could not safely traverse. In the following section, this chapter will also return to the consequences of the reterritorialization of urban space for martial ends. In any case, the wholesale collapse of the state combined with the widespread violence soon plunged the region into a humanitarian catastrophe. As Bakonyi (2009, p.448) puts it, ‘the war soon revealed another dynamic, with looting and banditry developing in an organized manner.’ As the humanitarian situation in Mogadishu and its environs worsened, international actors intervened.

### *Interventions and withdrawal*

With the authorization of United Nations Security Council Resolution 751 in April of 1992, UNOSOM I established a mandate for the deployment of a small observer mission to Somalia. However, by the end of the year, it became clear that the continual diversion of critical humanitarian aid, as well as control of the ports and distribution routes, became central to the ‘political economy of the militia’ (Lewis and Mayall, 1995, p.108). This led to the authorization of Security Council Resolution 794, which mandated the start of the UNITAF Mission, which would prepare for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The UNITAF Mission in Somalia, also known as Operation Restore Hope, began in December of 1992 with a rather promising start. This U.S.-led mission managed to begin the flow of aid materials and opened the airport and seaport in Mogadishu within 48 hours of its authorization (Boutros-Ghali, 1997, p.33).

Ambiguities about the scope of the UNITAF mission created problems between the United Nations and the United States. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali pushed for a wider berth for disarmament and whole-country presence (Boutros-Ghali, 1999, p.40-41), with American reticence to ‘avoid any situation that might turn into a Vietnam-like quagmire for U.S. troops’

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<sup>10</sup> Often transliterated Aideed or Aidid in English writing.

(Boulden, 2001, p.66). What followed was a speedy and uneven transition to the fateful UNOSOM II Mission, authorized by Security Council Resolution 814 (1993). Unlike UNOSOM I, UNOSOM II was a peace *enforcement* mission that was mandated for disarmament, scope to exercise power across the country, and cease-fire. This fast transition meant that ‘when it occurred, and lack of extensive prior planning meant that UNOSOM II began the mission scrambling to find its feet’ (Boulden, 2001, p.67).

As Recchia (2020, p.342) makes clear, the expanded ‘enforcement mandate drew the ire of Somali warlords, resulting in frequent attacks on the peacekeepers and increasingly turning the U.N. into a belligerent in the country’s civil war.’ After 24 Pakistani peacekeepers were killed in June of 1993, responsibility was quickly attributed to Mohammed Farah Aidid (Boulden, 2001, p.68). Within days, Security Council Resolution 837 (1993) unanimously authorized UNOSOM II to ‘arrest and detain for trial and punishment the Somalis responsible for the slaying of a ... Pakistani unit of the U.N. peacekeeping force’ and subsequently the Special Representative of the Secretary General issued an arrest warrant for Aidid specifically (Boulden, 2001, p.68). As Lewis and Mayall (1995, p.116) put it, Admiral Howe, then serving as the Secretary General’s Special Representative, behaved ‘as though he were the sheriff of Mogadishu and proclaimed Aidid an outlaw.’

The brutal violence of urban warfare that followed is, at this point, well known. When ‘UNOSOM II went to war against Aidid’ (Kapteijns, 2013b, p.432), it did so in a way that had important consequences for the denizens of Mogadishu. As Kapteijns (2013b, p.432) recounts, ‘the campaign of air attacks on Mogadishu went on for three months. It terrified and humiliated Somali residents of the targeted neighborhoods... and caused high levels of death and devastation.’ In the context of this violence against Somalis came the brutal deaths and subsequent images of the dead bodies and mutilated corpses of 18 American soldiers after Aidid’s men succeeded in shooting down Black Hawk helicopters and preventing their rescue. By March 1994, just days after the capture of Task Force Ranger, the United States announced its withdrawal from Somalia, with Italy, Belgium and France making similar announcements thereafter, with a final departure date for UNOSOM II achieved by the end of March 1995.

While the quick reversal of UNOSOM II’s fortunes and subsequent withdrawal of U.N. troops is often understood as the end point of international intervention, the urban war continued. While at this point, aspirations for the capture of national power through control of Mogadishu all

but faded, the war had generated its own self-sustained economic and political motivations for those who stood to benefit. As Marchal (2006, p.211) writes, ‘yet another round of political violence between warlords under the banner of sub-clans broke out in 1994 – this time between “the” Habar Gidir and Xawadle militias.’ This took place at the tail end of this period, ‘leading to the political elimination of the latter from Mogadishu politics’ (Marchal, 2006, p.211). A ‘lull’ following the death of Aidid in 1996 turned again to violence when groups allied against Aidid came to blows against one another. As Marchal (2006, p.211) notes, ‘internal tensions within [“the”] Abgaal surfaced, turning into an ugly intra-clan, low-intensity conflict that was still simmering in 2002.’ As in the rest of the Somali territories, the long-running conflict continued to simmer in Mogadishu and take new forms.

### *Urban reformations*

The division of urban space into violent enclaves and the protracted experience of violence in the capital made life increasingly difficult for Mogadishu’s urban residents. According to Ahmed Ibrahim (2018), in this context novel forms of governance arrangements began to emerge in the form of Shari’a Courts in Mogadishu. These Shari’a Courts are demonstrative of what Ibrahim (2018, p.26) calls ‘a movement of communal self-governance’ which was ‘rooted in the historical experience and traditions of the communities that established the courts.’ The emergence of the courts is placed within the political terrain of the region of Mogadishu in which they operated – the first court, in Mogadishu’s Madina neighborhood, came into being as early as 1992 because ‘Madina lacked a strongman, in the form of a warlord who could maintain a monopoly of violence’ (Ibrahim, 2018, p.17). It was the beginning of a structural shift in which ‘a communal self-defense initiative...managed to reduce the level of crime in the neighborhood’ (Ibrahim, 2018, p.19). The first Shari’a Court in north Mogadishu came into being *through* the clan-militia structure that dominated the space, established in 1994. It was established with ‘the blessing of and indeed under the nominal authority of Cali Mahdi, the leading strongman of the Abgaal’ (Ibrahim, 2018, p.19) until the court’s activities were read as interventions into the political sphere, at which point it lost the support of its secular backers and was disbanded by 1996 (Ibrahim, 2018, p.20). The emergence of multiple courts in south Mogadishu were similarly awkwardly positioned inside and outside of the auspices of the warlords in control of the region. The emergence of these courts was, placed in

its context, radical as it ‘was accompanied by a process that de-emphasized lineage belonging and lineage hierarchies’ emphasizing instead ‘the egalitarian ideal of Islam’ (Ibrahim, 2018, p.194).

As the Courts operated independent of one another, there were severe jurisdictional issues. Ibrahim traces the governing relations between the courts over time, where ‘they would come to each other’s aid when engaged in conflict with a warlord,’ ‘exchange judges, share experiences, and train each other’s staff,’ culminating in a coordination effort to ‘creat[e] a standing committee’ composed of the leaders of the Shari’a courts (Ibrahim, 2018, p.22). In the mid-2000s, the functioning independent courts merged to create the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). This effort was met with broad-based support from powerful clan members, businessmen, charities, and others (Verhoeven, 2009, p.415). Ibrahim (2018, p.221) sees this shift as marking a transformation from “traditional” to bureaucratized authority as ‘the authority to interpret and speak for the Shari’a was no longer vested in the “traditionally” trained religious scholars, but in the impersonal workings of rules, procedural norms, and most importantly documentation.’ This translated into the political goals of the movement, as well as how the Courts were perceived locally and globally.

While the ICU was notably cross-clan, it was internally divided between those categorized as ‘hardline’ jihadists committed to international struggle and ‘moderates’ committed to a national political project (Menkhaus, 2007, p.365). The ICU spread quickly in Mogadishu and its environs, quickly expanding its reach and roundly defeating the Washington-backed ‘Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism,’ a rebrand of the same warlords, but now supported with counter-terrorism funding. Notably, the ICU gained traction and popularity as a result of its ambition to ‘remove all roadblocks, reopen schools and confiscate all guns’ (Verhoeven, 2009, p.415). The defeat of the ICU after a brutal 2006 war with Ethiopia handed control of Mogadishu to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Abdullahi Yusuf, the then-President of the TFG, relocated to Villa Somalia. Al Shabaab, a radical splinter group that arose in the aftermath of the Ethiopian incursion, continued to battle with the TFG. The United Nations-backed African Union mission, AMISOM, wrested control of the capital from Al Shabaab in 2011 and paved the way for the transition to the first non-transitional government since state collapse, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS).

The time since this transformation in 2012 is the central concern of this dissertation. As traced in the next three chapters of this dissertation, the contemporary city is marked by fluid relationships of overlapping governance (Chapter 4), disjointed and contested memories (Chapter

5), which are set in a contested context of urban “reconstruction” (Chapter 6). Throughout, the uncertainty of political tumult and spectacular violence from Al Shabaab threatens to upend the halting “normalcy” in the city. To consider the contemporary city in-depth, I argue that it is critical to analyze the war in the city through the theoretical concept of urbicide.

### **Urbicide in Mogadishu**

In the rest of this chapter, I argue how the transformations that marked the start and propagation of warfare in Mogadishu constituted urbicide. There were massive population displacements that marked the onset of the Somali civil war and complicated non-linear trails of exile that included exile from Mogadishu and exile to Mogadishu. The middle class and those with the financial means to leave the city and those targeted for the clan cleansing that ensnared so many were pushed out of the city’s bounds, but many others displaced from other regions in the country found it expedient to enter Mogadishu, perhaps for the first time. These complicated pathways left the city with many people adjusting to the context of the new city in wartime.

The violence that swept Mogadishu proceeded in stages, which would culminate in the destruction of many parts of the city. The ancient quarter of the city, Shingaani, suffered severe damage as a result of its location as the ‘green line’ across which early fractions of militias fought. In the early phase of the war, as the dictator was toppled and the state crumbled, groups of people dismantled state buildings for survival and ‘looted’ the homes and private properties of those said to be associated with the ousted regime – a widening and increasingly all-encompassing affiliation. And as the war raged on, parts of the city were hidden away from one another as the morphology of the city became fragmented around the control of particular warlords who held those areas by force. All of this happened in a city increasingly defined through the politics of clan cleansing.

This section will consider urbicide in Mogadishu as constituted through clan cleansing, looting and the politics of rage, and martial urban reterritorializations. The looting that occurred during the early phases of the civil war was certainly economically motivated (whether for riches or for bare survival depended on the context), but it also politically reinscribed the built environment. Symbols of the state, state buildings and offices, and the private properties of entire groups (whether individuals were associated with the state or not) were defaced and reappropriated in a deeply political sort of destruction (Bakonyi, 2009; 2010). Militias used the built environment of the city in order to enact their contesting geopolitical visions, carving out shifting boundaries in

the city itself and reterritorializing the city for the purposes of warfare. Clan cleansing reordered who could belong in Mogadishu and who was targeted for death or exile. Taken together, uricide transformed the city.

### *Looting and rage politics*

Looting was a key feature of urban destruction, particularly in the early phases of the civil war in Mogadishu. This looting had a seismic impact on the built environment. While the looting of aid and basic provisions by warlords is widely acknowledged, the systematic unweaving of the urban landscape in the wake of state collapse has only gained limited scholarly attention. Bakonyi (2010, p.S251) offers a phenomenology of looting divisible into five distinct camps. Strategic looting was the looting of the properties of militia enemies by militias. Protest looting was the looting of public property by mobs of people, principally to ‘protest their exemption from re-distributional networks and request a legitimate share of public resources’ (Bakonyi, 2010, p.S246). Leveling looting targeted the properties and resources of ‘privileged groups,’ although in the context of clan cleansing, the ascription of ‘privilege’ often was described through the prism of clan and constituted the same violence as clan cleansing. These riots, Bakonyi (2010, p.S247) argues, took on a ‘festive character.’ Poverty looting was for food, medicine, and other essentials, while organized looting was the looting of exchangeable goods organized by gangs. The critical distinction, here, is not just in the variety of the *kinds* of looting taking place at once, but also in the variety of political and social aims they served, and the many kinds of groups – organized and not – that were implicated.

To begin, it is important to recognize the distinct political meanings of this looting – at a specific and aggregate level. Certainly, there were economic incentives – both for survival and for enrichment– but this is not the sum total of the politics of this looting. On the one hand, the kind of organized looting that militias and armed groups conducted connected the destruction to the global market as everything inside ‘government factories, telecommunication equipment, marine vessels, national schools and offices, even national monuments’ (Webersik 2006, p.1469) was stripped for scrap metal and sold internationally. On the other hand, the forms of looting characterized by the general public demonstrate what one Mogadishan characterized as ‘a mass rage. It was all rage those days for what was from before’ (Interview, Faarax, 2019). These looting spree were primarily targeted at the symbols of the state and the private properties of those deemed to have been unjustly enriched by the Barre regime. Particularly where it concerns



‘leveling looting,’ targeting the properties and resources of groups marked as privileges, these processes of looting were deeply political, as they were meant to engage narratives of loss and humiliation – they were ‘perceived as balancing out injustices, while at the same time demonstrating the capability and power of underprivileged groups’ (Bakonyi 2010, p.S247). Looting, especially during the opening phases of the urban war, had deep political implications.

In aggregate, the looting accomplished something further than simple destruction or theft. Through the dismantling of national symbols and government buildings, the destruction of records, and the occupation of particular kinds of homes, Mogadishu was made to take on a new form. As it was so deeply connected to the politics of the city before the war, the mass looting in the early phases of the war can be seen as a rebuke of the inequalities that characterized the city’s social structure to that point. Thus, the violence enacted upon the city by its denizens can be read as a kind of political reshaping, a bringing low of the city as it was, and the simultaneous *production* of a new kind of city, one that was organized by different rules (and rulers).

### *Martial territorialization*

With the coming of war came the reterritorialization of the city by armed groups into discrete enclaves of control – which were contested, diffuse, and renegotiated over the course of violent conflict. For decades, movement by foot or car between different parts of the city was severely restricted (Marchal, 2006, p.215). The built environment was therefore not only to be scavenged for survival or protest but also served as the raw material through which the urban war was waged. The city became reshaped through the fashioning of distinct spatial boundaries, mediated by checkpoints, armed guards, and ‘green lines’ across which movement was impeded.

Mogadishu was generally divided into “*the*” Abgaal-dominated “north Mogadishu,” ‘under the control of Ali Mahdi and includes Karan, Yaqshid, Shangani, Shibis and parts of Bondhere’ and the more mixed “south Mogadishu” ‘was the name given to most of the rest of the city and was under the control of General Aidid’s supporters’ (Marchal, 2006, p.212). For years, a ‘green line’ divided these sections across which ‘people could not or did not dare to walk about freely. Nor could they easily travel by car or truck between different parts of the city’ (Marchal, 2006, p.215). As Marchal notes, ‘the protection economy was conditioning the relationships between both sides of the capital city’ organizing the spatial as well as embodied understandings that people had of urban space. These boundaries, therefore, became identity as well as martial enclaves,

reconfiguring who could – or could not – belong in particular parts of town. This meant, in real terms, war substantively changed the morphology of the city. While the emphasis on these *specific* enclosure points is less prominent in contemporary Mogadishu, enclosures are now more often security boundaries, mediating the flow of bodies in a city characterized by securitized architecture.

Sara Fregonese (2019, p.107) describes how a similar process turned Beirut ‘into a geometry of military sectors, confrontation lines and axes’ after which ‘the geography of the city, and indeed its everyday built environment were rewritten in the language of militia warfare.’ Beirut ‘was fragmented into myriads of bordered territories protected by increasingly organized militias’ (Fregonese, 2009, p.314). The material fabric of the city became both the ‘terrain and tool for the representation, enactment and localized reinterpretation of differential urban geopolitical visions by the urban militias’ (Fregonese, 2009, p.314). In this case, ‘the built environment itself ... reinforce[s] discourses of urban territoriality and accompanying division’ (Fregonese, 2009, p.310). In Beirut, the space of the city itself was carved into a complex network of roadblocks and checkpoints and the ‘mobility of the militias through the streets and buildings... required constant tactical review and organization’ (Fregonese, 2009, p.310). This was, for Fregonese (2009), constitutive of urbicide as the ‘mundane, embodied and material dimension of the city’ allows for the extension of analysis outside the production of discourses on geopolitical knowledge (Fregonese, 2009, p.314).

Thinking of this martial reterritorialization makes it possible to understand how the city, itself, is not the background upon which urban warfare is carried out but became materially enjoined in the fray. This is political violence made real *through* the city itself, with the materiality and symbolism of the city enjoined in the fray. The destruction of certain neighborhoods and not others, the erection and demolition of certain kinds of monuments and government buildings, the creation of war zones and space of relative peace, and the boundaries around which urban denizens can belong to the city and in what ways – these are all political processes deeply embedded in - and productive of – urban space.

### *The ‘forced unmixing’ of clan cleansing*

Clan cleansing was an attempt to reconstruct the *polity* of the city to cohere with the new *spatio-political order* that now governed the city. It was a direct attempt to reinscribe what belonging

meant, and could mean, in the context of Mogadishu's urban space. For Kapteijns, it came into being through a 'key shift' which remade the terms of political violence, first opening up political violence as a 'political instrument' which was meant to 'gain control of the state' but which 'dr[ew] civilians into the direct experience of physical violence at each other's hands' (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.3). Clan cleansing as a political project served to reorganize political belonging as it 'did not only make civilians the target on the basis of their clan background but also rallied them in the name of clan to become perpetrators of such violence' (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.3). Leaders of the time, 'in the pursuit of their political goals, encouraged, ordered, enabled, and allowed ordinary Somali people to humiliate, rob, rape, maim, kill, and expel other Somali people now constructed as the clan enemy who had to be eliminated and expelled' (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.3). The construction of 'clan enemies' in the context of Mogadishu became those who were constructed to be allies of the Barre regime through clan association. It involved militia leaders employing and reifying 'clan hate discourses' (Kapteijns, 2013a) which associated an ever-broadening group of people with the ousted Barre regime and thus available for expulsion or elimination. And the justification for this violence that found profound salience was one of the Barre's usurpation of power, but also of space. Here, Mogadishu was conceived of a space in which 'clan logic' (Kapteijns, 2013a) became the only credible determinant of urban citizenship.

Lidwien Kapteijns (2013a, p.6) speaks of clan cleansing in the city of Mogadishu through the potent language of a 'forced unmixing' in which 'the violence with which the would-be heirs of state-power tried to impose their new political order was thus all the greater because it had to undo the lived realities of many of its inhabitants.' This marked a shift from clan violence as a 'technology of power' wielded by colonial powers and the military regime to clan-based violence as '*communal violence*, perpetrated and suffered by people who shared geographical and social space as neighbors, acquaintances, friends, maternal relatives and in-laws' [emphasis added] (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.3). Clan cleansing unraveled a way of being and living in Mogadishu *as Mogadishans*, as 'a good part of the middle class had chosen to emphasize a more cosmopolitan and shared (in the Somali case an explicitly national) identity over ethnic or clan-based ones' (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.6). Clan-based political violence was used to displace the conception (however flawed or illusory) that all Somalis could claim a place in Mogadishu to live, trade, and govern in the capital (Menkhaus and Adawe, 2018).

This dovetails with an understanding of urbicide. The most critical element of urbicide, for Coward (2004, p.11), was what the destruction of the built environment did to ‘the possibility of community, or being-with-others’ in cities. Indeed, the very purpose of urbicide for Coward (2004, p.11) was to recreate the urban space and to eliminate an important constitutive element of urban life, to stamp out ‘being-with-others in favor of being in homogeneous enclaves.’ The city is reshaped through urbicide to eliminate the very spaces of intermixing, and to refashion the city along a line of uniformity – to render contestations over power, but also old ways of knowing the city, moot.

To distill a ‘cosmopolitan’ city like Mogadishu into a homogenous form implies a severe and unyielding sort of violence. This violence must disrupt a previous way of practicing life in the city, one that was once at least ostensibly premised on intermixing and communal living. This political violence targeted both the city’s inhabitants and the built environment that made those ways of living possible. The texture of the urban space, itself, was transformed through clan cleansing. Indeed, it was through clan cleansing that one of the ultimate aims of urbicide was achieved – the ‘reshap[ing] of individual identity from one that exists in a state of plurality to one for whom homogeneity is the norm.’ (Coward 2004, p.11)

However, it would be a mistake to think that urbicide entailed only the destruction of Mogadishu wholesale. The paradox of political violence, as Broch-Due (2005) argues, is that attempts to flatten out diversity through force often have the effect of ‘reinforcing diversity in identity rather than eliminating it’ (Broch-Due 2005, p.1). Older ways of being endure in particular ways, even if they are no longer the norm, and new orders are brought into existence. This is what Broch-Due (2005, p.2) calls the ‘double valence’ of mass violence, which is both ‘subordinating and producing [...] destroying and creating’ and which is critical to our consideration. Through these many changes, a kind of Mogadishu was destroyed, and another arose in its place, a different city riven through with contestations. Tracing these distinctions is critical to understanding how the politics of intimate territoriality operates in the contemporary moment.

### **(Un)settling Mogadishu: urbicide and intimate territoriality**

In this chapter, I have argued that looting, martial reterritorialization, and clan cleansing in Mogadishu’s war constituted urbicide. It is in this context where conflict-related property disputes come to assume their present form and become important features of the conflicted urban

landscape. This happened, I argue, through the transformation of Mogadishu's demography and the wartime creation of a new property regime. I will trace these in turn.

For some, urbicide was about the destruction of Mogadishu by the city's hinterlands. One interviewee described the urban war as the '*invasione di barbari*,' or the invasion of the barbarians (Interview, Ladan, 2019). As much of Mogadishu's 'middle class' at the start of the war left the city for disparate sites within the Somali territories, and in the global diaspora, the sinews of urban social relations were fractured. Those who knew the city's 'old way' (Interview, Mahad, 2019), who could attest to the fact that *this* aunt lived across the way from *that* cousin in these kinds of communal-cognitive mappings left, died in the diaspora, or simply forgot. Through these transformations, an influx of new urban denizens (a mix of fighters, displaced persons, and others) came to inhabit and settle on the city. As Marchal (2006, p.215) argues, 'urban residents who stayed behind for one reason or another commonly said that they had become "prisoners of the bush people," meaning not only the militias, but a way of life which was at odds with the normal urbane lifestyle in coastal cities like Mogadishu' (Marchal, 2006, p.215). The modes of urbane sophistication, which I consider in-depth in Chapter 5 as key to "modern urban subjectivity" were transformed through the movement of people out of and into the city. The deep dislocation that many who forward the "cosmopolitan" claim to Mogadishu feel, and express often through discussions of conflict-related property disputes, is not simply that their properties are no longer accessible but also that the city has, in an elemental and intangible sense, irrevocably changed.

This is also true in terms of the transformation of urban property regimes. With the war, the shift in looting from "the seats of power" to the "residences of wrongdoers" (Bakonyi, 2009, p.446) had a meaningful impact on how urban property was used, disposed of, and came to be considered "owned." The legalistic, bureaucratic framework of land ownership and registration in the city was upended with the collapse of the state. Some homes were forcefully vacated by those with arms, as 'captured in the expression *waan taabsadey*, or "I touched it" – a term used to lay permanent claim to any resource one came into possession of during the war (Menkhaus and Adawe, 2018, p.34). Other homes were left abandoned as their legal owners went into exile, and poor and displaced persons created makeshift shelters from their walls. In this context, I argue, ownership more closely came to align with *settlement*, rather than an articulation of a legal claim registered through titles and deeds. Ownership became a function of physical presence, sometimes backed by the use of force, rather than a diffuse conception tied to a now-inexistent state.

This transformation of urban property regime through urbicide is critical for our understandings of conflict-related property disputes, and ultimately conceptions of belonging. As the city was ordered through clan cleansing, conflict related property disputes became sites of ‘the victor’s peace,’ whereby Mogadishu was transformed into a ‘mono-clan urban area’ (Menkhaus and Adawe, 2018, p.34). This suffused conflict-related property disputes with a heightened level of contestation – as a site of multiple kinds of contested displacements.

This transformation of urban property regime is meaningful in an embodied sense, particularly as it was cemented by intervening years. Three decades have passed since the collapse of the state in 1991, allowing for the creation of whole new relations of place-making, of social relations, of even whole new neighborhoods. This is what Veena Das (2007, p.7) calls the ‘descent into the ordinary’ whereby new forms of social being, new relations of meaning and the ‘mutual absorption of the violent and the ordinary’ configure normalcy out of contexts of urban uncertainty. Through this ‘descent into the ordinary,’ Mogadishu’s new urban property regime of settlement-as-ownership was cemented as “normal,” as “how things are.” But as Das (2007, p.7) argues, the new “normal” is always attached to the ‘event’ that brought it into being. Here, urbicide as the ‘event’ is ‘attached to the ordinary as if there were tentacles that reach out from the everyday and anchor the event to it in some specific ways’ (Das, 2007, p.7). In this dissertation, I trace how this new ‘ordinary’ is riven through with contestations, particularly as through the “return” of many diaspora to the capital (explored extensively in Chapter 6). These new urban relations have been a site of heightened contestation.

Thus, the violence of 1991 and thereafter did not simply occur *in* Mogadishu. As this chapter explored, this was war *of* Mogadishu, *through* Mogadishu, and even *for* Mogadishu. This violence upended existing ways of belonging, understanding, and relating to the urban environment and erected wholly new registers of ownership and belonging. Enormous transformations have occurred in Mogadishu during the past three decades. Many moved to the capital during this time as new city-dwellers became city denizens, and a consistent influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) sought shelter. New place-names began to emerge to describe areas as new city-dwellers came to call the city home. In these ways, one can argue that the project of urbicide was unsettlingly successful. But as will be demonstrated in the rest of this dissertation, older ways of ordering and relating to the city do not simply vanish, even when they seem to be

supplanted. This is the critical axis upon which the contestations over ‘post-conflict reconstruction’ now turn: who is this city for? By what (kind of) right? And who gets to decide?

It is critical, here, to appreciate how war significantly transformed Mogadishu’s relationship to registers of belonging and how those claims could be reasonably made. Over the past three chapters, this dissertation has considered colonial spatial forms, the coming of post-independence and military rule, and how these shifts have regulated relations of belonging to the city. So, too, did the war reconfigure how belonging was articulated and exercised in Mogadishu. As was set out in this chapter, clan cleansing and urban warfare reorganized relations of belonging in Mogadishu. New, rigid understandings of clan-based territoriality became the central way through which claims to belong were articulated. The violence of clan cleansing was a political project that severed the meaningful alternative claims to the city and targeted some of the city’s denizens for expulsion and elimination. In the end, the combination of the prolonged war and the contested contemporary “reconstruction” serves to cement some of these political reconfigurations in place.

At an elemental level, urbicide is about the politics of belonging. It is the enactment of violent means to reorganize the boundaries of belonging, and carve out new political meanings from within urban space. The violence of clan cleansing, in particular, is ‘the dirty work of boundary maintenance’ (Crowley, 1999), in its most pernicious form. This contest over the politics of belonging, mediated through the violent reinscription of space, is what sets the stakes for the contests over intimate territoriality through conflict-related property disputes. Indeed, urbicide is the context in which conflict-related property disputes first originate – through the combined politics of expulsion, looting, and the reorganization of social mores about the possible uses of property.

In the following chapters, this thesis will explore conflict-related property disputes through the everyday negotiations of property as public authority (Chapter 4), through the wider politico-historical claims they evoke (Chapter 5), and through the politics of urban ‘reconstruction’ (Chapter 6). This thesis will demonstrate that through conflict-related property disputes, what is being contested is not simply a home or a plot of land, but instead, the wider question of intimate territoriality. That is to say, contestations over land and buildings *in* Mogadishu map on to contestations *over* Mogadishu and the rights to live, do business, and belong.

## CHAPTER 4 – DISPUTE PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC AUTHORITY IN MOGADISHU

The subsequent three chapters of this dissertation argue that conflict-related property disputes have become a site of mnemonic and spatial contestation in Mogadishu through intimate territoriality – the suffusion of contestation over the city through disputes over particular parcels of land. This chapter examines how conflict-related property disputes are productive of public authority, Chapter 5 considers how conflict-related property disputes are locations through which wider politico-spatial histories are manifested, and Chapter 6 considers conflict-related property disputes through the light of Mogadishu’s contemporary “building boom” and urban reconstruction. In order to unpack this, it is important to begin with the central concern of the thesis: conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu and their claims, governance, and (un)resolution.

I argue that the governance of conflict-related property disputes is a fluid constellation of competing and cohering authorities. Mogadishu’s fluid governance arrangements are not divided into self-enclosed spheres of authority: the state, the religious, and the customary. Instead, these distinctions refer to the type of *power* to which legitimating authorities appeal and to the *codes* that are enforced upon adjudication: state actors to the still-reconstructing law, religious actors to the sacred, and communal actors to customary social order. Rather than being discrete forms of authority, however, I demonstrate how in Mogadishu, these legitimating groups and the actors that appeal to them blend and reformulate public authority in interesting ways – within and outside of the state. This chapter traces what I call “dispute pathways,” or the multiplicity of orders that govern, adjudicate, obfuscate, and otherwise address conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu. I examine how the many diffuse, circuitous, and ambiguous pathways that claimants and occupants chart through conflict-related property disputes demonstrate Mogadishu’s multivalent political landscape.

Uncertainty is, in many ways, Mogadishu’s essential condition. The confluence of tentative political settlements, unresolved tensions over disputed past legacies leaves the city open to dramatic transformations in short spans of time. Like many cities in the global majority, ‘productive uncertainty’ (Simone, 2013) is the key feature of making life in the contemporary city. This uncertainty is productive because it gives rise to ‘inventive political technologies’ (Simone, 2013) mobilized to manage and navigate it. As Abasa (2020, p.9) argues, in urban societies in the global South, urban communities are constantly navigating uncertainty to ‘survive, circumvent state authoritarianism, and reshape’ urban circuits of power and dislocation.



Conflict-related property disputes are functions of this uncertainty. Dispute pathways charted across multiple kinds of public authority become a means of addressing and navigating the uncertainty of law and ownership. I trace how, as Simone (2013, p.250) argues, negotiations of ‘land of uncertain and contested status... operate in a cat and mouse game of expansion and retreat in the face of ritualized surveillance.’ The social and political infrastructures constructed to deal with this uncertainty are, themselves, amorphous as ‘things are intersected not to fit together but to generate motion and volatility that propel the components of contracts and deals into still other experimental relations’ (Simone, 2013, p.245). I try to capture this ambiguity through my consideration of conflict-related property disputes, not as simple “forum-shopping” or discrete silos of lawmaking. Instead, I consider how dispute pathways demonstrate how the regulation of conflict-related property disputes is a site of ‘inventive political technology’ (Simone, 2013), which anchor and legitimate claims to particular parcels of land, homes, and businesses as well as the city at large. These dispute pathways are sites of contesting, abutting, and dispelling public authority through which ‘the various contestations and unresolved tensions in relationships between popular beliefs, colonial pasts and post-colonial imaginaries, economic trajectories and the pragmatics of administration’ (Simone, 2013, p.246) are engaged through the material of the city. Following Smith (2019, p.37), I consider how conflict-related property disputes are ‘entangled in the everyday generation of a textured, felted landscape, and how these entanglements contribute to different ways of making the city.’ These ambivalent, contested, and uncertain relationships contribute to and make up how denizens approach and relate to the city in a wider sense.

This chapter first locates this argument within an ongoing debate about the nature of Somali governance, before exploring several different kinds of dispute pathways: the court system, the vital life of property documents, the politics of “enforcement” and policing, as well as interpersonal mediations of disputes. Through Christian Lund’s (2006) framework of “public authority,” I show how the multiple, ambiguous routes that actors trace in relation to property disputes reveal a multipolar, uncertain, and contested network of public authority in the city. This has significant consequences on how urban denizens relate to property ownership, to be sure, but also how they contest their claims to the city *through* disputed properties.

## **Governance, political order, and authority in Somalia**

The study of political governance in the aftermath of war has been a predominant concern for studies of societies experiencing civil war in general, and Somali studies in specific. Theoretical treatments of ‘ungoverned spaces,’ (Clunan and Trinkunas, 2010), ‘hybrid political authorities,’ (Boege, Brown, Clements, and Nolan, 2009, p.200) or ‘areas of limited statehood’ (Risse, 2011) engage fundamental questions about the nature of sovereignty and political order in the aftermath of the breakdown of the state. These readings revise political theories premised on Weberian conceptions of the state as the container of the monopoly of legitimate violence. Instead, they conceptualize and empirically trace ‘actually existing sovereignty’ (Agnew, 2005) in its many forms, complicating conceptions of ‘statehood’ in the first instance.

Governance plays a similarly complicating role in Somali studies. The paradigmatic fracture in Somali studies literature orients around diverging approaches to the role of clan as governing order in Somali society. This fracture concerns epistemological as well as empirical differences in the analysis of social structures in the Somali territories. At the extremes, in certain paradigms, this has significant bearing on the very possibility of state governance in the Somali territories. The first paradigm follows the work of anthropologist I.M. Lewis and has alternatively been termed the ‘traditionalist’ (Samantar, 1992), ‘primordial’ (Gaas, 2018), or Lewisian approach (Kapteijns, 2004) to Somali studies. Analysis in this paradigm orients squarely around clan as ordering and governing structure in Somali society. Clan, as a ‘segmentary lineage organization,’ is understood to be the essential condition of Somali social order. The ‘decentralized and highly fluid’ nature of Somali society is taken to be highly fractious and prone to fratricidal conflict. The structure of clan creates ‘inherently oppositional and confrontational basic identities that are mobilized when competition and conflict develop over material resources, power, personal security, and reputation’ (Lewis, 1998, p.101). As one incisive critique of this approach surmises, this reading of Somali political culture contends that ‘Somalis may today have replaced their spears with bazookas and rocket-propelled grenades, but the basic structure of their sociopolitical system and function of clan in it have remained the same’ (Kapteijns, 2004, p.2-3). In this form of analysis, the state is read as a competing governing order to clan and largely a foreign machination that is waveringly perched atop a society organized by clan. In this reading, it is no surprise that the house of cards came crumbling down.

As I have traced before, critiques of this approach to the study of Somali politics analyze in manners termed ‘transformationalist,’ (Samantar, 1992), ‘instrumentalist,’ (Gaas, 2018), and ‘deconstructivist’ (Kapteijns, 2004). Under these banners, scholarship emphasizes the malleability of clan as a social construct, shifted in manner and meaning through colonial intervention, post-colonial engagements, and the global political order. Here, clan order and state order are not analyzed as oppositional forms of governance but instead as mutually interpolating structures. This paradigmatic difference made governance the central debate in Somali studies for some time now.

In the aftermath of civil war and state collapse, new theoretical engagements with the question of governance emerged. Traditionalists argued that state collapse marked the return to clan governance, but those in the transformationalist camp saw evidence of new governance structures in other locations. In response to the assumption that state collapse begot anarchy, Menkhaus (2007) convincingly made a case for ‘governance without government’ and traced forms of authority wielded by businessmen and other actors, spread across the political landscape. Others have considered the ways in which state actors maneuver and define the roles that they inhabit, considering how ‘policeness’ is defined (Hills, 2014), in security arrangements and assemblages (Menkhaus, 2016), and the roles that businesses play in creating and managing violence (Weberisk, 2006). Taken together, state collapse ignited a search for forms of governance and authority structures in Somali studies that continues to this day.

This chapter contributes to this ongoing effort. The aim is to apprehend the political landscape of conflict-related property disputes, and the forms of authority they engage and legitimate. I argue that through conflict-related property disputes, one can see political governance in Mogadishu as a patchwork quilt of overlapping, cooperating, and contending authorities, traceable through many different kinds of locations. Those negotiating property disputes, whether as claimants or as respondents, operate within this fluid and interconnected network of authorities. This chapter, then, helps to uncover some of the political institutions and processes in contemporary Mogadishu.

### *Public authority and the constitution of power*

This chapter engages Christian Lund’s theorization of property politics and public authority in contemporary Africa. Lund argues that property and its negotiation is central to processes of state formation in sub-Saharan Africa. Not only do authorities compete over the capacity to ‘entitle and

disenfranchise' (Lund, 2017, p.2), but indeed, distinct kinds of authority are *reified* through property legitimization. Through the determination between legitimate and illegitimate claims, disparate authorities claim the right to draw boundaries around 'who belongs and who does not, and to establish and uphold rank, privilege and social servitude in its many forms' (Lund, 2017, p.2). It is in this way that public authority is *made* through the adjudication of property disputes, just as authorities seek to determine which laws and policies to apply, how to interpret national legislation in local contexts, and which kinds of beneficiaries should result (Lund, 2006). As Lund (2017, p.2) argues, 'struggles over property and citizenship are therefore as much about the scope and constitution of political authority as they are about access to resources and membership of polities.' I seek to take these propositions forward, considering how conflict-related property disputes illuminate relations of public authority and governance in contemporary Mogadishu.

Situating Lund's conception of property as constitutive of state and non-state public authority in Mogadishu is a critical undertaking, with much to gain. As Lund argues (2017, p.2), 'investigating the social production of property and citizenship enables concrete understanding of the dynamics of authority or state formation.' In service of this, I use this chapter to chart out various 'dispute pathways' or ephemeral engagements between claimants, respondents, and state and non-state actors that make up the political landscape of conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu. I seek to chart out the unevenly distributed and overlapping sources of public authority operating in the post-conflict city, with an eye to examining how understandings and relations of governance are produced. The *politics* of these disputes emerge from the enmeshment of individuals with the 'pursuit of control over land' within structures of competing and cooperating governance structures, which 'involves them, willy-nilly, in the competition over public authority – its consolidation, reconfiguration, and erosion' (Lund, 2006, p.3). Through conflict-related property disputes, I argue, governance and authority coagulate around particular figures and structures and dissipate from others – forming a picture of fluid and ever-changing structures of public authority. What emerges is an image of dispute pathways in Mogadishu as multiple, non-linear with the possibility of reversion and a deeply embedded experience of transience. Rather than separate structures of authority (clan elders in competition with state actors, or religious authorities contesting power brokers) what emerges is a kind of enmeshed political landscape that can be traversed in many ways. By way of illustration, dispute pathways in Mogadishu can be

envisioned as worn paths in a grassy clearing that one can cut across and revert backward with ease, change tracks and turn around as the situation demands.

The undergirding threat of violence in conflict-related property disputes is an important site of analysis that is unaccounted for in Lund's analysis, but is critical to understanding conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu. As will be seen in the following analysis, memories of past violence in the city and the threat (implied or explicit) of future violence looms over conflict-related property disputes. This shifts the stakes of contestations over public authority in appreciable ways. Where authorities compete for the capacity to govern disputes, violence permeates the language of negotiation and dispute. Where disputants engage with state and non-state institutions or with one another, the threat of violence and asymmetrical capacities of violence mediate the kinds of negotiations that are possible. What political work does the threat of violence perform? In a real sense, the context of violence both opens and forecloses possible dispute pathways, and does so in ways that are contingent. In a future chapter, I will explore how conflict-related property disputes operate as a discursive project in Mogadishu, but here, I focus on the concrete reality of disputes in a post-conflict urban setting.

### **Dispute pathways in Mogadishu**

When Sahro recounts her experiences of conflict-related property disputes in contemporary Mogadishu, she prefaces her explanation by recounting her previous experiences with the Somali state and property (Interview, Sahro, 2019). In the 1980s, her family property was marked for seizure and nationalization (*Dan Guud*), which her family successfully challenged. As she recounts, 'they tried to take property but even Maxamed Siyaad Barre couldn't steal from us [chuckles].' Like many interviewees, Sahro was negotiating disputes for multiple properties in the city at the same time with varying levels of success. When asked how this came to be, Sahro explained her family was employed in government, giving them access to information which assisted in the acquisition of property rights. It was through these closed bureaucratic networks that access to land ownership was made possible. Consider how Sahro engages the question of property acquisition:

“There was this idea that we had property because we had taken part in bribery. That was not the case. My mother earned 350 shillings at the Ministry of Education.

[...] Whatever *dhul* [land] was being handed out [registered] she was one of the first to be told. She knew the people who did the registration. It cost only 80, 50 shillings, something like that. All of the properties in our family, our father only had one in his name. The rest were my mother.

She [Sahro's mother] knew the people in each place, who was around, and we never accepted land that wasn't properly, legally done." (Interview, Sahro, 2019)

Legal land and property registration and ownership, particularly in the later days of the former Somali Democratic Republic, operated in the context of deeply personalized bureaucratic networks. As was explored in an earlier chapter, class inequality and integration into principally *urban* governance networks had an outsized influence on determining ownership in the city. In the context of a "modernizing" city where land registration was still underway, these pre-existing bureaucratic relationships gave an advantage to those inside privileged circles. Yet Sahro does not see this as improper, as it existed within the bounds of the legal. As she emphasized, 'we never accepted land that wasn't properly, legally done' (Interview, Sahro, 2019) going on to favorably compare her family's land purchases in morality to the more problematic processes of *goof* purchases on the periphery of the expanding city. For Sahro, the legality of the purchases in their own time was sufficient to scrub them of any moral aspersions.

During the course of the war, Sahro lost access to the documents that would prove her ownership of the properties. Even as she engages the language of legality to demonstrate the propriety of property *acquisition*, she refuses to use the instruments of the existing legal infrastructure in order to mediate her property disputes. As she argues, 'You can bribe the Court and get a wrong decision. Am I crazy to go to the Court?' (Interview, Sahro, 2019). This brings us to the first of many possible dispute pathways: the 'formal' legal system. Of the many entryways of dispute pathways, it is possibly the part of the political landscape that has transformed the most over the past decade – in practice and form. These transformations are evident in the ways that individuals negotiate, understand, and navigate the formal system (or not). It is also evident in the deeply political politics of refusal and rejection of the existing legal system. As well, as will be established in-depth later, the images and symbols of the state and its functions permeate 'official' state *and* non-state processes of conflict-related property dispute mediation.

## Going to the courts

In all the disputes I encountered, engagement with the Courts was attempted only after interpersonal attempts at mediation failed to resolve the dispute. The process of proceeding with a dispute through the Court system is expensive, long, and uncertain. Officially, land and property dispute procedure in Mogadishu is linear. The opening of a claim begins with the testimony of both parties to the judge. Both claimant and respondents to the claim are invited before the Court to present documents and oral testimony about how they came to own or occupy the land in question. Respondents have the option to defend themselves or to bring an attorney (at the municipal and appeal court levels). Where documents are in dispute, a special committee – called *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafadka ee Dowladda Hoose*, or the Committee for the Resolution of Disputes – is engaged in order to determine the veracity of the documents. The judge takes all available testimony and renders a verdict. If the verdict is in favor of the claimant, the judge issues a notice to the Mayor, who can engage the neighborhood police in order to enforce the ruling. There are two levels of judicial appeal after the Municipal Court renders a verdict: the appeals court and Supreme Court. Proceeding through these processes can take many years.

This story, however, leaves much to be desired. It cannot account for the distinct levels of variability in how processes are *experienced* or *understood* by claimants and respondents. More importantly, however, it is simply incomplete. At every step in this process other kinds of actors and political impetuses are implicated in the formal system. There are many actors involved in property dispute cases in the courts, and not all of them are clearly delineated official roles. Instead, a constellation of state and non-state actors participate in the judicial process. Many of the non-state actors have assumed *state-like* functions – particularly around processes of verification and production of documents.

The legacies of urban violence have shaped the existing state infrastructures and the possibilities of negotiation within those structures. The longevity of the urban war, particularly the nature of lengthy exile and rapid transformations in the city, make these disputes deeply complicated to navigate. In many cases, the city that claimants left was fundamentally different from the one to which they returned. As a former senior judicial official outlined, ‘these people were gone 20, 25 years. They don’t have title deeds. They [documents] might have been taken by force. They lost their way forward’ (Interview, Bashir, 2019). In the intervening twenty years, an existing building may have been razed to the ground, reconstructed from the ground up, or sold

and resold to unwitting new owners. The original owners who were scattered across the globe might have died or be unable or unwilling to press a claim. The sheer complexity of many of these cases would overwhelm any system, but the Somali jurisprudential structure is particularly vulnerable.

The former senior judicial official described the existing legal infrastructure as rife with complications – and what he considered to be corruptions. He described the state courts as fundamentally “weak” with judges receiving irregular and insufficient salaries. He described a hypothetical circumstance under which a judge could be overseeing the rightful ownership of homes and land worth upwards of \$2 million USD while receiving a meager sum of \$200 a month in salary. This, as the former senior judicial official (Interview, Bashir, 2019) said, invites ‘Machiavelli judgment’ as corrupting forces could intervene. Indeed, not all of the currently appointed lawyers and judges are trained in the law (some are holdovers from political appointments (Interview, Ibrahim, 2019)).

In addition, legal professionals adjudicating cases are subject to the threat of violence from claimants, respondents, and other interested parties. Violence can be done for many reasons: to exact punishment for cases already settled, to influence a case that is being currently engaged, or to suggest that an *alternative authority* should adjudicate the cases – namely, Al Shabaab. The real, permeating threat of violence means that, as one interviewee argued, ‘they are under a security threat. They don’t have private security. A prosecutor was killed just a few months ago’ (Interview, Bashir, 2019). A Mogadishan engaged in property disputes explained that someone he considered honest had taken the helm of the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka ee Dowladda Hoose* (Committee for the Resolution of Disputes). Almost as if thinking aloud, this Mogadishan said ‘he is a great guy. A very honest guy. I hope they don’t kill him, *Walahi Billahi*. I worry about him. I hope they don’t kill him’ (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020). Violence and the threat of harm cloak all aspects of property disputes in the capital.

#### Marqaati politics: documents, testimony, and evidentiary power

*Marqaati* is the Somali word for witnessing. In this section, I consider the kinds of witnessing systems and evidentiary processes that render claims authentic and invalid in relation to property disputes in Mogadishu. Through these practices, we can then trace the kinds of authorities whose role it is to devise evidentiary systems and the terms of the discretion and authority that exist



therein. The compelling politics that underlies *all* these forms of negotiation seems to be, in brief, whose testimony do you believe, and what kinds of witnessing are possible?

It is first important to consider the non-trivial finding that pre-war property documents, where they exist, are considered as valid proof of ownership by most arbitrating parties in Mogadishu – Al Shabaab, the federal and municipal courts, and interpersonal engagements. This is true, even as the structure that created unequal access to those documents continues to be hotly contested. As such, the use and deployment of documents as valid evidence is critical to the trajectory of any particular claim. Paper documents from the pre-civil war era act as *marqaati*, as witnesses, to what might be considered a valid lineage of ownership and title transfers. Where original titles are inaccessible, supporting documentation can be used to conjure the same effect – records of tax payments, receipts of water payments, or notations in the public archive of land petitions in the latter sections of the official government publication *Bolletino Ufficiale* later known as *Faafinta Rasmiga Ah*.

We have already acknowledged the problem of the absence of documents – documents that have been lost through decades of exile, which were sometimes purposely destroyed during the onset of violence in the city. But there also exists in Mogadishu a *surfeit* or *surplus* of documents in circulation, created by a whole host of political entrepreneurs, operating under the collective nickname “Cabdul-Shideey.” Indeed, parts of Bakaara Market specialize in the production of new title deeds. Some of these originating titles are produced for those who have lost their documents, although many exist to create new lineages of ownership for those hoping to sell or use a contested property in the capital. As the former senior judicial official (Interview, Bashir, 2019) argued, this process of legitimizing properties has been underway for well over twenty years, as ‘some made their house *halal* [legitimized] with documents. Fake title deeds... They created *naqshad* [planning maps] for the house.’

The determination between “valid/authentic” and “invalid/false” documents, then, is an ever-present concern in the capital. And yet, state authorities at the Court or the Committee for the Resolution of Disputes cannot directly access the Municipal land registry, even though the register was saved from destruction in the destruction that followed the war. This has created an opening for informal bureaucrats to provide “verification” services to land claimants and state actors, considerably broadening the sphere of actors equipped to engage in evidentiary politics. For an

illuminating example, we should consider the case of Abdullahi – a broker in evidentiary politics who has become closely integrated into land politics in Mogadishu.

Where there are questions about the validity of documents, the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka ee Dowladda Hoose* becomes involved. This translates to the Committee for the Resolution of Disputes for the Municipality of Mogadishu. We will call them the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka*, for short. This committee operates under the auspices of the Municipal authority, with its members and chairperson selected by the Mayor of Mogadishu. Practically, they perform the deeply critical role of *verification*, establishing the basic facts upon which the Court will proceed to make its determination. This often means the settling of rival sets of documents and the determination of ownership. Over the course of its history, *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* has had a widely varying reputation, based on the perceived honesty of the chair and the Mayor that appointed them. As one frustrated claimant argued:

All this is bullsh\*t. *Guddi Khilaafaad* should not exist. For me, *Guddi Khilaafaad* they don't resolve nothing, they complicate the problem. My sister named them *Uffiico Complicazione Affare Semplice* [the Office for the Complication of Simple Affairs] (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020).

The importance of the *Guddi*'s role as the arbiter of valid and invalid documents can only be understood when we consider the vital, political life of documentation in conflict-related property disputes. However, as they are not currently in possession of the land register, they must subcontract their expertise to a man whose role we explore next. The involvement of non-state actors in this venture demonstrates the critical importance of documentary, witnessing politics in contemporary Mogadishu.

#### *The Verification of Lands Office and the political life of documents*

Despite its name, the Local Government Mogadishu Office Verification of Lands Documents Years 1956-1990 is not a state office. In fact, the Verification of Lands Office (for short) neither belongs to, nor is dictated by, *any* of the levels of government in Somalia – much less the Municipality of Mogadishu. Instead, the Verification of Lands Office is a private business in Mogadishu that has become critically engaged in the work of land and property disputes in the capital, and in evidentiary politics in particular.

The Verification of Lands Office came into existence because of a unique individual story at the beginning of the civil war. Abdullahi was an employee at the Municipality of Mogadishu at the outbreak of the civil war in the early 1990s. When the urban violence turned to the destruction of state structures in the capital, Abdullahi had the foresight to take the land registry and several of the neighborhood planning maps (*naqshad*) into his personal custody. He remains in possession of the most comprehensive urban land registry of Mogadishu to this day. The Verification of Lands Office sub-contracts the verification process to the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* and the Municipal Courts. Abdullahi conducts business through the Mogadishu Verification of Lands Office, albeit providing this consulting service remotely, from Europe.

By maintaining possession of the land registry, Abdullahi has become a vital source of verification for the courts. From his offices across the Somali territories (and his remote intervention from Europe), Abdullahi has created what might be termed a para-statal consulting business on which state actors rely for the validation of documents. Where documents are incomplete, non-existent, or where both parties to dispute present rivaling documents, the Courts or the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* will *direct* disputants to Abdullahi for verification, at a steep cost, often amounting to thousands, or even tens of thousands of dollars. The price of the validation of the Verification of Lands Office is not standardized but instead varies widely depending on the value of the land or property and location in the city. It is in this way that the Verification of Lands Office is markedly *unlike* a state office, even though the service provided is access to the land registry curated by the state: the deeply exploitative and discretionary pricing.

It is important to consider the ways that Abdullahi's exclusive access to the registry is located within the state process of verification and validation. The documents produced by Abdullahi's Verification of Lands Office are taken by the Mogadishu Municipality, the Courts, and *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* as demonstrative proof of official ownership. This is because no official state apparatus has the land registry in its possession, and therefore cannot empirically contest his claims. Through meaningful everyday bureaucratic interactions, the work of the Verification of Lands Office is legitimated. These include the directing of potential clients to the Verification of Lands Office, even in cases where a single party is in possession of documents. Through the integration of Abdullahi's office into the broader evidentiary system in Mogadishu, I argue that Abdullahi has become an informal bureaucrat – a source of “state-like” authority in Mogadishu. Moreover, the need for an office like the Verification of Lands Office undergirds the

centrality of *marqaati*, or witnessing, politics in Mogadishu. Urban governance, understood as public authority, accrues around his office.

Following the flow of paperwork in Rooble's case demonstrates the ways in which the claims Verification of Lands Office are taken up and reasserted as state truths. Rooble explained the process this way:

I brought my papers, went to *Dowladda Hoose* [the Municipality]. But the Court can't verify it, so they send you to [Abdullahi]... I showed him both documents and paid him \$5,000 each [to verify the land].

He sent it back, and they believe his register. Whatever he says is the right one. He does it in under 48 hours. When the complaint for the [other case] is opened, I will pay him again.

With [Abdullahi]'s verification, the *Guddi* confirms it is his (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020).

Consider the document produced by the Verification of Lands Office for Rooble (provided in Interview, 2019 and 2020) in Figure 11 (below) as an example. First, it is important to note the clear approximation of state function in the *formality* of the document itself. The special-made letterhead features the Somali proverb "*Hubsiiino halbaa lasiistaa ee, iska hubi dhulka intaadan gadan*" which translates in meaning to "certainty is worth paying one (she-camel), be certain before you purchase." Three special-made stamps anoint the decision, with one signed with an era of finality. It is titled "document to determine ownership of land" The mimicry of official documentation, even to the extent of marking with the stamped signature, is a politics of public authority.

As Lund (2006, p.691) makes clear about the political arrangements of land and governance, 'people discursively draw on legitimizing symbols to cognitively anchor new institutional and social arrangements' (Lund, 2006, p.691). Here, the symbols and the language of the state manifest in the very *form* of the document.

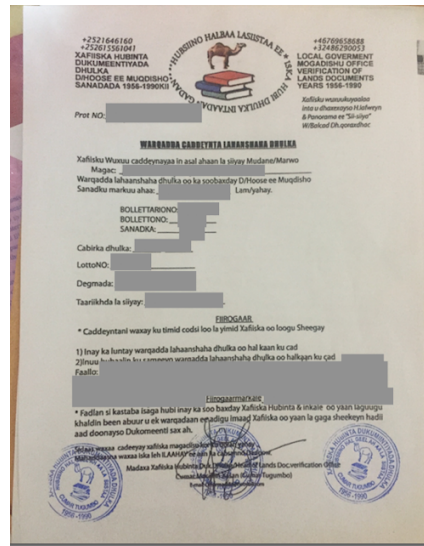


Figure 11: Rooble's adjudication from the Verification of Lands Office

With the two following documents, one can see the claims made in the Verification of Lands Office document accepted into the state's bureaucracy. Figure 12 (below) demonstrates the public notary's acknowledgment of the decision by the Verification of Lands Office on the letterhead of the Somali government. This document validates the incorporation of this decision into the Mogadishu municipality's reading of the city.

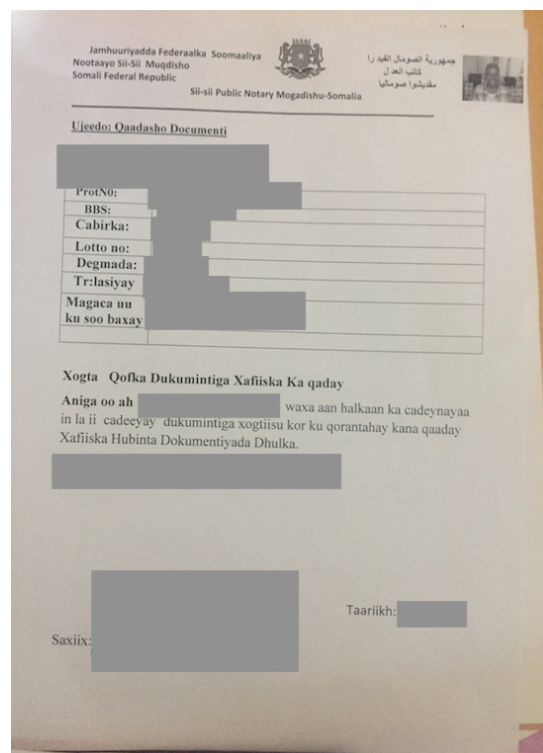


Figure 12: Copy of the Notary's registration of the Verification of Lands Office paperwork for Rooble

In Figure 13 (below), we can see the claims made in the Verification of Lands Office document presented by Rooble to the Notary treated as fact in the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* decision, made without reference to the Verification of Lands Office at all. Instead, the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* treat the matter as if they were presented with the original documents – referring to those documents as opposed to the Verification of Lands Office. With this evidence, they rule in Rooble’s favor.

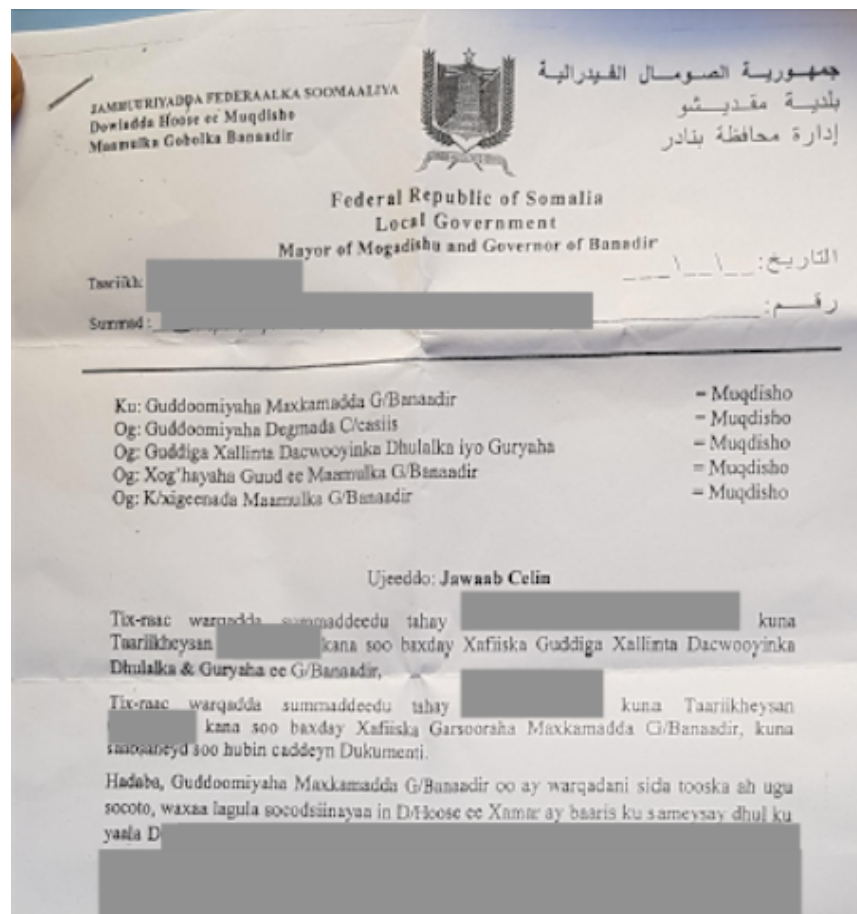


Figure 13: *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* ruling on the validity of Rooble’s claim

Finally, in Figure 14 (below), the Court proceeds referencing the document produced by the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka*, as well as other earlier documents produced by the Municipality. The Court decision references the original documents by way of the Notary but also fails to recognize the role of the Verification of Lands Office. It too treats the validity of the information provided by the Verification of Lands Office as fact.

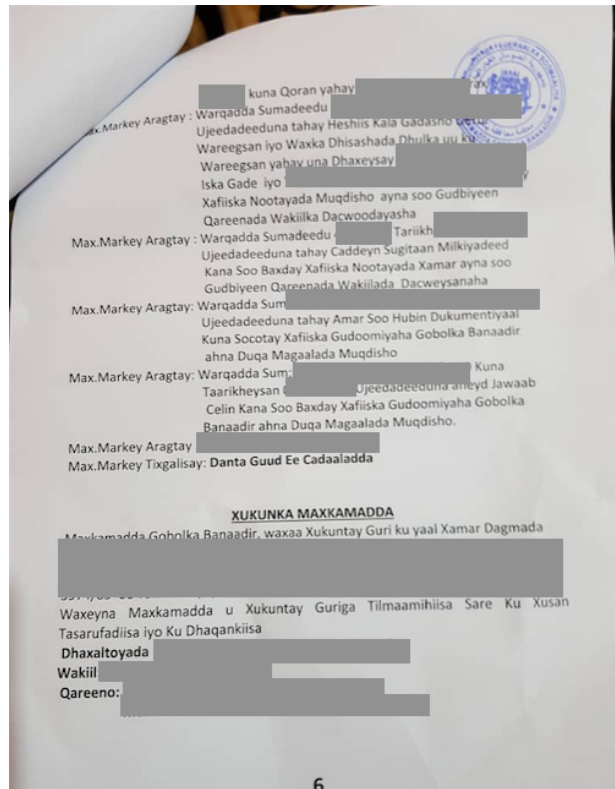


Figure 14: Court decision regarding Rooble's conflict-related property dispute, adjudicating in favor of Rooble

Tracing this document process in Rooble's case is illustrative in many ways. The documents are useful as evidence of governing authority. In coming to grips with what is referenced and elided we can consider how state-like knowledge becomes enmeshed in state regimes of truth. The work of the private Verification of Lands Office is eschewed in favor of the valuable evidentiary information that it renders legible, and through further dispute adjudication processes, the *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* and the Municipal Court treat the case as if the original documents have been presented to the courts, even though they haven't been. We can understand these movements through a return to Lund's argument on public authority.

To cast this as a governance question, we must first see that the *who* of public authority is as important as the *how*. Who has been authorized to intervene in these judicial practices can help us to understand how the political landscape of recognition through which state formation processes unfold. This is because, as Lund (2006, p.10) states, 'the processes of recognition work in tandem. Recognition of property rights by an institution simultaneously constitutes a process of recognition of the legitimacy of this institution.' This also extends to the individuals invited into the adjudication by the state. These processes of recognition grant a kind of authority to individuals

like Abdullahi and his office, as they are dependent upon him to proceed. As a result, he becomes enmeshed in state processes. These ‘everyday negotiations of property and propriety’ (Lund, 2006, p.19) remake the distinctions between the ‘legal and illegal, public or private.’ And indeed, through many conversations with state officials from the municipal and federal levels (Interview, Jamac, 2019; Interview, Yasir and Mohamed, 2019; Interview, Mukhtar, 2019; Interview, Hamza, 2019), Abdullahi does not seem to be regarded as a political intercessor. Instead, he was often lauded for preserving the register in the face of the inevitability of its destruction, like so much else. Through this process of state recognition, then, a private citizen who has absconded with the public registry can be made into a public-facing state-like actor, even as he profits from its possession.

This also extends to the individuals invited into the adjudication by the state. These processes of recognition grant a kind of authority to individuals like Abdullahi and his office, as they are dependent upon him to proceed. As a result, he becomes enmeshed in the processes of the “reconstructing” state. These ‘everyday negotiations of property and propriety’ (Lund, 2006, p.19) remake the distinctions between the ‘legal and illegal, public or private.’ And indeed, through conversations with state officials from the municipal and federal levels (Interview, Mukhtar, 2019; Interview, Hamza, 2019; Interview, Yasir and Mohamed, 2019), Abdullahi does not seem to be regarded as a political intercessor. Instead, he was often lauded for preserving the register in the face of the inevitability of its destruction, like so much other critical information that was lost in the destruction of the state during the war. Through this process of state recognition, then, a private citizen who has absconded with the public registry can be made into a public-facing state-like actor, even as he profits from its possession.

There are two central points to reflect in this consideration of politics of papers. The first is the vitality of documents as a material site of contest – as something *worth* duplicating, reconstructing, struggling over and through. As one Mogadishan said, ‘without documents you are doomed.’ In order to counteract this loss, processes of document *production* have been created – through the Verification of Lands Office, through the title production mills in the Bakaara Market, through the usage of other documents (tax payments stubs, water payment receipts, excerpts of the *Bolletino Ufficiale/Faafinta Rasmiga Ah*).

The manner in which documents are lost, found, recovered, reproduced, duplicated and disposed of speaks to how property claims are manifestly *political* claims, and the ways that they are attached to *marqaati* or evidentiary politics. This connects to already existing academic



discussions that connect claims-making, citizenship, and documentation. Hull (2012) traces the material politics of documentation and urban claims-making in Islamabad, arguing that documents serve as a kind of ‘participatory bureaucracy’ as ‘paper practices’ become a site through which contestations are realized. As Hull (2012, p.248) argues, ‘writing is usually seen to nail things down, but it can also set them in motion – often it does both simultaneously. Thus, state control can be extended not only through specification, but through ambiguity, by leaving matters undocumented.’ Pilo’ (2020) traces how documents cement conceptions of ‘deserving citizenship’ and become spaces of material contest in favelas in Rio de Janeiro. These considerations take into account how documents produced by the state come to be suffused with claims-making and are taken up for productive use in new and unexpected ways. This is a critical insight in Mogadishu, as the role that documentation plays in conflict-related property disputes is not limited to their use as support for legal claims. As they are material remnants of the state before the war, and are located within complicated constellations of remembering and reassertion of property orders and *city orders* no longer in wide use. They impart a lineage of ownership, a traceable genealogy, of presence and participation in the city before the war. For that reason, documents become sites of affective, as well as legal, contest. Documents in Mogadishu are vital in both senses of the word: one the one hand they are critical for proving one’s case, and on the other they are a site of active, fraught, contestation.

The second important takeaway is that in Mogadishu, the duplication of papers has led to the duplication of bureaucracies to manage them. In an interesting parallel, Denyer Willis (2017, p.236) has called São Paulo a ‘city of clones’ because of the ways that ‘formal institutions and outcomes exist intertwined with informal copies of the same institutions and outcomes.’ Denyer Willis (2017) traces the practice of “cloning cars” in São Paulo, or the practice of illegally cloning license plates and paperwork for vehicles in parts of the city. These clones manage to ‘reproduce the logic and order of the formal’ as a kind of meticulous mimesis of state processes, and are a function of state abandonment and absence in urban spaces. This mimesis of state processes is evident in Mogadishu’s vital paper politics, considering the lengths to which “state-like” authorities go to reproduce the likeness of “official” documentation and processes. This evidentiary politics in Mogadishu and the political life of documents speak to symbols and images of statecraft repurposed with new meanings, and the engagement in public authority with new actors. However, in Mogadishu, these reproductions of public authority appear both as mirrored

*and* intertwined features because of the verification broker's necessity to claimants *and* to the state itself. The verification broker becomes a necessary feature of Mogadishu's property landscape because these dealings in the "authenticity business" are done through knowledge that no one else has access to. That the Courts and *Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka* actively direct clients to the Verification of Lands Office is evidence of the complex interdependence of official and non-official state actors in Mogadishu, which are interlocked in mutually affirming processes of consolidating authority. Abdullahi and the Verification of Lands Office is a single node in an expansive series of interdependent and contesting sites of public authority in relation to property disputes in Mogadishu.

Taken together, the vital life of documents in Mogadishu points to the multivalent political landscape in the city and the uneven and uncertain terrain that all actors must navigate in order to pursue conflict-related property disputes. The centrality of evidentiary politics is deeply tied to the legacies of urban war that destroyed existing state structures, eliminated particular kinds of urban sociality and mechanisms of trust, and the context of contemporary urban uncertainty. As a former official in the Ministry of Internal Security (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020) put it, 'justice is subject to whoever is in office at that moment.' In this context, documents become a way to announce a tangible claim to the city prior to the war, and to anchor a right of ownership and usage in the urban fabric.

### *The politics of enforcement*

When conflict-related property disputes are adjudicated, the Court issues a recommendation to the Mayor of Mogadishu to inform the neighborhood police to enforce the ruling. But just as there are interventions and leakages throughout the Court process that significantly impact the judicial ruling, the politics of "enforcement" in Mogadishu is deeply contested and contingent. Indeed, the question of "enforcement" demonstrates the limits of judicial power, documentary evidence, and the many disparate interests at stake in conflict-related property disputes.

While there is nowhere in the world where police are apolitical, even the veneer of neutrality is absent in Mogadishu. As Alice Hills (2014, p.95) argues, imagery around policing draws explicitly from 'memories of Somalia's 30 years of national policing.' However, these historical through-lines are primarily aesthetic, manifesting in the manner in which the police dress and occupy space on the street. The contested work of police in Mogadishu leads some to see them

as ‘little more than militiamen in police uniforms’ (Hills, 2014, p.105). In some cases, the police and security officials have been directly implicated in conflict-related property disputes. One interviewee noted a piece of property near where ‘I was given that property legally, but I cannot get the people there to leave it. There are military [police] families living all around in properties that don’t belong to them’ (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020). These challenges around the nature and role of policing also surface in relation to conflict-related property disputes.

As the former senior judicial official explained (Interview, Bashir, 2019), the police have refused to enforce the court-mandated outcomes of certain conflict-related property disputes because of their spatial location in the city, as some neighborhoods are reputed to be strongholds of particular clan militias. This can create dangerous situations for the police, as their intervention into these locations could be met with armed resistance. According to the former senior judicial official (Interview, Bashir, 2019), the ill-equipped police force could not be expected to risk their lives to enact the outcomes of particular disputes. As the Court’s dictates can be said not to apply here because of the notable lack of enforcement, this demonstrates that even as there are sites of overlapping public authority, there are also boundaries around state action and the possibility of engagement. Here, too, the threat of the upending the city’s delicate peace bounds the capacity for the state to perform this form of public authority. Even where legal decisions are made, therefore, this does not imply that there will be a change in the usage of a property – rather than a simple affirmation of legal ownership.

### **Social location and conflict-related property disputes**

Throughout the process of adjudication and long after, many pressing kinds of politics come to intervene in the shape of the dispute. This contributes to a pervading sense of uncertainty in regards to conflict-related property disputes as they make their way through informal, formal, and alternative dispute processes. Considering these intertwined politics, one can see disparate social locations and forms of governing authority shaping property disputes. This also comes to bear on the many reasons why conflict-related property disputes occur: for some, these lands and properties are sources of basic shelter. For others, they are the spoils of an urban war considered to have been won. For still others, the reality of three decades of conflict in the city has changed the city to an extent that new relations of ownership, validated through *settlement* as opposed to paperwork are valid ways to stake a claim. These distinct dispute relations are mediated by wealth,

social status, and power in the urban space. As a result, the governance of disputes tracks differently along these distinct relations of power as well. As Rooble, who experienced conflict-related property disputes with people at widely differing social locations argued, ‘all different kinds of people, they are all in there. Some people want money, some want *du’a* [blessings], and some want nothing, just for you to leave.’

The relative power of the respondents in a conflict-related property dispute, their social location in the urban community, and their ability to upend the tenuous peace in the city has much to do with how conflict-related property disputes end. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are the most vulnerable community in the urban space, and an entire enterprise has been constructed around the management of their provisions (Bakonyi, Chonka, and Stuvøy, 2019). IDP communities are regularly subjected to forced evictions, even in circumstances where they are forced into circumstances with no shelter (Durable Solutions, 2018, p.25; Durable Solutions Unit, 2020). There are cases of homes being sold at discounted prices with communities of IDPs still living inside, as the responsibility to ‘remove them’ would fall to the new owners (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020).

The deconstruction of informal living structures constructed by IDPs has been a central feature of the process of the “reconstruction” of the urban city. As will be considered in Chapter 6 this process raises the question of what kind of urban denizen the “reconstructed” Mogadishu is meant to serve. Put simply, conflict-related property disputes involving internally displaced persons are amongst the simplest to resolve for claimants, as the processes of eviction from public and private lands are underway across the capital. However, it is important to understand that the eviction of internally displaced persons from contested land and property *does not mean* that the property will necessarily be restituted to the pre-civil war legal owners. As one interviewee mentioned, they would rather allow the IDP community to continue to reside on their land, as they cannot be certain that more powerful forces would not immediately rise to take their place and be far more difficult to negotiate with (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020).

On the opposite end of the urban social sliding scale are the community of power brokers that constitute former warlords, current politicians, and those with the recourse to the use of force. Particularly in high-profile disputes, “clan elders,” politicians, and individuals with large amounts of social capital or recourse to the use of force regularly intervene in the processes of dispute resolution inside and outside of the judicial process. The ability to rally powerful individuals

around one's cause, as either the claimant or respondent, can be vital for success in a high-profile property dispute. These individuals can place pressure on lawyers, judges, and others to adjudicate disputes in particular ways.

If these avenues fail, these individuals can also make recourse to inflammatory clan discourse, rallying others around the claimant or respondent's cause. The clan of the disputants and their relationship to narratives about ownership of the city forms an underlying texture for the dispute process. As I argue in an earlier chapter, politicized clan discourse sets the emotive and political stakes upon which conflict-related property disputes are conducted, narratively linking disputes with understandings of histories of violence in the city. But clan politics comes to intervene in conflict-related property disputes in more muted ways as well. Apart from the large-scale narrative politics about belonging and ownership in the city that will be explored in a further chapter, clan is utilized here as a *practical political instrument* through the mobilization of "clan elders" and politicians appointed through clan distribution.

Conflict-related property disputes involving powerful individuals can quickly become political lightning rods. Consider the story of Hamda, a physician who returned to Mogadishu from the United States in 2014, to find that a valuable plot of land that her father had purchased in 1965 was claimed by someone else. The occupant was a man we will call the Senator. The Senator is former warlord and currently in Somali government. Hamda sent a civil engineer to demarcate the land, and that engineer was chased away with bullets. Hamda began a long and painstaking process to recover the land, organizing meetings with high-level officials. In these meetings, the Senator claimed that the land was given to him by a former President in exchange for his agreement to demilitarize. The courts would not intervene, even though they had documentary evidence of Hamda's legal ownership, as 'the Chief Justice was telling us this was a political situation.' The then-Mayor suggested that this contested land could be divested from *both parties* by being demarcated as *Dan Guud* (National Interest), as the Senator had also taken the abutting public land for his own. In response to this, the Senator launched a media campaign arguing that his land was being unjustly seized by the state, explicitly tracing it to a clan-based conspiracy. Owing to the fact that the Senator continues to have recourse to political violence, the threat of nationalizing the land and abutting property were withdrawn. Since then, Hamda's case has not changed (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020).

This is similar to the experience of Rooble (Interview, 2019 and 2020), who had an encounter with a man called the General in a different conflict-related property dispute than the one outlined in the preceding section. In 2014, Rooble returned from Europe to find that a villa had been constructed on a plot of land that he owned and was being rented out to others for a profit. The constructor was a retired general and sitting Member of Parliament. Unlike in his other dispute, where Rooble felt comfortable to engage the respondent and take them to Court, the real threat of bodily violence surrounded this conflict-related property dispute. As Rooble recounted, ‘whoever you send, he sends them away. He has his *ciidan* [army] to chase you away... He knows he won’t face consequences.’ Critically, Rooble has a complete set of documents for the land that is occupied here, but in this context they are of no use. As Rooble argues, ‘he has my land by force. Even though I have all of the documents.’ The capacity to enact the command with force, then, demonstrates a clear limit to the boundaries of evidentiary politics. There are clear reaches where the documents have little to no effect.

The majority of conflict-related property disputes exist between these two poles of social location: outside of the extremes of the most vulnerable and marginalized or the most powerful. It is in this middle ground where the most amount of flexibility in dispute pathways can be brought to bear – where multiple kinds of dispute pathways are possible.

### **Property politics in the everyday**

While conducting an interview with a lawyer (Interview, Ibrahim, 2019), he unexpectedly revealed that he had been involved in a conflict-related property dispute himself when he first returned to Mogadishu some years prior. The house where his wedding took place before the war was being “held” against his will by another party. As he described it, ‘there were so many people there.’ Ibrahim reflected on this, and decided to sell the house ‘his [own] people,’ or the occupant’s own clansmen. He then laughed and said ‘*ha isla bood boodaan*’ or ‘let them jump on themselves.’ He then relayed an apocryphal story that was retold in enough interviews to rise to the status of urban legend. In this story, a man from a non-majority clan returned to Mogadishu to find that his property was being advertised for rent. Instead of launching his claim directly with the would-be landlord, he paid rent, settled in the home. While renting the home, he quietly put the house up for sale. He found a buyer of the same clan and sub-clan as the man who rented him his own house and sold the house to him. He exchanged the original documents, legalized the sale with the

government, and left the complications to the new owner. The moral of the story is ‘*ha isla bood boodan*,’ or let them jump on themselves.

These stories speak to the kinds of ways that individuals can diffuse, exacerbate, manipulate or profit from the complicated politics of conflict-related property disputes. These are navigations inside and outside of the court system, requiring a shrewd understanding of the context and the uncertainty of the urban context. In a way, these myriad interactions constitute a kind of folk governance, involving popular understandings of right and wrong, the place of religion in urban society, and readings of urban history.

### *Property disputes between forgiveness and damnation*

Ahmed finalized the recovery of a plot of land that had once belonged to his deceased mother. He had long intended to construct a mosque in his mother’s name and decided that this location would suit that purpose. Upon further inspection, he found that a mosque was already in existence just a short walk away. In a conversation with a resident of the neighborhood, Ahmed was surprised that the resident urged him to construct the mosque for his mother as planned. When Ahmed asked why a neighborhood could be in need of two mosques in such close proximity, the man explained that the other mosque was constructed by an individual who was known to not own the land. He mentioned that no one in the neighborhood prayed at the existing mosque, as that knowledge alone was enough to invalidate the prayers conducted there. Ahmed constructed the mosque in his mother’s name, and it was well attended (Interview, Ahmed, 2019 and 2020).

The religious location of conflict-related property disputes is critical, as it is a prism through which many of the interviewees orient and understand their experiences. It reflects the engagement with the community as a community of Muslims, but also as individuals seeking to make meaning of their relations to this world and to one another. Languages of justice are inextricably tied to Islamic understandings of right and wrong – even when other Muslims are the perpetrators of wrongdoing. Where justice was impossible to access in this human life, many interviewees (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020; Interview, Nasrudin, 2019) claimed that righteousness would be on their side in the afterlife. Understandings of the Divine and the afterlife explicitly shaped how claimants and respondents interacted in relation to conflict-related property disputes. This suffuses conflict-related property disputes with religious meanings as those

understand them, come to grips with the challenges of disputes, and their role in this world, through their relations to God.

Islam's role in conflict-related property disputes is *not limited* to the arbitration processes constructed by the Islamic Courts Union and the ones currently in operation with Al Shabaab. Instead, Islamic knowledge flourishes in the everyday idioms and understandings of relations, conceptions of real ownership and the process of disposal, as well as the non-relativist readings of justice. This is evidenced in the interview data as interviewees would sometimes cast the political complexities of property disputes as demonstrative of the fallibility of human pursuits. As one interviewee argued, 'the only absolute justice is Allah's – everything else is a political construction' (Interview, Nasrudin, 2019). Understandings of universal justice allowed interviewees to dispense with the hope of accountability in this world, with an expectation that all would be brought to account in the afterlife.

The invocation of Islamic understandings gave voice to a strong undercurrent of narratives of acknowledgement, forgiveness, particularly when disputes came to an end. These strongly emotive stories were recounted many times, and spoke to distinct experiences of the legacies of violence on individual's lives and wider sociality. For example, Ahmed recounted the story of when he sought to restitute a property that had belonged to his sister. He found a young woman with children living there who explained that she had been raised in that house and knew it as her only home. She had assumed that the home belonged to her father, who had died there and was buried nearby. The young woman said that she was prepared to leave, but she asked that Ahmed forgive her father, fearing that her father would be held to account for their presence there in the afterlife. Ahmed relayed the message to his sister, who offered her forgiveness. Ahmed's sister chose to allow the young family to stay in the home as tenants for as long as she continued to reside in the United States.

In another experience, Sahro came to know of a man who was renting out rooms in her old family home to members of the police at expensive rates. The individual responsible was a man well known to Sahro. When the man returned from a trip to Hajj, Sahro heard that his health had deteriorated, as she described it, 'his skin was tearing.' His sister urged him to contact Sahro in order to make amends before he died. As Sahro recalls:

We said we forgive you, and don't want any of the money. Just send us the key. We forgave him. Then he instructed all of the people who live there that we own



the house and would be taking the rent. We send him some, but the rent and the *lahaansho* [ownership] is ours (Interview, Sahro, 2019).

The affective politics of forgiveness here works much differently than that often engaged with transitional justice literature. Forgiveness, in this context, exists neither as a wholesale engagement with the violence of the civil war, nor an engagement with the wider politics of social repair. In conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu, the narratives of forgiveness that I encountered had to do with very particular, acute harms – the use of a home over time, the collection of rent on homes that someone did not own – and forgiveness was sought by the individual responsible. It speaks to Islamic eschatological understandings of divine judgment in the afterlife, where one will be held to account for one's relations with others. The only one who can release one from the judgment of sins committed against another person is the victim of that harm. Forgiveness, here, does not entail a different approach to the complicated socio-political context of the post-urban city, or imply a deeper commitment to community-based processes of repair. Indeed, outside of the individual interactions of seeking and accepting forgiveness, the complex urban legacy of violence lives on.

### *Forging new relationships*

Sometimes in the aftermath of conflict-related property disputes that find resolution, the parties to the dispute forge new relationships within the urban fabric. This can come to be through the intercession of clan elders, politicians, or through individual initiative. When this happens, two kinds of relationships have emerged clearly from interviews: the *ilaali* (protector) and the tenant.

In interpersonal engagements with conflict-related property disputes, it is not unusual for claimants to pay respondents to vacate a property or place of land. This is often referred to as payment for protecting the house in the owner's absence, *ilaali*, which retroactively reimagines the past for mutual benefit. According to a senior judicial official involved in one case, the claimant paid the respondent a sum that approached the value of the house, as the occupant had invested a significant amount of money repairing the house after the explosion of a bomb (Interview, Dalmar, 2019). These payments allow the current residents of the property the means to find new homes in a different context. They also provide the means of social re-imagining. These payments, as *ilaali*, reconstruct the past relationship as if residing in the house was a *service* provided to the claimant. The payment implies that the resident protected the home from (other) armed marauders, (other)

would-be settlers and (other) threats to its use or livability until such time as the legal owner returned.

In other circumstances, particularly after forgiveness is sought and offered, the resident of the home may become a tenant of the home's claimant. This allows the property to continue to be occupied and used by the tenant, but for a fee. As one interviewee explained, establishing rent payment does more than create a new revenue stream, it acts as a symbol that the owner has *lahaansho* (ownership) and establishes a new relationship (Interview, Ahmed, 2019 and 2020). This is particularly important where public-facing businesses have been constructed on contested property, as it allows the enterprise to continue unimpeded. As Ahmed (Interview, 2019 and 2020) explained, in his absence in the diaspora, his old family home was converted into a bustling hotel without his knowledge, with each bedroom transformed into a separate guest room. When he returned to Mogadishu, Ahmed took control of the business and handed its management to his younger brother but continues to employ the original hotel constructors. While he was still deeply emotionally affected by the fact that the family home had been transformed without his approval, he found that it made more sense to engage the new city as it was, rather than how 'he would like it to be.'

These new relationships are uneasy and often fraught with difficulty. The deep distrust that characterizes much of city-living in Mogadishu is doubly true in these contexts, where the violations of boundaries have already occurred in an interpersonal context. These new relationships are often premised on the mutually beneficial re-readings of personal pasts – whether to establish the property occupant as the property's 'protector' or to establish as a tenant going forward. The context requires that both parties perform as though the current circumstance is a result of the original owner's consent, which it usually was not. These communal re-readings, however, lay the foundations for the possibility of new engagements going forward from the present.

### **Recourse to the *other* path: Al Shabaab's system**

Due to the clear security risk, this study did not seek out claimants who utilized Al Shabaab's court system or those who worked within it. Al Shabaab's system of arbitrating disputes traces back to the Islamic Courts Union's process, the mediation of disputes using Islamic principles and backed through the threat of force. However, even as none of the interviewees in this study spoke about

personally utilizing Al Shabaab's courts, the amount of reverence shown to Al Shabaab's process is noteworthy. It is understood as efficient, functional, and enforceable, free of clan-based interference, unhampered by large attorney fees, and unencumbered by unending Appeal processes (Interview, Faarax, 2019; Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020). The respect that Al Shabaab's dispute process engenders is particularly notable when considering that no interviewee professed to have had any personal interaction with it.

Al Shabaab's presence in the city is manifested both through the regular acts of spectacular violence and through their access to the halls of power, 'taxation' through the Mogadishu Port, and reportedly the banking sector (Dahir, 2020). Their influence on the justice structure is also marked, and has had a marked impact on how certain disputes proceed. In this case, Al Shabaab has created what might be considered a parallel judiciary with its own set of rules, judges, and manners of enforcement. Procedurally, the process is not substantively different from the overview of the state process provided in this chapter. Interviews are conducted by Al Shabaab officials where 'neighbors and other witnesses' are called to give testimony (U.N. Monitoring Group, 2019, p.14). The claimant and respondent to the case are invited (often with the threat of underlying violence) to present themselves for judgement (U.N. Monitoring Group, 2019, p.14). After the decision has been made by the Court, the Court issues its decision and, where necessary, orders the eviction of the unlawful occupant. A significant part of the admiration that even senior Somali government officials hold for this process stems from the fact that bribery or the influence of 'political men' are not thought to be able to significantly shift judicial outcomes.

As the U.N. Monitoring Group notes, 'Al-Shabaab ... provides some basic services typically associated with government, even in areas it does not physically control' (U.N. Monitoring Group, 2019, p.14). In addition to its taxation system for revenue collection, arbitrating disputes have become a meaningful way in which Al Shabaab attempts to exert authority across the Somali territories. The U.N. Monitoring Group finds that in contrast to the state justice system, which is perceived as 'costly, protracted and unpredictable' (U.N. Monitoring Group, 2019, p.14), recourse to the Al Shabaab justice system can be seen as a way to cut through the complicated politics that surround the government system. This may especially be the case for vulnerable people in rural circumstances, where 'in the absence of functioning family courts in rural areas, Al-Shabaab offers some women their only opportunity for financial compensation from ex-husbands and male relatives' (U.N. Monitoring Group, 2019, p.14). As the U.N. Monitoring Group

(2019, p.14) notes, ‘Al-Shabaab’s provision of rudimentary courts and access to judicial recourse...may account for its appeal among certain segments of the population.’

Rumors about those who had engaged the services of Al Shabaab abound, and these allegations have even been leveled at sitting members of the Somali government. Secondhand stories tell of individuals involved in unending disputes in the state Courts finding that Al Shabaab’s arbitration system quickly and effectively ended the dispute. There is, however, clear acknowledgment that the threat of violence is the instrument that Al Shabaab uses to ensure their will is done. On a similar note, the U.N. Monitoring Group (2019, p.14) argues that ‘the group’s ability to enforce its judgments through the threat of violence’ may be a driving factor for support for the group amongst certain segments of the population. For some, this is a path that the Somali state could follow in order to secure its *own* respect and accord.

People in Mogadishu, they have built a system, they have built an economy on this situation of warfare. They think bringing the government back means they lose. They don’t want to see the return of something strong. They don’t want it to stand. The government even begs, “please” [...] The idea of saying “please, go” is wrong. You should take them out (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020).

It is important to reflect on the reasons that Al Shabaab would engage property disputes and other kinds of arbitration during the context of ongoing martial hostilities with the Federal Government of Somalia and AMISOM. In the context of war with the state, why would Al Shabaab focus on adjudicating ‘divorce and child support, theft, possession of weapons and the sale of livestock’ (U.N. Monitoring Group, 2019, p.14) and other seemingly minor issues? I argue that Al Shabaab’s involvement with property dispute cases makes sense when understood as an appeal to the politics of public authority. Its demonstrated capacity to provide adjudication services to urban denizens is meant to bolster their credibility as political authorities. Moreover, fear of Al Shabaab’s retaliation widens the appeal of their courts as they have the capacity to realize their judgments in a way that the state courts simply cannot currently achieve.

This provides a useful contrast for our understanding of public authority and conflict-related property disputes in the capital. Unlike the Verification of Lands Office, which engages dispute processes as public authority but ultimately buttresses the existing state structure, Al Shabaab adjudicates property disputes with the aim to *upend* the existing formal structure. This contestation means that while Al Shabaab is materially threatening the lives of state judges, lawyers, and others involved in the state process, they are *also* conducting their judgments at a

high level of credibility. This relation, under which ‘property and public authority are mutually constitutive and contingent’ (Lund, 2006, p.174) sets the stakes for authorities to contest over the right to govern conflict-related property disputes. This demonstrates the manner in which conflict-related property disputes are an arena for contesting attempts at claiming authority in contemporary Mogadishu.

### **Intimate territoriality, public authority and conflict-related property disputes**

As disparate authorities cohere around the management of conflict-related property disputes, it’s important to return to the concept of intimate territoriality. Public authority is about belonging because, as Lund argues (2017, p.2), authorities are *themselves* constituted through the competition to determine between ‘who belongs and who does not, and to establish and uphold rank, privilege and social servitude in its many forms’ (Lund, 2017, p.2). Conflict-related property disputes are the site of an active political claims-making in the context of Mogadishu’s essential uncertainty.

Mogadishu’s polyvalent political landscape comes to create and circumscribe the opportunities for disputants and occupants to lay claim to land and property in Mogadishu. This chapter considered how the duplication of property documents and the duplication of their management becomes a site of vital contestation – over particular properties, over public authority, and anchors to legitimate claims to the city. Through the consideration of social location, this chapter showed that relative power and the ability to enforce will through violence circumscribe access to property and the outcomes of disputes. Individuals chart non-linear and uncertain routes through relationships to property disputes, sometimes ending in the reconstruction of the past for mutual benefit, sometimes invoking or reconstituting religious authority, and sometimes ending in new relationships moving forward. Finally, this chapter considered how Al Shabaab uses property disputes as a site to cohere public authority and legitimation. Taken together, property disputes (whether taken to Court or not) are a site of active contestation over power, property, and location in Mogadishu.

The uncertainty of these navigations comes to cement an important consideration – that ‘inventive political technologies’ (Simone, 2013) are created and deployed to navigate and manage conflict-related property disputes. Mogadishans determine how they will deal with these contested legacies: whether through Court or through the threat of violence, with forgiveness bringing the possibilities of uneasy new relationships or the severing of all possible further interaction.

However, many urban denizens have ended dispute processes with more or less satisfying outcomes, there are many more locked in intransigent disputes across the city. The sheer magnitude of the issues of conflict-related property disputes is confounding, demonstrating that this is an issue that is likely to be with us for some time.

It might seem that property disputes in Mogadishu occupy a liminal kind of ‘ungoverned’ space, constituting a governance of everyone and no one. This is a tempting, yet limited, view of the scope of the issue. Tracing these dispute pathways has shown that there is a kind of multivalent politics at work in the city. These disputes are constituted by many different kinds of urban authority. Property disputes in the capital are the site of many legitimating authorities involved in contests for power and buttressing one another, creating a complex political ecology of property disputes. These fluid interconnections are liable to change, making it possible that governance coheres around certain sites and floats away from others. It is clear that the legacy of urban war ties these kinds of fragmentary politics together. The politics of urban war exist in the dissolution of state authority but also in the proliferation of other authority and governance mechanisms. The state formation project, thus, engages all of these legacies in contesting, overlapping, and seemingly contradictory ways.

This fractious politics gives way for conflict-related property disputes to become suffused with larger political histories of urban presence and belonging. The carving out of discrete sites of contest, mobilized here through the production and management of papers and documents, comes to be understood through the contested spatial legacies of this city that this dissertation has established – the city’s colonial transformations, post-colonial “modernizations,” and reordering through urban war. While the focus of this chapter has been tracing the everyday, embodied politics of conflict-related property disputes, the following chapter will consider how conflict-related property disputes are located in wider politico-historical narratives about ownership, belonging, and claims to the city.

## CHAPTER 5 – NEW AND OLD MOGADISHANS

This chapter explores how conflict-related property disputes become a site where claims over particular parcels of land become suffused with a bundle of contestations that traverse the nature of the civil war, the state and society that significantly preceded it, the city's contemporary political and constitutional status, and imaginaries of the city's future. I address how conflict-related property disputes refract this politics of urban belonging, evoking deeply divided and discordant relationships to political pasts, presents, and futures. The foundations established in the previous chapter demonstrate that conflict-related property disputes are a site of active political claims-making. This chapter considers how the vital contestations over conflict-related property disputes also reflect wider politico-historical discourses about belonging in the city.

The central argument of this thesis is that contestations over ownership *in* the city map on to contestations of ownership *of* the city in important ways. Nowhere is this dynamic clearer than when considering the memory politics of discourses of ownership and belonging in the urban capital. Conflict-related property disputes have become a focal point of these contradictory discursive practices, giving us the space to be able to compare and contrast distinct understandings of the city.

The main conceit of this chapter is that conceptions of urban belonging in Mogadishu marshal different readings of the urban history of the city. I consider how, through conflict-related property disputes, articulations of claims to Mogadishu are framed through “cosmopolitan” or “autochthonous” arguments. I consider how myriad claims to being “*true* Mogadishans” are often framed as being “*Old* Mogadishans” in contrast to an image of “newcomers” who usurped the city. Legitimacy is derived, here, through a politics of first-ness, but that is derived through distinct understandings of the city's past. In doing so, they situate their claims in reference to larger narrative trajectories of political shifts. These claims pull from, and are constitutive of, diverging understandings of Mogadishu's political history. They turn out to be bounded claims, meaning that the “New” Mogadishans in one telling *are* the “Old” Mogadishans of the other.

This chapter will first trace the relationship between memory, narrative, and urban belonging. It will consider how the palimpsest of different readings of the past evoked through the city's history come to bear on contemporary readings of ownership and belonging in the city, in ways that do not cohere with the practice of ‘restitution,’ but significantly exceed it. This chapter

will then distinguish between two distinct kinds of urban claims-making that arise from conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu. The first, which I call the cosmopolitan claim, is open-ended only in terms of its clan composition – it is an argument that bounds belonging on the basis of prior use or prior presence in the city. The other claim, the autochthonous claim, argues for belonging to the city derived from an understanding of Mogadishu as an ancestral homeland for a particular clan. Both of these claims, I argue, are articulated as claims to “real Mogadishan-ness” and impact how denizens move through and understand the conflict-related property disputes and the city at large. This is, ultimately, the discursive politics through which intimate territoriality gains meaning and political power.

### **Sediments of urban memory and the politics of belonging**

To Ali Jimale Ahmed (2014, p.6), Somalis are ‘far too caught up in the past.’ This past ensnares Somalis within its grip, as the ‘present and future are held hostage to a past whose contours and origins are shrouded in mystery, but whose quotidian practices are repeated through rituals that are endowed with verisimilar significations’ (Ahmed, 2014, p.6). Nor is the past what it seems at first blush. As Ahmed goes on to argue that the past Somalis conjure ‘reflects our collective misapprehension of reality, our misunderstanding of what clan or cultural identity entails’ (Ahmed, 2014, p.6). For Ahmed, Somalis suffer from a surfeit of memory. This is not any kind of memory, but a surfeit of contested memory that reworks and reshapes the present and future and sets the stakes for the contemporary contest. It is a past that acts, even as it is being continually reconstructed. In this chapter, I will detail the way that these contests over Somali pasts come to bear on how conflict-related property disputes are understood, and how this erects boundaries around who is, or isn’t, a ‘real’ Mogadishan.

It is important to have a sense of what kind of memory is being addressed here. These are ‘images of the past that speak *in the name of collectivities*’ [emphasis added] (Olick, 1999, p.345), not some kind of base expression of the essence of the community in question. The question of historical memory in the aftermath of conflict has been widely studied across the social sciences, taking the alternate terms ‘collective memory’ and ‘social memory’ (Olick and Robbins, 1998), ‘clan hate-narratives’ (Kapteijns, 2013a), and ‘mythico-history’ (Malkki, 1995). The scholarly consensus is that historical memory, particularly in the aftermath of violence, is mutable and politically charged. Here, the substance of the past becomes the material through which discursive



battles over political identity are waged. A great deal of post-conflict scholarship on memory also deals with state-sponsored commemoration, memorialization, and the manner in which “official” memories and “local” memories contest as ‘memory frictions’ (Shaw, 2007). It is important, too, to understand how memory frictions can exist outside of the realm of statecraft. In the Somali case, Ahmed (2014, p.6) makes the case that the ‘quotidian practices’ of memory are ‘repeated through rituals that are endowed with verisimilar significations,’ and that this has a great political consequence. These memory contests are a critical part of recent Somali political practice.

Ben Lieberman (2006) traces the production and reproduction of “national hate narratives” in the Balkans in the aftermath of conflict. These ‘stories told and retold within communities’ (Lieberman, 2006, p.301) are reflective of the political needs of the present. As Lieberman (2006, p.300) argues, these narratives situate the “nation” as the protagonist and are ‘compartmentalized; they present their hero, the nation, as unique in suffering; and they depict the national narratives of rival nations as illegitimate.’ Lidwien Kapteijns extends Lieberman’s argument for the Somali case, substituting the “nation” for clan. Kapteijns (2013a, p.206) makes the case that through the narratives of ‘clannism,’ one can observe the creation of a ‘discrete, “containerized” identity, is characterized by its having been uniquely victimized by other, similar’ clans. In Somalia, ‘grievances that are derived from private and public, personal and professional, socio-economic and political, and local and regional conflicts and inequalities came to be interpreted in terms of mythical clan hate-narratives’ (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.209)

The temporality of these narratives mixes past, present, and future in the service of the needs of the political moment. As Patrick Devine-Wright (2003, p.20) argues, collective memories ‘typically possess a beginning or moment of origin and a temporal diachronic sequence from the remote past in which later events are embedded and anchored to the immediate present context.’ What is included, and excluded, from those linear narratives speaks to the politics that is being emphasized. Indeed, as Menkhaus (2014, p.569) argues, ‘one’s choice of date on the beginning of the era of war and collapse... involves a much more political decision than meets the eye.’ Thus, when one chooses to start the narrative of Somalia’s state collapse validates different understandings about who is to blame for the violence. The differing punctuating turns in the narrative create a coherent, logical narrative from diffuse strands of the past.

Contested memory is intimately intertwined with the politics of belonging as a means of projecting contemporary boundaries backward and forwards through time. At this level of

understanding, contested historical memories of violence in Mogadishu are situated in urban space. As Simone argues, ‘the city is a field of affect’ (2008, p.105) and ‘all cities remain the densities of stories, passions, hurts, revenge, aspiration, avoidance, deflection, and complicity’ (2008, p.103). Here, conflict-related property disputes can be considered a site where urban accretions of memory, of affect, and of belonging in the city are manifested and contested.

The spatiality of these memory contests can be understood through Huyssen’s (2008, p.3) language of an ‘urban imaginary’ which is, fundamentally, a recognition that ‘cities are palimpsests of real and diverse experiences and memories.’ In this way, I argue that conflict-related property disputes trigger, evoke, and become a means of contest for this array of distinct urban imaginaries as ‘city dwellers imagine their own city as the place of everyday life, the site of inspiring traditions and communities as well as the scene of histories of destruction, crime, and conflicts of all kinds’ (Huyssen, 2008, p.3). This relationship between claims-making, contested memory, and belonging is more than simply discursive. Indeed, ‘urban imaginaries are...part of any city’s reality, rather than being only figments of the imagination. What we think about a city and how we perceive it informs the way we act in it’ (Huyssen, 2008, p.3) and also how we lay *claims upon it*. These claims – of the mantle of “true” Mogadishan – are projected forward and backward into time and acted through the contestations over parcels of land and buildings in conflict-related property disputes.

Narrating histories of violence in Somalia, then, is as a deeply political act. As Menkhaus (2014, p.559) argues, ‘what might appear to be arcane historical trivia to out an outsider becomes, for Somali protagonists, a critical fulcrum determining the weight of a claim to land or power, or the very legitimacy of the Somali state.’ Memory is an active site of political activity, as ‘clans seeking to justify claims on newly occupied land recall the 1960 election of a member of parliament in that area from their clan as a marker of their long-term presence there’ or ‘nationalists invoking a golden era of national unity and mobilization quarrel over whether the Barre regime slipped into clannish and oppressive behavior in 1969, 1975, or 1978, each of which carries very different meanings’ (Menkhaus, 2014, p.559). Menkhaus (2014, p.559) argues that it is difficult to make sense of these distinct claims as ‘some of these claims are valid; some are exercises in nostalgia; others are willful attempts to fabricate a past that never was, or to forget inconvenient histories. Knowing which is which is not a simple task.’ However, it is useful in our context not to attempt to make sense of the spaces between these claims, or their competing political aims, as

indications of objective truth. Instead, I'm interested in understanding what political work the narratives *do*, as opposed to using the historicizations to construct an objective vision of the Somali past. Here, we can come to see what the narratives emphasize and obscure and what kinds of claims to belonging they support or negate. What happens, then, when competing and incommensurable claims of belonging are set against one another? What happens when the mythic imageries of rightful belonging are projected by differing actors onto the same space? How do conflict-related property disputes become the battleground for these contesting claims to Mogadishu?

### **New and Old Mogadishans?**

The following section is a mapping out of patterns and connections made by interviewees about their *understandings* of property disputes and Mogadishu, rather than about their specific *experiences* of the disputes, which were charted in the previous chapter. This section comes from the ways that interviewees anchored themselves, and their disputes, in the context of the socio-political landscape of Mogadishu and its history. The central argument is that different respondents articulated their claims to properties and land in Mogadishu in ways that legitimated their right to live, do business, and determine the political landscape of Mogadishu going forward. This was achieved through the discursive construction of a 'real Mogadishan' to which interviewees claimed they belonged. Often, the status of 'real Mogadishan' was made through a claim to being an '*Old* Mogadishan,' a first-comer, in the context of an order upended by a significant rupture, and the city repopulated by usurpers. And yet, these claims are formulated in ways that are exclusive – an Old Mogadishan in one features as a usurper in another – and thus the site of conflict. I argue that contested memory runs through these definitions, based on which parts of the Somali past are emphasized or excised. I want to demonstrate the ways in which these claims rely on diverging understandings of Mogadishu's political history, proceeding from the erasure or engagement of distinct historical junctures.

There are two central kinds of claims that I am interested in elaborating: what I've termed here the "cosmopolitan claim" and the "autochthonous claim." The cosmopolitan claim to Mogadishu stakes its argument on the waves of migration to Mogadishu that occurred before and after Somalia's independence. It is 'cosmopolitan' because it imagines the Mogadishan identity as defined differently from clan identity, and reads Mogadishu as a space in which all clans can ostensibly belong, drawing from the recent nationalist past. This argument is bounded, however,

by one's ability to trace a personal connection to the 'real' Mogadishu – Mogadishu before the civil war. Belonging in Mogadishu is bounded by whether one (or one's family) lived, worked, and engaged in the city before the outbreak of violence in 1991. Self-described *reer magaal*, or city folk, view Mogadishu's status as the capital as implying that Somalis from all clan lineages can rightfully belong to the city. But these bounded understandings of 'modern' pre-war urbanities means that the cosmopolitan argument expects from Mogadishan particular postures, practices, and knowledge of the city before state collapse.

Conversely, the autochthonous claim draws the boundaries of belonging in Mogadishu around where one (or one's family) was said to have been located before the coming of colonial occupation. This argument is made salient by the shifting territorialities of clan structure after the coming of the civil war, and calls back to conceptions of pre-colonial history.

Substantively, there is a striking symmetry in both the autochthonous and cosmopolitan claims to belonging and grievance in relation to Mogadishu. Both are stories of a community rightfully settled in the city, forcibly evicted and re-settled by 'newcomers.' The major distinctions are the details – the difference of the stories exists in the timing of the events, the nature of the rupture, and the individuals at fault. That these discourses strike similar narrative chords is not a coincidence. This, indeed, is part of the functioning of these stories. Mythic pasts, narratives of grievance and victimhood, and experiences of humiliation are part and parcel of these contested narratives. While exploring these postures, it is important to understand the rendering of the Somali past that these narratives evoke, and critically, what is elided.

### **Cosmopolitan Claim to Mogadishu**

The cosmopolitan claim to Mogadishu emerges from a specific historical moment and reading of time. While discourses of modernity and urbanity were engaged at length in Chapter 2, here, I want to speak to how these understandings of modernity filtered into embodied practices, knowledges, and relationships to Mogadishu before the war. Reading how some interviewees characterize their location in Mogadishu before the war as *citizens of Mogadishu*, helps to untangle how this cosmopolitan claim operates in the contemporary moment. As Luling (2006, p.476) argues, partly due to state-led prohibition of the 'open reference to clan' and partly because of 'the growing mobility and mixing of people from various origins in the capital Mogadishu and other

towns, there did grow up a generation of young urban people to many of whom clanship meant little, or who were committed to rejecting it.’

To begin, one must locate the cosmopolitan claim in the context of state modernization in the late twentieth century, which encouraged not only state reorganization but also *social* reordering in order to attain modernity. Bakonyi (2015, p.247) writes of this relationship: ‘keywords such as development, progress and modernity were used to “narrativize the nation” and to mobilize the citizenry into the state-building project.’ This mobilization of the citizenry included attempts at the wholesale reordering of Somali identity, such as through the move to ‘eliminate tribalism’ in the 1970s and the expansion of education as a ‘vehicle for national unity’ (Bakonyi, 2015, p.247), which were discussed in depth in a previous chapter.

In a way, the modern Somali subject that the state ostensibly endeavored to create was spatially located in Mogadishu. This is because while the modernization project imagined a temporal binary between backwardness and modernity, it also imagined a *spatial* binary between the city and the countryside. As Bakonyi (2015, p.253) argues, the narrative of modernization in Somalia marked a geographic distinction ‘between “bush” and “town”’ where ‘the [bush is] the home of individualistic and ungovernable nomads (the ‘people from the bush’), the [town] an expression of civilization, control and order.’ In many ways, this modern Somali subject, where it existed, was realized in Mogadishu through state intervention in schooling, employment, and governance.

Kapteijns (2010, p.39) speaks of *ilbaxnimo* (sophistication) as a set of bounded postures which ‘encompasses a set of meanings associated with the sophistication of living in urban communities’ characterized by education status, particular gendered relations, and overall understanding of refinement. In a way, *ilbaxnimo* is how about this modern Somali subject moves through the world, but also how they interpret the world. This distinction between town and bush ‘gave rise to an ambivalent urban attitude oscillating between a romanticised adoration of the nomad’s courage and freedom, amusement over their ignorance, and paternalistic demonstrations of their own (educated and rational) superiority’ (Bakonyi, 2015, p.253).

Farah (2002) marks this distinction in *Of Tamarind and Cosmopolitanism*, which contrasts the open, multi-clan, multi-ethnic Tamarind Market that preceded the urban war (which Farah calls ‘the sacking’) with the Bakaara Market that rose in its place, a space of many silos where ‘militarized capitalism’ reigns supreme. The description that Farah marks of the time before the

war speaks to this urban modern subject in the making, the sense of Mogadishu as a point of pride, the ways that the national and the urban weave into one another effortlessly.

...I remember the enthusiasm of the seventies which all Somalis were in joyous celebration. In those long-gone years, we were enthusiastic about a number of things. We were highly enthusiastic about the political independence that was only a decade old then. We were enthusiastic, too, about our particular cultural and linguistic legacies and the enviable fact that ours was the only country on the continent of Africa with a sizeable population whose people spoke one language, Somali. Many of us would also mention another important point of which we were very proud. We knew that the city we lived in, Mogadishu, was not only one of the prettiest and most colourful cities in the world, but also that it was decidedly the oldest in sub-Saharan Africa and older than many of Europe's most treasured medieval cities (Farah, 2002, p.71).

This almost romantic reading of the city's recent past is the affective core of the cosmopolitan argument. It is, in some ways, the embodied, experiential mode of the political project of modernization. As one interviewee, Hamda, recalled her youth in Mogadishu in the early 1970s, she made many of the same arguments about the city, the nation, and her place in it.

At that time Somalia was great. We were one of the powerful countries of East Africa. I remember when I was in high school, Somalia hosted the Union African meeting, 1974, and I served at that time because all the high school students they used to be translators – or, serving delegations coming from all over the country, and we had high schools they were Italian speaking, English speaking, Arabic speaking. [...] And we were so proud being Somali. We were so proud being Somali. At that time, we were so proud to be Somali. And most of friends, we didn't know which tribes they are. Actually, some of them we discovered each other which tribe we are after the civil war. Believe me (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020).

Hamda (Interview, 2019 and 2020) made clear that she felt a duty to return the investments that she felt the government had made for her. She had trained as a doctor abroad but returned to Somalia 'because my country gave me a scholarship, and they are the ones who needs physicians and help, and I came back to serve my country. To pay back what they put in me.' Hamda imagined herself as part of a social contract with the Somali people, specifically, 'because all the students we had free school, free health. And we served all the military no matter which class you belong, which tribe you are, which *gender* you are. Because we had equality' (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020). Hamda felt morally and politically engaged in the modernizing project in Somalia at the time and contrasted that sense of rootedness against the contemporary political landscape.

These sorts of romantic depictions of the pre-war era did often come with significant acknowledgments that the military state had significant problems. However, the affective power of the cosmopolitan argument is in the comparison between the past, understood to be orderly, and the present, which is described as lawless. As Rooble argued ‘there was law. People lived together. Land issues didn’t even exist. The first that I heard about this land issue was after the war started’ (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020).

For those who engage in the cosmopolitan claim to belonging in Mogadishu, the rupture came at the war. What Farah (2002, p.73) calls the ‘sacking of the city in 1991’ marks the decline of this social and political order. Recall that Hamda emphasized that, to her, clan identity was not the salient feature of her networks of friends and colleagues until the war came. The interpretation of the war, here, is one of outsiders upending that valuable political project of the Somali state and Somali society and replacing it with violence. Even as many navigate conflict-related property disputes today, those who I would categorize as articulating these cosmopolitan arguments see something wider working: the disestablishment of the city as it once was. As one interviewee put it, rather bluntly, ‘the *reer magaal* [city people] were pushed out, and the *reer badiyo* [bush people] came in and ruined it’ (Interview, Sahro, 2019).

### *Old Mogadishans know Mogadishu*

As people from many sides of disparate land and property disputes in the city recounted their understanding of the violence of the civil war, a resonant theme emerged. Hamda (Interview, 2019 and 2020) contextualized her dispute as “the Old Mogadishans have left.” Another interviewee (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020) said the city was full of people he characterized as “Johnny-Come-Lately” and that this was the central issue undergirding Mogadishu’s land and property disputes. In these arguments, it is the “not knowing” the city before state collapse that *generates* questions about ownership and use in the first instance. The cosmopolitan argument imbues in pre-war city dwellers a system of informal knowledge of who lives where (amongst elites), abutting which specific property, what old places were called, how people inhabited space. In the moment of exile, through the dispersion of these networks of witnesses, neighbors, colleagues, and friends, much of that knowledge was evacuated from Mogadishu. This is the location of a great deal of anxiety and a sense of irretrievable loss. Nor is this sentiment unique to Mogadishu – in Sarajevo, Stefansson (2007, p.59) remarks that ‘for the locals, there is no doubt: Sarajevo is not, and will

never become, the city it once was before the recent war.’ Just as in Mogadishu, those who might be considered Old Sarajevans ‘portray themselves as “cultural strangers” within their “own” city’ and believe that ‘the core values which defined the city and the people who embodied those values – has been exiled’ (Stefansson, 2007, p. 60).

My conversation with Mahad (Interview, Mahad, 2019) reflects these shifting knowledge practices and its relationship with the politics of belonging. Mahad is a deeply religious and reflective older man and he works as a real estate broker (*dillal*) in Mogadishu. He has a nearly encyclopedic memory of property sales in particular areas of the city – remembering not only the details of a specific plot but also keeping tabs on adjacent plots as well. Mahad moved to Mogadishu in 1977 and never left during the course of the civil war. Early on in my interview with Mahad, he invited another man to join in on the conversation. The man he invited to sit with us, Ahmed, was born in Mogadishu in 1960, but left Somalia for Canada in 1993. Ahmed returned to Mogadishu in late 2013. After they greeted one another, Ahmed addressed Mahad with his story (Interview, Ahmed, 2019 and 2020).

Some weeks before our meeting, Ahmed was late to a meeting at the Banaadir Regional Administration. He ran to a young *bajaj* (autorickshaw) driver and jumped in the car. He cycled through three names for city hall to direct the driver to his destination and was met with confusion each time. First, Ahmed asked to be taken to ‘Municipio,’ which is the Italian word for municipality. Then he asked to be taken to ‘*Dowladda Hoose*,’ or “lower government,” a name that only makes sense in the context of Somalia’s centralized government before the war. Each time he was met with a blank stare. Finally, he asked to be taken to ‘*Gobolka*,’ which is a direct reference to the name the BRA currently holds. After this third prompt, the *bajaj* driver laughed, started the engine, and replied ‘why didn’t you say that in the first place?’

While recounting this story weeks later, Ahmed was deeply frustrated. He could not understand how ‘a young, twenty-years-old man in Mogadishu... knows nothing about the city.’ Mahad offered Ahmed some advice. ‘If you want to live here, you have to act as if everyone from the city left. *Xamar Allaha u naxariisto* (Rest in Peace, Mogadishu).’ Mahad then turned to me and told me that he knew that he and Ahmed were from different clan families, but he had more in common with Ahmed than he did with ‘his people’ because they ‘understood one another.’

Here, both Ahmed and Mahad anchored their relationship to Mogadishu in a kind of knowledge of the city that they believed to be inaccessible to the young *bajaj* driver, and all those



they considered newcomers. They called back to practices of sociality, ways of relation with one another, and a shared sense of collectivity that they understood to be displaced through the violence of war. They, and many others, legitimated their belonging to Mogadishu through a kind of belonging-through-knowledge that was time delimited, with the window of possibility closing in the early 1990s.

### *Cosmopolitan forgettings*

In these readings, conflict-related property disputes emerge from this understanding that Old Mogadishans hold knowledge, social relations, and kinds of urban conviviality that ‘New Mogadishans’ cannot access. What emerges is a vision of Mogadishu as changed through war, refashioning not just the morphology and use of the city but also the denizens that make the city up. That the traumatic unraveling of urbane, cosmopolitan existence would figure prominently in the recollections of those who were interviewed is not surprising. These are people who lived through, personally or from afar, what Lidwien Kapteijns (2013a) calls a ‘forced unmixing’ which unwound the ties of urbane civility that they understood to exist before. These traumatic experiences of loss in property and home are central to the cosmopolitan claim.

However, this orientation toward the civil war as rupture obscures some parts of the city’s own history. This brings forth a historicization that colors colonial and post-independence Mogadishu through virtue of comparison to the urban war. As was extensively explored in Chapter 2, the structures that make this kind of “modern” urbane experience possible were structured upon the deep inequalities of the pre-war city. While one interviewee (Interview, Abshir, 2019) argued that ‘land issues didn’t even exist’ until the coming of the war, access to and ownership and title before the war was foreclosed through opaque bureaucratic networks. State violence was a visible part of the urban landscape for those on the city’s periphery, if not those in its core. Thus, these kinds of affective remembrances of the city recall experiences that were not universal – even amongst Mogadishans. While it would be going too far to say that these are simply elite remembering of the city before the war, it is important to locate how this narrative conceptualizes these parts of the city’s past, which are actively *emphasized* by the autochthonous claim.

Here, we might ask what *political* work does this narrative does. Clearly, it orients towards an understanding of rupture that takes place at or just before the outbreak of mass violence and what Kapteijns (2013a) called clan cleansing in Mogadishu in 1991. The war was an undoing, an

*‘invasione di barbari’* (Interview, Ladan, 2019) which upended the existing order and replaced it with something fundamentally deficient. This conceptualization of the city’s distant and recent past is fundamentally challenged by the autochthonous narrative, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

### **Autochthonous Claim to Mogadishu**

The concept of autochthony, or “being of the soil,” is implicated in violent contestation through the medium of land. Prestholdt (2014, p.253) defines autochthony as ‘a political strategy that anchors social identity to territory as a means of claiming rights.’ Here, an *a priori* right to the use of land is rooted in metanarratives of communal belonging (Bøås, 2012). Veena Das (2007, p.113) speaks of a claim of autochthony in India as constituted through an ‘ancestral purity,’ an ‘imagination of being worthy of having a nation, of being able to lay claims on a homeland...a claim that was articulated through the motif of being capable of making the sacrifices, bearing pain and hardship as would a martyr.’ Autochthony therefore implies predestination as well as a claim to futurity. The land was preordained to belong a specific community by way of origin, and further, the right to the continued use of that land is borne by the mythic history that ties the community to that space. Therefore, a notion of autochthony emerges as a response to the problem of ‘*who belongs?*’ and ‘*how can one prove belonging?*’ (Geschiere, 2009, p.6). As Sara Berry (2009, p.24) argues, ‘declaring “we were here first” implies that “our” claims cannot be gainsaid because no-one was there to witness our arrival.’ The spectral power of the land, itself, becomes the substance of the answer to that question.

Discourses of autochthony are implicated in political violence across Africa, where “‘sons of the soil” kil[l] people portrayed as “invading aliens” seeking to grab power and land’ (Dunn, 2009, p.114). Where autochthonic claims become salient in moments of political violence, Kevin Dunn (2009, p.114) argues that this is a result of underlying ontological uncertainty. Discourses of autochthony provide ‘a sense of primal security and certainty...[y]et his sense of security is inevitably fleeting’ as a result of the plasticity and instability of the claim itself. As Arjun Appadurai argues, violence remedies this uncertainty and produces a desired order, as ‘uncertainty about identification...calls for the worst kind of certainty: dead certainty’ (quoted in Dunn, 2009, p.115). Crucially, however much autochthony discourses might manifest as a destructive force through the means of political violence, it is also a *productive* endeavor, as it exists as ‘part of the

production, reproduction and performance of political identities,' which 'revolves around' and attempts to settle, 'questions of citizenship' (Dunn, 2009, p.115).

Depending on how it is periodized, the autochthonous claim to Mogadishu can be understood to be a relatively recent construction or a deeply embedded historical one. Kapteijns (2013a) traces this claim as emergent in the context of the early war, locating the creation of clan hate discourses and their ties to territoriality as a 'key shift' that allowed for the outbreak of clan cleansing in the city. Conversely, Farah (2002) traces the 1991 'sacking' alongside a historical pattern of cyclical violence in the sixteenth century in which 'contingents of disenfranchised herdsmen, led by city-based men and armed with ancient injustices newly recast as valid grievances, visited havoc on the city.' There is a sense in which both of these kinds of periodizations can be held together, as an examination on a theme of place, identity, and the construction of political identity. How does it come to be that, contrary to the cosmopolitan claim, Mogadishu is carved out as a site for exclusive use or ownership mediated by clan identity? To understand how the autochthonous claim generates salience in the context of Mogadishu, it is important to locate the territorialization of political identity throughout the civil war, and how memory-work and narratives of historical injustice animate and affectively anchor these claims. In this section, I will be explicit with clan names in a way that I have avoided in other sections, as they are the central to the argument at stake. As mentioned in the introduction, this is not an attempt to reify existing, consolidated clan identities but to represent what I have been told in explicit terms by interviewees.

This kind of claim orients around people who describe themselves as inheritors of Mogadishu as "clan homeland" through autochthony. Autochthony, as Peter Geschiere (2009) submits, operates on notions of belonging that revolve around conceptions of rootedness in particular space, of 'being of the soil,' of being 'first-comers' as one defines it. Here, too, ownership of and belonging to the city is made salient through a formulation that renders "Old Mogadishans" as "true Mogadishans." However, the temporal bounds of the moment of rupture center around Italian colonial intervention, and injustice (and displacement) sustained by post-independence Somali governance. These claims to Mogadishu were solidified by understandings of territorial rights that were legitimized through rights by blood, or '*u dhashay*' (Barnes, 2006), which were understood by some to supersede ownership rights negotiated through the state through titles and deeds. After "*the*" Hawiye USC clan militia that captured Mogadishu in the early phases

of the urban war, Mogadishu became ‘the domain of a single clan family’ and ‘exclusive claims to rights and resources [were] established by one clan at the expense of other current or former residents’ (Menkhaus and Adawe, 2018, p.33-34). This is what Ken Menkhaus and Ismahan Adawe call the new ‘ethno-hegemonic’ character of Mogadishu, which contrasts against its recent history.

First, it’s important to make sense of how the autochthonous claim to belonging is rooted in a territorial argument for ‘clan-based homelands.’ Bakonyi (2015) traces the relationship between mass migration during the civil war and conceptions of autochthonous origin, enshrined as rights to reside, do business, own and dispose of property, and engage in political activity.

Many people now fled to regions populated mainly by people from their own clan and controlled by a local clan militia. They soon referred to these regions as ‘home regions’ or ‘areas of origin’. The entanglement of genealogical affiliation with notions of territoriality and origin resulted in the creation of new discursive repertoires in which to be ‘born in’ (*ku dhashay*) a region was added as another layer (or rim) to the cultural frame of being ‘born to’ (*u dhashay*) a clan and both were used to legitimise or contest political rights (Bakonyi, 2015, p.253).

Indeed, a great number of those who forwarded the cosmopolitan claim engaged in these kinds of lateral movements *in addition* to staking claims in Mogadishu, by sense of their identities as Puntlanders, Somalilanders, or Jubalanders in an autochthonous register, but also staking personal claims to Mogadishu by dint of life experience and enmeshed histories. There is a sense in which, through the cosmopolitan claim, Mogadishu is rendered as a *distinct* space that operates (or should operate) outside of these autochthonous registers of ownership and belonging because of the history of mixed-clan presence or through histories of state and international investment. As one former senior judicial official (Interview, Bashir, 2019) put it, ‘as a capital city [of] Somalia, [Mogadishu] has been a city where everyone lived. 200 years of government, every *qabiil* [clan] put their land in Xamar [Mogadishu]. There was a change at the war.’ Echoing Hamda’s statements, the attorney (Interview, Bashir, 2019) made the case that before the war, ‘neighborhoods were diverse. No one knew what was happening.’ The important distinction between the cosmopolitan and autochthonous claims to Mogadishu, then, is not whether autochthonous attachments *do* or *should* exist across the whole of the Somali territories. The central contest is over whether these autochthonous renderings are salient in Mogadishu, and whether ownership in and of Mogadishu should operate at a different register than elsewhere. Put simply, how does one stake a claim to Mogadishu, and what understanding is valid?

These contests resonate with broader understandings of territoriality outside of Mogadishu. Indeed, Bakonyi (2015, p.254) suggests that in Mogadishu and Kismayo, ‘people often referred to colonial clan maps to legitimise or contest the “historic right” of particular clans to govern a city’ (Bakonyi, 2015, p.254). Orienting these understandings of “right” in the context of the colonial era speaks to an understanding of pre-existing authenticity and sense of legitimacy that was unwound through colonial and post-colonial intervention. The ‘Old Mogadishans,’ in this figuring, are those who *would have* been placed in Mogadishu or *would have benefitted*, from the Somali state-led political project had they not been displaced from their space in the political project. Cast in explicitly clan-based terms, this understands Mogadishu to be the preserve of “*the*” Hawiye clan generally, and “*the*” Abgaal sub-clan, specifically.

### *Coloniality and narratives of displacement*

Even as colonial cartographies of ‘clan homelands’ are used to populate and legitimate representations of Somali birthright, there is in Mogadishu a deeply contentious relationship with the politics of Italian colonialism and urbanism. Importantly, coloniality and its impact on Mogadishu’s morphology is a site of elision and forgetting in the cosmopolitan narrative.

As the autochthonous claim is figured as a *collective* birthright, so too are the ruptures that are understood to have displaced this clan group figured as collective series of injustices, moving through the colonial to post-colonial eras. As one interlocutor argued, ‘When Italian colonial administration [came] they owned the land. It was ancestral land. They were never consulted. The post-colonial continued this approach... took land that belongs to clans without any conversation. So the grievances that is created by people to say this is ours by right’ (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019).

Through this argument figures a claim to dispossession, rendered in terms of shifting of land ownership that occurred during the colonial era. Land was taken, reconstructed into something else, or displaced from the control and use of the “original inhabitants.” This is kind of historicization is borne out through the ‘Casa Italia case,’ which recently came before the Mogadishu Municipal Court (*Maxkamadda Gobolka Banaadir*). Before the Court, a man lodged a complaint that his family had been unjustly dispossessed of the land under which Casa Italia stood. Casa Italia, a notable landmark in the heart of Mogadishu, had been in the possession of the Italian government for nearly a century. During the colonial era, Italian colonial administrators

and their families constructed Casa Italia as a ‘grand Italian club’ (Harding, 2016, p.45) a site of parties and leisure in the center of the historic town. After independence, Casa Italia remained a members-only country club where Italian and Russian expats played tennis, where one could find ‘splendid penne and Chianti,’ and where ‘Somalis rarely appeared on the [tennis] courts except as ball boys’ (Maass, 2000). The coming of the civil war in 1991 upended the structure upon which Casa Italia stood – the expats and the Somali ball boys fled the city, and the building was abandoned.

In Court, the man claimed that his grandfather had used and tended to that land throughout his life and was ultimately buried there. In his paperwork, the complaint was filed against ‘*Gumeystaha Talyaaniga*,’ or the ‘Italian colonizers,’ arguing that he had been forced from land that was rightfully his possession. A lawyer involved in the dispute argued that the premise of the case was absurd and should never have received hearing as ‘in these kind of cases you have to give a notification to the occupant in a claim. Who are *Gumeystaha Talyaaniga* [Italian colonizers]? How do you give them notice?’ (Interview, Ibrahim, 2019). For these procedural reasons and a lack of documentary evidence the claim was unsuccessful in Court. But the failure of the claim in Court does not undermine the claim’s salience, political relevance, and sense of underlying grievance.

Similarly, “*the*” current-day Reer Mataan sub-clan (Abgaal, Hawiye) claimants of the land underneath the former Parliament (ex-Parliament) building did not feel the need to lodge a complaint in Court. Ex-Parliament was inaugurated as Casa del Fascio in April 1938, the building served as the headquarters of the National Fascist Party until the fall of Italian East Africa in 1941. When the first Somali parliament was constructed upon independence in 1960, this was where it sat, until parliament was suspended in the coup in 1969. President Barre contracted the Soviets to construct a new Parliament building, which is where the reformed parliament congregated until the collapse of the state in 1991. After this, ex-Parliament was thoroughly looted in the first waves of the civil war, with ‘its valuable red bricks now serving a new purpose in hundreds of ovens in the city’ (Menkhaus, 2006, p.81). Throughout all of these changes in the urban landscape, there remained the argument that the land underneath ex-Parliament had *always* owned by the claimant group. As the interviewee pointed out, emphatically, ‘it was our burial ground, and we even have nothing in the government’ (Interview, Beydan, 2019).

Buttressing understandings of colonial displacement, those who forwarded the autochthonous argument emphasized the inequality and stratification that characterized the post-independence period, particularly in the aftermath of the 1969 military coup. These inequalities were represented as the terms of land ownership as well as political integration. These claims contrast with the suggestion offered by the interviewees who forwarded the cosmopolitan claim that clan identity was a less salient feature of the pre-war Somali state. As one interviewee put it, contemporary land issues are ‘due to the fact that there are grievances about who owns the land. Under the Barre days, the Darood had the old houses in the town center’ (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020). Another spoke of similar processes of state capture as dialogic with the socialist revolution: ‘many reasons – the government revolution said all the [land] was theirs. Agricultural land was taken over and grievance was born’ (Interview, Hamza, 2019). These grievances are understood to have fomented the violence that came later, coming in the form of what Bakonyi (2010) calls ‘leveling looting.’

The autochthonous claim to Mogadishu is rooted in arguments about injustice during colonial rule, the reorganization of land tenure in the city, and the increasing clan polarization of the ‘modernizing project’ that characterized the post-independence Somali state. In a way, there is no way to understand the autochthonous claim without an understanding of how the Barre regime reified clan identity through state violence in an effort to consolidate power. As traced extensively in Chapter 2, the Barre regime waged brutal campaigns of state repression *framed in terms of defiant clans*. These applications of large-scale state violence ‘initiated the first step towards the clanisation...of violence that would later characterize the civil war in Somalia’ (Bakonyi, 2015, p.249). Kapteijns (2013a) calls this the reification of clan as a ‘technology of power,’ which refers to the ways that clan identity was made salient by the state, flattening and holding to account clan groups constructed as ‘disruptive’ *as clans*.

As one interviewee Interview, Hamza, 2019) argued, the Somali clan system was once the center of the Somali order but then the ‘*kacaan* [revolutionary government] abolished all these things, constitution revoked. The people have to go to the court system that we inherited from the Italians.’ And of the military regime, this interviewee said ‘Italians lived separately after independence; we changed the color. We got their office, wear their clothes. Now there is only someone who speaks Somali. People stopped believing in this system and its justices’ (Interview,

Hamza, 2019). The violence that followed the dissolution of the state, to this interviewee, and the property issues as well, came from this primary source of dislocation.

The autochthonous claim to Mogadishu is situated in this context, where Mogadishu comes to stand in for these series of dislocations. Mogadishu's land and properties come to be figured as elite capture, often slipping into claims of clan capture. Indeed, the centrality of bureaucratic navigation in order to access land and property in the capital before the war, coupled with the knowledge that the military regime consolidated power through the use of clan rhetoric, gives some credence to this claim. However, just as in the cosmopolitan claim to belonging in Mogadishu, the autochthonous claim engages in multiple kinds of forgettings.

### *Autochthonous forgettings*

The autochthonous claim to belonging in Mogadishu elides the violence of clan cleansing that gave rise of Mogadishu's contemporary 'ethno-hegemonic character' (Menkhaus and Adawe, 2018). It serves, in some ways, to legitimate the discourses that motivated clan cleansing in the capital in 1991 and cements those outcomes in the contemporary moment. Menkhaus and Adawe (2018, p.34) speak of the 'prevailing ethos of the era' as 'the victor's peace, captured in the expression *waan taabsadey*, or "I touched it"—a term used to lay permanent claim to any resource one came into possession of during the war.' While the autochthonous claim makes important critiques about the structural violence of coloniality and military rule, it often does so in a way that elides the violence of clan cleansing and cements the outcomes of the urban war in Mogadishu.

The analysis of military rule as 'Darood domination' figured heavily in the expanding circle of political violence that characterized clan cleansing in the early 1990s, ensnaring not just the elites that benefitted from the military regime but *also* ordinary civilians that bore those particular clan names. Critically, it spares from consideration elite individuals from across clan families that supported and buttressed the repression of the military regime. It is a kind of discursive flattening, where 'Barre's complex, ever-changing, clan-manipulated network of political clients' is reduced 'to the simplistic clan-based adjective of Daarood' (Kapteijns, 2013a, p.211). In this way, contemporary fissures are read back into time and reorder understandings of pre-war state governance.

This discursive flattening functions as a distinction, here, between Old and New Mogadishans, which surfaces at a violent political register. Lidwien Kapteijns (2013a, p.228) notes



in her work that clan-based autochthonic discourses were articulated as “hate narratives” that ‘included the construction of the targeted groups as “foreign” and “from elsewhere,” which emerged from an understanding that Mogadishu was the exclusive homeland of a single clan family. In this autochthonic argument, all others were “New Mogadishans” and therefore available for expulsion. This is, as was outlined in the theoretical framework, a significant problem central to autochthonous discourse. As Geschiere (2009, p.27) argues, autochthonic discourses often result in ‘an obsession with purifying the community generates constant redefinition of the “true” autochthon, with ever smaller circles being drawn.’ Through reference to these colonial and post-colonial injustices, but also through the elision of the violence of clan cleansing that endures in Mogadishu’s contemporary ‘ethno-hegemonic character,’ these autochthonic discourses can very well cement in place a sense of ‘victor’s peace’ (Menkhaus and Adawe, 2018).

The other serious elision in terms of the autochthonous claim to Mogadishu is common to autochthonic discourses across the continent: the specter of competing claims to autochthony. The Banaadiri people, now a marginal ‘minority group’ in the context of the Somali political landscape, are historical inhabitants of the old towns of Mogadishu. Indeed, the colloquial name for the Banaadiri people is Reer Xamar, quite literally “the people of Mogadishu.” Due to the discursive bounds placed on the conception of Somaliness, however, the Banaadiri people are displaced as possible autochthons and figure instead as continual strangers. As Kusow (2004, p.4) argues, ‘the Banaadiri Somalis are considered too light to be Somali. Moreover, the original homeland... of the Banaadiri groups is located somewhere in the Arabian Peninsula, Portugal, or Persia depending on the whim of the narrator.’ These cultural bounds, framed by Kusow (2004, p.4) as ‘racialized exclusions’ make possible the elision of the Banaadiri people’s relation to Mogadishu, particularly in the context of urban political violence. The uneasy relationship between the Banaadiri community and the politics of belonging in contemporary Mogadishu is made even more stark by the relations of patronage through intermarriage that some families have established with dominant clans in the city in order to gain access to wider protection mechanisms. This is, in many ways, the classic challenge of autochthonous discourse and the source of much of its discursive anxiety: when claiming purity by dint of being ‘first,’ the alternative narratives of autochthonic belonging can lead to deeply divisive disputes.

### **Conflict related-property disputes as intimate territoriality**

This chapter considered how Mogadishans anchor claims to the city by defining themselves as “true” Mogadishans, through the discursive construction of “Old Mogadishan.” Here, what is important is how boundaries around “Old Mogadishan” are mutually-exclusive – the narrative construction of “Old Mogadishan” figures *as* a newcomer in another telling. These boundary-making practices, enforced and constructed through memory, are important sites of identity construction and distinct urban imaginaries. However, these claims also underlie conflict-related property disputes in the city because of the different registers of belonging *and ownership* at stake. Distinct boundaries of belonging (either “cosmopolitan” or “autochthonous”) make room for different kinds of conceptions of ownership (validated through papers or by settlement). This is the central conceit of this dissertation’s conception of intimate territoriality – that claims to property in the city are anchored through wider claims to the city and vice versa.

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive analysis of all kinds of claims to belonging in Mogadishu. However, in the context of conflict-related property disputes, the autochthonous and cosmopolitan claims serve as distinct registers of contest, vying to determine who can belong to the city – and more importantly – in what ways. These narratives of ownership and usage, disputes and resolution are deeply tied to the narratives of the past and how the Somali past is understood. These disruptive and contested memories of the Somali past form pathways *to* belonging and boundaries *around* belonging, located in the aftermath of urban war. These claims are manifested through conflict-related property disputes because claims to properties and land are contextualized through claims to the wider city, and understood *together*, making conflict-related property disputes sites of intimate territoriality.

Katharina Schramm (2011, p.5) makes the case that memories of violence are ‘not only embedded in peoples’ bodies and minds but also inscribed onto space in all kinds of settings: memorials, religious shrines, border zones or the natural environment,’ and I would add, homes, properties and unconstructed land in urban Mogadishu. Space is not simply a container for memory, but instead ‘profoundly shape, and are also shaped by, the ways in which violence is experienced and performed as well as remembered’ (Schamm, 2011, p.6). Landscapes of violence are sites of ‘complex entanglement of procedures of remembering, forgetting, and the production of counter-memories’ and as a result, ‘such landscapes are never uniform or fixed, but rather...are constantly re/produced by the different people who are engaged in memory work in various ways’ (Schamm, 2011, p.5). The disputes at the core of this dissertation, then, become ways in which

this complicated memory work leaks through the meanings ascribed and imbued into brick and mortar. I'm interested in how the processes of retrieval, disposal and negotiation of land and properties in these disputes come to figure for how belonging in Mogadishu is discursively narrated. That is to say, I'm interested in exploring, here, in how *through* conflict-related property disputes, the city of Mogadishu comes to hold dissonant meanings.

One way to access these dissonant meanings is to think through how framings of 'Old' versus 'New' Mogadishans mobilize distinct registers of time. Indeed, the cosmopolitan and autochthonous claims to Mogadishu are not being made in silos, they engage and contest one another. Consider how Hamda formulates her understanding of how her conflict-related property dispute came to be:

The new people occupied properties they don't own. You can't convince these people they don't own the land. They think they legitimately own the land, being that tribe. And occupied for so long. They can't understand people who are not from their clan owning Mogadishu...

[Mogadishu is] claimed by particular people, they're claiming to be the owners of Mogadishu. And they just arrived after the civil war. Us, who were born here, who were raised here, we are being acted like we are foreigners. Because just we don't belong to that tribe. The biggest issue here is that one (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020).

Hamda's critique of the autochthonous argument brings together many distinct arguments – a claim to a specific property is, here, contextualized by a number of different things: a definition of how one can legitimately claim to belong in Mogadishu ('us, who were born here, who were raised here'), a critique of how others formulate their belonging on autochthonous terms ('they think they legitimately own the land, being that tribe'), and a re-assertion of her status as an Old Mogadishan ('and they just arrived after the civil war').

Another interviewee, Abdirahim, characterized his understanding of the origin of the issue of conflict-related property disputes in a way that implicitly critiques Hamda's assertions.

After the collapse, many of the people have left behind properties. There were also natives, indigenous people, clans that moved in. Some claiming that this is their ancestral land. Colonial administration took the land and that is where the problems started (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020).

Pulling these readings together shows the ways in which both discourses of belonging do not exist in isolation, they are thematically and politically linked. Those that Hamda understands to be 'the

new people’ who ‘just arrived after the civil war’ are the same people that Abdirahim understands to be ‘natives, indigenous people, clans that moved in.’ These distinct historicizations diverge in almost every substantive way – on the history of Somali statecraft, the livability of pre-war Mogadishu, clan identity and its salience in Somalia’s recent past, and whether Mogadishu’s urban denizens today are ‘Old’ or ‘New.’

But again, there are important structural ways in which these narratives dovetail. As mentioned before, there is a striking symmetry in both the autochthonous and cosmopolitan claims to belonging and grievance in relation to Mogadishu. Both are stories of Mogadishans settled in the city, forcibly displaced, and replaced by ‘newcomers.’ As mentioned before, the fact that these discourses strike similar narrative chords is not a coincidence. Returning to the conception of conflict-related property disputes as landscapes of memory, Schamm (2011, p.7) speaks of this relationship between space, memory and violence as a process of sacralization, which not only refers to the ‘overtly religious realm,’ but also to the ‘explicit ascription of meaning to a violent past’ through the construction of meaningful archetypal narrative figures. As Schamm (2011, p.7) argues, ‘the victim, the martyr and the hero are narrative figures through which such conversation of the inexplicable into the meaningful may be channeled....’ In a similar way, Schindel and Colombo (2014, p.4) speak of the relationship between memory and ‘mutated landscapes’ through an analysis of ‘the ways in which subjects remember and dispute meanings about what happened’ coming to bear on ‘the haunting effects emanating from the buildings and practices of living and using the spaces in the aftermath of conflict... even if the material remnants seemingly remain untouched.’ These narratives, mediated through the brick and mortar of the properties in dispute, stand in for claims to belong in the city at large.

These discursive constructions of ‘New’ and ‘Old’ Mogadishans are attempts to shape the past of the city in ways that can anchor claims to belonging in the city. As Yuval-Davis (2006, p.2) notes, memories are central to the politics of belonging as ‘identities are narratives, stories that people tell about themselves and each other. These narratives are contested, fluid, and constantly changing but are clustered around some hegemonic constructions of the boundaries between “self” and “other” and between “us” and “them”.’ This brings together our understanding of intimate territoriality with the political uses of memory and violent inscriptions of belonging in space.

By constructing oneself as an ‘Old Mogadishan,’ one can do the important political work of boundary maintenance. With this established, readings of urban strangerhood, trespass, and

ownership in contemporary Mogadishu can follow. But there are, in this context, multiple ways of defining and inscribing belonging and boundaries in the context. What does one make of these many memories and many kinds of discursive constructions? I argue that there are multiple, incommensurable ways of defining “strangerhood” and “trespass” in contemporary Mogadishu, evidenced by these different registers of belonging and constructions of “Old Mogadishans” as *true* Mogadishans.

All of this has bearing on how ‘reconstruction’ in Mogadishu is understood and framed. The next chapter will consider conflict-related property disputes in the context of ‘post-conflict urban reconstruction’ underway in the city. I think critically about the ‘building boom’ in the capital, ballooning the value of land and property and creating a scramble for new builds or the refurbishment of previously existing private homes, public properties, and even urban monuments. I think about how these wider contests come to bear on visions of urban futurity, and whom the city is ultimately for.

## CHAPTER 6 – URBAN RECONSTRUCTION IN AN UNCERTAIN CITY

Suuban (Interview, 2019 and 2020) is an architect with both personal and professional experiences with conflict-related property disputes. When she returned from the diaspora in 2011, she found that her technical skills were in high demand in the capital. She created a small construction firm that designed construction processes, primarily for private property renewals. In several buildings she was contracted to refurbish, she found striking markings across the walls. These markings, almost like murals, represented the physical remnants of years of contested and transient building use in Mogadishu. Over time, she began collecting images of these markings as a way of preserving them before she was contractually obligated to replace them with new walls or fresh paint. These images, saved from multiple building sites across time, spoke to an important way Suuban (Interview, 2019 and 2020) understood her work, her place in the city, and her ambivalent relationship to Mogadishu's contemporary urban reconstruction.



*Figure 15: Markings on a Mogadishu wall, reproduced with permission.*

According to this architect, markings such as these lined the walls of almost every building she set out to reconstruct from 2011-2017. She became intimately familiar with these images, enough to

imagine who had created them. In the top quadrants were practical markings – full of names and phone numbers. Across the bottom, there were drawings. ‘I’m sure it’s not adults, and not young children below 4 or 5, but others,’ she says (Interview, Suuban, 2019 and 2020). They were often in the lower third of the wall, pointing to a particular height of the artists. The images depicted became familiar themes from one building site to another. She saw many hearts, often crying with ‘red tears from the eyes, like crying blood’ (Interview, Suuban, 2019 and 2020). She noted the presence of the Holy Qur’an, flowers, and guns. She had an ambiguous relationship with the images, finding them meaningful and potent while simultaneously viewing them as ‘graffiti’ in need of removal. She resolved to take photographs of the images to preserve them in some form. When asked why she compiles these photos, she replied, ‘I read the pictures. They put their feelings on that wall. It is where they lived. They were young people.’ For Suuban (Interview, 2019 and 2020) the images in these buildings represented a way of engaging the ambiguous relationships of ‘home’ curated in these spaces over time – with or without proof of legal ownership. In these ways, those people who had moved through these buildings had found a way to make the space their own. They inscribed their presence on the walls. She said she has no sense of what became of the individuals who made the markings on those walls, when they were made, or whether the people were specifically removed in order to facilitate the renovations she was contracted to undertake (Interview, 2019 and 2020). These lacunae, both personal and political, open up important questions about Mogadishu’s contemporary urban reconstructions.

Suuban’s experience is a generative site to think through the unwieldy context through which conflict-related property disputes occur – namely, Mogadishu’s contemporary ‘urban renewal.’ Here, processes of urban reconstruction after mass violence raise two main kinds of contestations, which are best framed as questions: what requires reconstruction, and who is reconstruction for? The first question responds to a series of contestations that surround the nature of the civil war and what that reconstruction means in the post-war political order. The second question, however, asks who belongs in the city after the fighting has ended, and how new kinds of urban boundaries (both material and symbolic) around the city are drawn. In this chapter, I consider Mogadishu’s “building boom” as a site of multiple, contradictory kinds of political inscriptions occurring through the city’s built environment. I examine how urban reconstruction is not characterized by standardized and regularized process, but instead through the initiatives of multiple kinds of actors (state, private individuals, armed groups) making use of the built

environment of city in order to contest the past, present, and future. In this context of ‘urban reconstruction,’ conflict-related property disputes figure as sites of transition and ways of negotiating what kinds of urban futures are possible, and for whom.

This chapter will first consider Mogadishu’s “building boom” as a site of urban contestation. It will trace the imageries of urban “return” of diaspora and the politics of reconstruction by dispossession to consider how reconstruction is striated by contemporary urban inequalities. This chapter will consider how eviction, particularly of the city’s most marginalized, has become a central feature of processes of urban revitalization. Having established this, this chapter will move on to a discussion of “nostalgic reconstructions,” or how *what gets reconstructed* speaks to the ambivalent legacy of urbicide in Mogadishu’s contemporary moment. Finally, this chapter will consider how conflict-related property disputes as implicated in this contested politics of reconstruction.

### **Mogadishu rising?**

Even as early as 2013, the shifts underway in Mogadishu were notable enough for the World Bank’s vice-president for Africa to remark ‘Mogadishu is in the midst of an economic revival, driven by a building boom, new international airline routes, rising trade out of the city’s port, and renewed hope in a new, more promising era’ (New Humanitarian, 2013). These sentiments are commonly expressed as part of a discursive construction of Mogadishu as a ‘rising city’ that exists in the context of a broader appeal to see ‘Somalia rising’ (Hammond, 2013). Discursive constructions of Mogadishu as a ‘rising city’ endeavor to see Mogadishu, and Somalia, as on a path away from chronic insecurity and conflict, and towards state capacity and economic growth. The language of ‘Somalia Rising’ (Hammond, 2013, Momodu, 2016) came into prominence in 2012, with the coming of the first non-transitional government since the collapse of the state in 1991. Discourses of the ‘rising city’ are preferred by Somali diaspora youth who disseminate images of growth and beauty in resistance to narratives of failure in Somalia (Chonka, 2018). The ‘rising city’ narrative also supports international organizations that work in the capital, as it demonstrates that decades of continual investment in the Somali peacebuilding process have come to fruitful ends. In these readings, Mogadishu is ‘back from the brink,’ a city ‘in recovery mode,’ a place where ‘eye-catching office buildings and residential apartments are replacing bullet-riddled, dilapidated structures’ (Momodu, 2016). These transformations are taken as a sign that



the city is ‘rising,’ mediated by informal entrepreneurship, market expansion, diaspora capital, and economic reconstruction. Layered underneath the optimism of the ‘Somalia rising’ narrative that characterized much of the return of state governance, there were important interconnected urban shifts in the making – namely the beginning of a wave of returnees, and the concomitant ‘building boom.’

Rather than a straightforward sequence of hope-inducing post-war reconstruction, however, the changes to the urban fabric have been complicated negotiations with questions of the meaning of the city, its rightful denizens, and the perennial issue of who can determine its future. Indeed, as Chonka (2015) writes, these narrative depictions of Mogadishu serve to complicate, but not replace, images and realities of Mogadishu’s current instability. As Chonka (2015) notes, ‘business is booming in certain sectors, urban regeneration is moving forward in some districts (though scars of conflict are still very much present)...[b]ut at the same time these portrayals are no more a ‘reality’ of Mogadishu for most residents than the images of endemic violence and extreme militarisation [...]’ These are images of the city that serve to rebut the endless depictions of Mogadishu as an inhospitable and unliveable place, but they can serve to smooth over the very real contestations that continue to undergird everyday urban life.

It’s clear that conceptualizing Mogadishu as ‘post-conflict’ is challenging, considering the incidents of spectacular violence that happen with relative frequency. There is an unsettled quality to the city, to the extent that Al Shabaab continues to attack thoroughways, state offices, and upscale hotels on a regular basis. And yet, there has been a notable increase in the number of diaspora in the city since at least 2012 (Mohamud, 2014) and a corresponding ‘building boom’ across multiple areas of the city. The price of land and property in the city has skyrocketed, particularly in areas where development is less contested. Critically, this building boom is driven by Somalis, especially diaspora returnees, who have found in Mogadishu an important site of investment. This building boom is, at least discursively, associated with the ‘return’ of diaspora from all corners of the globe in order to do business, engage in politics, or retire in the city. This building boom has bolstered a small industry of cement importers and resellers, construction laborers, *dillal* (brokers), notaries, lawyers, and dispute arbitrators. As I will trace below, these reconstruction processes are tied clearly to conceptions of the past, present, and future. To complicate this reading of Mogadishu as a ‘rising city’ it is important to understand how urban reconstruction in post-war contexts is intimately tied to legacies and contestations over violence.

### *Reconstruction, unplanned?*

For the purposes of this dissertation, just as we focused on ‘quotidian practices of memory’ (Ahmed, 2014) in relation to the making and contesting of post-conflict memory, so too shall we focus here what might be considered the ‘quotidian practices of reconstruction.’ This ad-hoc, frenetic, seemingly ‘unplanned’ series of constructions and reconstructions in Mogadishu’s urban core offers a space to think outside of the meanings inscribed by state or international actors. I am interested in how urban reconstruction in Mogadishu seems to be, in large part, an ambivalent and unplanned process, wavering between the power of individual plans mediated through diaspora capital (real estate and the like) and the ambiguous auto-construction of mass populations. For urban planners, development practitioners, and well-heeled Mogadishu residents, this ambiguity is a significant source of anxiety. As Rooble (Interview, 2019 and 2020) reflected on the rapid pace of urban reconstruction, ‘it is a mess, it’s not good. [the streets] they don’t have drains. The water and sewage will go into the new houses. There are some streets where you go down the streets in boats.’ Thinking about this, he added ‘the things they should do first, they only think about it after. After the consequences come. Sometimes they destroy what they just built to fix it, and sometimes they say let it stand’ (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020).

Reconstruction is a powerful form of urban reordering across social scales. As Sawalha (2010, p.12-13) makes clear in the case of Beirut, ‘while powerless groups and individuals were excluded from the process of reconstruction, investors, developers, and governmental institutions that controlled the physical rebuilding of the city were shaping Beirut’s past and history through the deployment of new meanings assigned to selected urban spaces.’ Some sites are prioritized for reconstruction while others allowed to languish in rubble. Some homes are reconstructed in their past image, others take new purposes and new meanings. How these determinations are made, and by whom, can tell us a great deal about the nature of the reconstruction and the city itself.

### **Imaginaries of urban ‘return’: diaspocracy and developmentalism**

For our purposes, it is important to understand the figure of the diaspora in this process of ‘reconstruction.’ While most of those exiled by the Somali civil war ended up in neighboring countries, there are sizeable Somali communities across the Global North, the Middle East, and elsewhere. A great deal of scholarly and humanitarian attention is particularly paid to the

remittances that the Somali diaspora sends home, amounting to over a \$1 billion a year (Majid, 2018). Somali diaspora returnees (in particular) and the Somali diaspora (in general) have been lauded as possible agents of Somalia's 'reconstruction' in terms of political reconstruction (Lewela, 2012), counter-terrorism (Richardson, 2011), agents for the dissemination of democratic norms and civil society (Pirkkalainen, 2015), or peacemakers (Horst et al., 2010). It is important to complicate these readings with an understanding of 'multi-sited embeddedness' (Horst, 2018), which gives us the space to think of Somali diasporic returnees as complex political actors, with important, and controversial relationships to the 'reconstruction' of Mogadishu.

Anecdotal reports and widespread social understandings point to the return of Mogadishu's diaspora population from all corners of the world as largely responsible for this 'building boom' (RVI, 2017). These patterns of return, particularly from the Global North, speak to many factors which have been richly analyzed by academics. Scholar Cawo Abdi (2015, p.241) makes clear in her analysis that a sense of continual transience, dislocation and mobility is a marked aspect of across the Somali diaspora that emerged in war's wake, and that the forging of 'transnational lives' across geographic boundaries comes through 'experiences and alienation in their new settlement'. Through this 'emotional dislocation in the new places of settlement' comes a figure of home that is 'imagined, reimagined and idealized' (Abdi, 2015, p.239). This brings us to the possibility that the politics of 'return' are as much about visions and possibilities of 'home' as they are about the social locations of these diasporic communities in their adopted homes. As Horst (2018, p.1347) makes clear, while 'many of the first to move – in the late 1980s and early 1990s – were the country's urban elite... they are also amongst the ones who are now returning with the aim of contributing to the rebuilding of Somalia, often having kept transnational connections while in exile.' That is to say, the understandings and relations of 'home' are contested not just through experiences in the diaspora, but also in imaginaries and politics of 'return.'

But diaspora 'return' is neither a linear nor final process. It is iterative, tentative, and cautious. As Mohamud (2014, p.2) writes, there is a significant misunderstanding, particularly in host countries in the Global North, 'that when return is viable it will be permanent.' Instead, the practices of return appear to be governed by what Abdi (2015, p.234) has termed 'flexible citizenship' in which mobility is facilitated by the adoption of 'coveted Western documents' which 'permit refugees to seek economic opportunities and physical and psychological security and provide the ability to lead the transnational lives necessary for families scattered around the globe.'

As Mohamud (2014, p.2) makes clear, diaspora ‘return’ is *made possible* through access to privileged passports and documentation as ‘citizenship enables mobility to and from Somalia’ by ensuring visa access as well as the ability to leave in the case of ‘a sudden deterioration of security in Somalia.’

This passport parachute, the ability to leave if circumstances in Somalia become untenable, is one source of tension between diasporic and non-diasporic Somalis. This binary between ‘*qurbo-joog*’ or diaspora, and ‘*qorrax-joog*,’ has been richly analyzed by scholars such as Mohamud (2014, p.3-4), who writes that tensions between diaspora emerge from several sources, including: securitized architecture that prevents meaningful interactions between non-diaspora and diaspora Mogadishans, perceptions that diaspora Somalis conduct themselves in a ways that exhibit a ‘feeling of superiority,’ patterns of ‘circular return’ which can lead be interpreted as ‘a lack of commitment to Somalia’ as well as the significant disparities in language and educational skills which give diaspora returnees an edge in terms of lucrative external facing employment. These tensions are especially prominent when considering the significant political capture by diaspora returnees, with a third of parliamentarians holding dual nationality as of 2017 and extending into the highest reaches of the Somali Federal Government.

Robtel Neajai Pailey (2021, p.199) coins the much-needed term ‘diaspocracy’ to describe ‘the dominance of repatriate nationals in homeland government policy and practice’ in Liberia. For Pailey (2021, p.181), diaspocracy figures as an element of the ‘post-conflict make-over fantasy’ in which ‘post-war polities are tabula rasa with histories of inequality that can somehow be sanitized with technical, bureaucratic reforms.’ Diasporic actors in Liberia come to mediate between international programs of state ‘reconstruction’ and the ‘local’ actors, becoming ambivalent ‘janus-faced’ figures in the process. Pailey makes the connection to political transformations in Somalia explicit, by arguing that President Mohamed Abdullahi ‘Farmaajo’ is ‘emblematic of a “wider” diaspocracy because many high-ranking officials previously resided in Europe or North America’ (Pailey, 2021, p.199).<sup>11</sup> Through this careful analysis, Pailey complicates the role of the diaspora returnee in post-conflict African societies.

Diaspocracy is a useful prism through which to think through the movement of power in visions and enactment of urban ‘reconstruction.’ It gives a frame through which to critique the

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<sup>11</sup> The contestations surrounding the dual-citizenship of President Mohamed Abdullahi ‘Farmaajo’ have become flashpoints in Somali politics, leading to President Farmaajo announcing that he renounced his U.S. citizenship in August of 2019. For more, see: *The East African*, “Farmaajo drops US citizenship, but will this deliver victory?”.

optimistic relationship between ‘return’ and ‘reconstruction,’ and gives a useful language through which we can ask a central question: just *who* is a reconstructed Mogadishu meant to serve?

### **Reconstruction by dispossession? Mogadishu’s building boom**

This brings us to the building boom. As Bakonyi (2021, p.15) argues the investment of international aid ‘together with investments from local companies (prominent among them the money transfer companies), and the global Somali diaspora, has initiated the rehabilitation of Somalia’s war-torn urban systems.’ These investments have ‘prompted a development boom in the city’ (RVI, 2017, p.80). While there is little clear analysis about how these investments have come about, widespread narratives point to international development funding coupled with the return of the diaspora (Horst et al., 2010). Making sense of these transformations requires an analysis of continent-wide patterns in urban violence and property values.

Bakonyi (2021, p.6) writes that Mogadishu’s contemporary building boom is underwritten by ‘aid, together with investments from local companies (prominent among them the money transfer companies), and the global Somali diaspora’ which together have ‘initiated the rehabilitation of Somalia’s war-torn systems.’ This process is rendered visible as ‘governmental buildings and offices are rehabilitated; residential houses are renovated and newly built; hotels, shops, malls and restaurants are open; transport, communication and service infrastructures are (unevenly) assembled throughout cities’ (Bakonyi, 2021, p.6).

One emerging strand of research considers the relationship between urban conflict and urban land value through the nexus of urban ‘humanitarian presence.’ In this analysis, humanitarian intervention is materialized spatially as ‘humanitarian presence’ (Büscher and Vlassenroot, 2010). Büscher et al. (2018) think through the relationship between urbanization and aid agencies through the evocative language of Gulu, Uganda as ‘urban aidland.’ Urban aidland, here, speaks to the ways in which the intervention of aid agencies in service provision (such as education), planning (through ‘humanitarian architectures’ in the form of gated aid compounds’) and governance come to circumscribe and interpolate the meaning of urban space for denizens (Büscher, Komojuni and Ashaba, 2018). The politics of encampment and humanitarian intervention has also thoroughly been explored by Branch (2013) where humanitarian intervention paradoxically supports state violence.

There are ways in which conceptions of Mogadishu as ‘urban aidland’ can be important theoretical departures. The ‘NGO-ization of the Somali public sector’ (Somali Public Agenda, 2019), coupled with security interventions by AMISOM and others come to shape the lived experiences of urban residents and their movements through space. And yet, in terms of the building boom, these questions become more difficult. The historical challenges of humanitarian access in Mogadishu (Grünwald, 2012) have circumscribed the mobility of humanitarian actors across the urban space. Outside of the barricaded Xalane airport complex, which houses the United Nations Mission to Somalia (UNSOM) and international embassies, there is very little explicit ‘humanitarian presence’ in the wider city. Put simply, the humanitarian footprint in Mogadishu’s urban space takes a much subtler, less overt form.

The physical markers of ‘reconstruction’ do important *symbolic work* as representative of a break with Mogadishu’s violent past. The refurbishing of private dwellings and businesses, the construction of new offices and modes of work, the use of Lido Beach for leisure, and the Mogadishu Stadium for statewide sporting events – these taken together offer an image of a changing, ‘progressive’ vision of Mogadishu’s contemporary and future status. These reconstructions are physical manifestations of the ‘cautious optimism... that Mogadishu’s darkest days are over and that the city will gradually return to greater levels of peace and stability’ (RVI, 2017, p.8). Even so, Mogadishu has yet to regain its pre-war “cosmopolitan” character. This is evidenced even by the varying rates of reconstruction across the capital. There are anecdotal reports from interviewees (Interview, Suuban, 2019 and 2020; Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020; Interview, Ahmed, 2019 and 2020) that the varying level of reconstruction in the city map onto perceptions of the reputed ‘openness’ and ‘mixedness’ of different neighborhoods, with more clan-heterogenous neighborhoods constituting the bulk of the ‘building boom’ reconstruction. This has much to do with the new demographic politics of the city, where homogenous neighborhoods seem to have undergone fewer transformations than ‘mixed’ sections of the city, likely due to the pervasive threat of communal violence that *maintains* the homogeneity of those neighborhoods (Menkaus and Adawe, 2019). Due to this perceived inaccessibility, the property values of large, historically well-located villas in homogenous zones may be substantially less than those of more modest accommodations in mixed neighborhoods (Interview, Suuban, 2019 and 2020). It is clear that this ‘building boom’ is fraught with contestations about the city’s past, present, and future.

### *Eviction as reconstruction?*

It is important to begin this argument with a reflection on the skyrocketing real estate prices and concomitant processes of urban eviction, particularly for Mogadishu's most vulnerable populations – internally displaced persons (IDPs). Bakonyi (2021) traces the ways that reconstruction has 'gone hand in hand with the commodification of land' which 'choreograph many of the contemporary struggles over urban space in Somalia and Somaliland.' To make this argument, Bakonyi draws from David Harvey's formulation of accumulation by dispossession. Here, Harvey (2005, p.144) critiques the ways that Marx's 'primitive accumulation,' or 'accumulation based on predation, fraud, and violence' is consigned to a remote "'original stage" that is considered no longer relevant.' Instead, through the concept of 'accumulation by dispossession,' Harvey charts the ways that the features of 'primitive accumulation,' reformulated as 'accumulation by dispossession' continue to push into the 'outsides' of capitalism as a mediator for crises of overaccumulation. A central feature of accumulation by dispossession, then, is the 'commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations' as well as 'the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive property rights' (Harvey, 2005, p.145).

Sawalha's (2010, p.10) proposes a useful conception of 'prohibited space' or 'urban sites that were originally "public" and within the reach for the majority of the city residents' but through urban violence and selective reconstruction became 'inaccessible and out of reach for the majority of the population.' As architect Omar Degan (Latief, 2019) argues, the loss of public space to private investment has deeply impacted how its denizens experience the city. Of the plentiful publicly available spaces accessible before the war, Degan argues that only the beach is still accessible as it is 'not private yet' (Latief, 2019). *Beerta Nabadda*, the Peace Garden, is the only park left in the city, 'which is private. It costs \$1 to enter. Most of the population live below the poverty line, so they cannot afford that' (Latief, 2019). There is reason to believe that patterns of privatization mediated through state collapse in Mogadishu – of free schools turned into fee-paying institutions, of formerly-public boardwalks turned into securitized architecture, of public parks turned into private spaces for elite consumption– is reflective of a kind of urban enclosure not yet thoroughly analyzed in scholarly literature. Placed in the context of urban renewal, then, the city's reconstruction becomes a frontier for new forms of dispossession.

Bakonyi is principally interested in the fates of the internally displaced persons in Mogadishu and other urban spaces in the Somali territories. Indeed, over the course of the intervening decades since state collapse, the influx of internally displaced persons finding and making shelter in the capital through the construction of on public land, through the division of private homes, or in spaces previously left unconstructed has been a significant axis upon which questions of ‘reconstruction’ have turned. As the Banaadir Regional Authority’s Durable Solutions Unit reports, ‘public facilities’ account for some 6% of IDP settlements, with a notable increase in forced evictions in recent years (DSU, 2019, p.25). They note with alarm that more IDP evictions took place in 2019 alone than the combined totals of 2015-2017, an increase that is directly attributable to ‘urban reconstruction’ (DSU, 2019, p.25). Bakonyi (2021, p.15) insightfully turns our attention to how urban reconstruction in the Somali territories has ‘gone hand in hand with the commodification of land’ which ‘contribute to spiking land and real estate prices, which, in turn, have drawn the attention of cities’ elites to land on which displaced persons settled, and they have initiated mass-scale evictions in Mogadishu and Baidoa.’ Through Bakonyi’s analysis, we can see how reconstruction is *not only* coupled with processes of eviction, but is also prefigured by it.

Eviction occurs in the context of urban private property, across formerly ‘state-owned’ land, and involves a complex interplay of state, private, and humanitarian actors (Amnesty, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2015). These processes place in stark relief the question of Mogadishu’s ‘reconstruction.’ Reconstruction, here figured as a site of violent accumulation, brings to the fore several questions: who is the reconstructed city for, and on what terms? On its face, the reconstructing city is an opportune site for the transformation of ‘urban land into fictitious forms of capital and contribute to the expansion of a rent economy, which precipitates, in Somali cities and elsewhere, mass-scale evictions of displaced people and urban poor’ (Bakonyi, 2021, p.11). The reconstructing city makes way for the emergence of new possibilities – legal, social, and political – which legitimize, and indeed, encourage, eviction. These urban futurities, captured by new urban elites, create significant constraints around which poor and displaced urban residents must navigate.

In one case during my fieldwork, the presence of IDPs in the context of conflict-related property disputes was a site of *negotiation* for the holders and would-be-buyers of land titles. This speaks to the ways in which ‘evictions enforce and tighten private property claims on land and houses (even if in ruins)’ (Bakonyi, 2021, p.11). An interviewee described the end of a conflict-



related property dispute concerning a building in which IDPs were resident. At the end of his dispute, the interviewee chose to sell the house at a discounted price, as the new owners would take the responsibility of ‘remov[ing] the *qaxooti* [refugees] themselves.’ As he explained, ‘you sell the land while they [the refugees] are still there, and tell them that there new owners [sic], and that they should prepare themselves [to leave]’ (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020). This example enforces Bakonyi’s (2021, p.11) argument that ‘the arbitrariness and violence imbricated in private land ownership is...neither concealed nor mitigated by legal regulations.’ Private land disputes, then, can become a site through which these complicated politics are not simply traversed, but often *reaffirmed* through the power differentials of individuals and communities involved. I’ll return to this point in a subsequent section. Before this, it is important to set out the *temporal* stakes of Mogadishu’s urban reconstruction – sited as struggle between pasts and over futures.

### **Intimate territoriality: Mogadishu’s reconstruction between nostalgia and futurities**

In this section, I consider how the prospect of urban reconstruction opens a nested bundle of contradictions and possibilities. So far, this chapter has considered how urban reconstruction is a site of dispossession and fraught power struggles in Mogadishu. Put simply, this is the ‘who’ of reconstruction. Who can reconstruct, under what terms, and under what kind of political vision? Who is the reconstructed city meant to serve? Now, it is important to also consider the ‘why’ of reconstruction, which brings forth the issue of temporality. The question ‘what requires reconstruction’ follows linearly from the nature of the urban destruction, its precise political meanings, and what the prospect of urban reconstruction embodies. It also implies decisions made in the present that shape, and reshape, urban futurities. That is to say, why reconstruct at all, why reconstruct *this* landmark as opposed to *that* building, and what should *not* return to grace the urban landscape?

These processes of reconstruction, state and private, bring up intimate registers of contestation. These intimacies are bundled relations of affect and memory that emanate from and are inscribed both into reconstructed urban space and absence. Bringing these to the fore gives us the scope to see contestations over reconstruction not *simply* as frictions over the use of space, but also about how to imagine, make sense of, and inhabit Mogadishu after war.

A significant register of intimate territoriality concerns memory and the use of urban space during and after war. As traced through Chapter 5, memory is a significant site through which

Mogadishu's urban war has come to make meaning. The inscription of legacies of violence into space results in 'spatial reconfigurations' (Schindel and Colombo, 2014, p.4) such the 'destruction or disappearance of certain spaces but also the emergence and transformation of others.' Moreover, in violence, 'subjectivities, practices and discourses involved in the production of space are modified as well' (Schindel and Colombo, 2014, p.5). I want to find a way to trace, through this short consideration of urban reconstruction, how this rebuilding does not only engender a *new* Mogadishu, but comes into contact with the 'haunting effects emanating from the buildings and the practices of living and using the spaces in the aftermath of conflict' (Schindel and Colombo, 2014, p.4). I do this, first, by thinking of symbolic urban reconstruction (of landmarks and statutes), before reflecting on that which has *not* been commemorated – the urban war itself.

### *Nostalgic reconstruction*

A small memorial stands on the bustling Kilometer 4 junction to commemorate the October 14th, 2017 bombing in which over 580 Mogadishans lost their lives. There is no accompanying plaque or place to reflect as the column protrudes from the centre of the busy road, and auto-rickshaws (*bajajj*) swerve around it in circles. The number '14' is emblazoned horizontally across the top, and 'OCTOBER' descends vertically to the bottom of the column. Apart from this small memorial, there are no other monuments to evoke the violent events in the city that have taken place since the collapse of the state in 1991. In some ways, the whole city is that monument. The legacies of three decades of violence are inscribed in the notable ruins in the centre of the historic city, in the protected compounds that ring-fence entire neighborhoods, and in the armed controls that regulate vehicle movement every kilometer.

However, this does not mean that monuments have not been erected at all. In early October of 2019, the Federal Government of Somalia unveiled a series of five statues in Mogadishu – all reconstructions of monuments that were destroyed over the course of the civil war. These five statues - *Dhagax Tuur*, Hawa Tako, the Somali Youth League (SYL), Ahmed Gurey, and Sayyid Mohamed Ahmed Hassan - were all symbols constructed to glorify anti-colonial resistance and create a cohesive narrative thread from diffuse strands of the Somali past. These monuments, erected or refurbished over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, were part of a nationalist effort to construct a narrative of Pan-Somali heroes that agitated across the Somali peninsula and against many foes (the British, Italians, and Ethiopians). The original *Dhagax Tuur* statue was erected in

1970 to commemorate a political uprising in Mogadishu in 1948 in response to the Four Powers Commission, in which 17 Somalis and 51 Italians died (Castagno, 1975, p.39). Hawa Tako was a young demonstrator that was killed in those political uprisings, and her statue was constructed in 1971 (Castagno, 1975, p.73). Similarly, statues celebrating the Somali Youth League (the political coalition that agitated for, governed after Somalia's independence), Ahmed Gurey (the ancient Somali conqueror of parts of highland Ethiopia), and Sayyid Mohamed Ahmed Hassan (derisively termed the 'Mad Mullah' by British colonial administrators) were dotted across Mogadishu's skyline in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The construction of these monuments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century served to invoke an all-encompassing *Somalinimo* (Somaliness) that at once both invoked the far reaches of the Somali territories and situated them in Mogadishu, the heart of the centralized state.

Historian Safia Aidid (2010, p.103) incisively argues that public memorials in Mogadishu 'operate politically, acting as registers of present and future concerns' whilst also etching in stone 'a set of meanings and significations in its negotiation of national identities and narratives.' These monuments literally cement a kind of 'national metanarrative of Somali history' (Aidid, 2010, p.104) which is productive *both* of hegemonic state memory and counter-hegemonic public memory in postcolonial contexts. The destruction of these memorials occurred early in the course of the civil war in the city, through the kind of political destruction of cityscape. In some ways, the destruction of these memorials can be seen as a kind of counter-memory. But now the monuments have returned to grace Mogadishu's skyline. One must consider what the (re)construction of these memorials signifies when situated in contemporary Mogadishu, a city much changed since these statues first dotted the urban landscape. The city around these monuments and iconic buildings has transformed in critical ways. Which memories get called back to, by whom, and why? Why reconstruct *these* memorials?

This form of symbolic mimesis adds another layer of contestation to the existing symbolic language of memorials. As these five monuments were reconstructed wholesale, there has also been a notable push to refurbish existing iconic buildings and monuments, colonial fascist relics included. The Arco di Triomfo of Umberto I, which was built in the 1930s to mark the visit of the King, has recently been restored in gleaming white paint. The reconstructions of iconic functional state buildings such as the Somali National Theatre and the Somali National University can be seen to operate in this realm of nostalgia.

It is clear that the recreation of these particular symbols is an attempt to evoke nostalgic remembrances of the city as it once was, drawing a through-line between the city before and after urbicide. This argument arguably ignores the critical demographic, morphologic, and political changes that have occurred in the city in the intervening years. But critically, when considered alongside the memorial for the October 14th, 2019 bombing, these reconstructions indicate an inability to articulate civil war memory. There is a lacuna, a slippage, which moves directly from the post-colonial state to Mogadishu's reconstruction. In many ways, civil war memory is simply *too political*, too presently contested, in order to figure as public memory. The legacy of urbicide has been to make the two decades of endemic conflict rather unspeakable.

Kapteijns (2013a, p.69) gives several possible reasons for the 'aporia' of clan and clan cleansing in 'prestigious' poetry from the civil war era, including: the assumption of shared audience and knowledge, the unwillingness to speak directly to the violence for fear of being deemed partisan, a rejection or conscious reconstruction of the concept of clan, the longevity of nationalist political rejection of clan, and finally, the social sense that clan naming did not belong in academic spaces. Even so, Kapteijns (2013a) marks a distinction between 'prestigious' poetry's elision of clan with the explicit use of clan naming strategies in 'non-prestigious' poetry. Clan cleansing, its legacy and afterlives, are rendered 'unspeakable' due to their political explosivity and contested nature. A similar tension is marked through urban understandings of reconstruction in relation to urbicide. Urbicide and its legacies are so contentious as to be rendered legible only through a kind of peripheral vision. Urbicide figures as a gathering at the edges, made salient mostly through implication, and through the small acts of meaning-making manifested in everyday urban living. The unspeakability of the destructive violence and processes of clan cleansing that rendered the urban space in need of "reconstruction" in the first instance makes the drawing out the implications a tenuous political project.

### *Unredeemable city?*

There are those who think the deep violence of this urban history makes Mogadishu untenable even as a capital city. For Kapteijns (2018, p.60), 'public political acknowledgment of the clan cleansing of 1991-1992' is a requisite precursor to 'peace reconciliation' in a way that can only be advanced if Mogadishu 'ceased to be the capital of Somalia.' This is because the politics of clan

cleansing has been so deeply inscribed into Mogadishu's urban fabric as 'Mogadishu largely remains a clan-cleansed space' (Kapteijns, 2018, p.60). As Kapteijns continues:

The power concentrated there, continuously bolstered by international political players, shields the perpetrators and beneficiaries of the clan-based expulsions and killings of 1990-1991, as well as those who today still line up with them, from having to take any responsibility for their actions. This allows them to stick to their denials and distortions, enjoy and build on the gains they then made, and boast about their "victory" (Kapteijns, 2018, p.60).

There is no denying that clan cleansing, and urbicide more generally, is a central feature of Mogadishu's contemporary reconstruction. It is the necessary backdrop against which understandings of reconstruction in Mogadishu occur, the political locus through which any 'refurbishment' must wade. Urbicide is the reason for 'reconstruction, in a central way, and the *elision* of that reality cements in place the consequences of the violence that came before. There was considerable contestation, however, over whether Mogadishu was 'redeemable,' or whether the legacies of recent and past violence have made the city fundamentally unworkable. Hamda made the case for Kapteijns' view most clearly, arguing that:

... I put Mogadishu *ineey caasimad ahaato* [being a capital city] very questionable. It's claimed by particular people, they're claiming to be the owners of Mogadishu. And they just arrived after the civil war. Us, who were born here, who were raised here, we are being acted like we are foreigners. Because just we don't belong to that tribe. The biggest issue here is that one (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020).

However, because of their affective and historical relationship to the city, other interviewees seemed unwilling to relinquish the *idea* of Mogadishu, negotiating (sometimes through great difficulty) a claim to the city. Not simply as a capital city for government, but as a space through which to assert a claim to a kind of living. For some, these are intertwined principles. When asked 'what is special about Mogadishu,' one respondent said 'it's the place of power. Even the properties are very expensive. You could build a villa in *gobollo* [regions] with the price of these little houses. It is the seat of the government and government properties' (Interview, Rooble, 2019 and 2020).

It is important to note that this question is not about whether Mogadishu is irrevocably changed by urbicide or clan cleansing – there is a clear acceptance that that violence has left an indelible mark. Instead, this contest is a struggle over whether Mogadishu's present or future are 'worth' fighting for, engaging, and wrestling for space. This tension is, for the most part,

theoretical as opposed to practical. In their everyday lives as Mogadishan urban denizens, Hamda and others adopt a similar kind of elision as that necessitated for public memorialization. The polite silencing of Mogadishu's violent history, called by one interviewee (Interview, Hamda, 2019 and 2020) a 'constructive ambiguity' over politically contentious topics, is characteristic of contemporary urban living.

### *Violence in peripheral vision*

The specter of spectacular and everyday violence is also constitutive of a kind of urban futurity. The processes of reconstruction operate in tandem with urban destruction wrought by Al-Shabaab on a regular basis. Al-Shabaab uses the destruction of the built environment as potent political messaging – directly contesting narratives of reconstruction by targeting particularly iconic hotels, beaches, and government offices (Chonka, 2018). Chonka (2018, p.396) argues that this performative violence is engineered to create a kind of recursive loop by secluding notable political actors from the wider city and 'contributing to the heightened perceptions of elite segregation and foreign conspiracy in the city that are used... to justify violence in the first place.' This disjuncture is best illustrated with reference to the historic street of Makka al Mukaramah, a vibrant city artery which boasts 'newly re-paved roads...colourful hoardings of recently opened shops, banks, restaurants, hotels' and is also the site of a great number of the hotels attacked by Al-Shabaab (Chonka 2018, p.403).

Containerized, securitised architecture has been a hallmark response to the omnipresent threat of Al-Shabaab. This means that many main urban arteries are only partially navigable by car – either made to be one-way flows of traffic or dotted with checkpoints that require constant proof of *aqoonsi* (identification) to armed police. The navigation of these checkpoints opens up spaces of negotiation for 'tax collectors,' as well as others. Many days the city will be on lockdown, making it impossible to traverse the city at will. Yet, the security architecture in the city is unevenly geographically distributed, a patchwork quilt that is clustered around particular locations. International organizations and governments have largely barricaded themselves in Xalane, which is often described as an airport compound but is far more extensive than that description allows. As a sizeable area abutting a protected section of the Indian Ocean, Xalane is a self-enclosed compound protected by AMISOM soldiers that might be better characterized as a city-within-a-city. The area encircling Xalane is heavily protected, almost as a perimeter to Xalane, and is the

avored setting for Somali notables – politicians, political party headquarters, and the like. Hills (2017, p.31) argues that the threat of terrorist violence acts as a leveler of sorts as the consequences ‘potentially affect everyone, from politicians operating in Villa Somalia to children working in the fish market,’ and this is largely true. However, as a result of the uneven geography of security architecture described above, those targeted for particular violence are often the ones most *insulated* from the consequences of that violence.

An emphasis on Al-Shabaab’s ongoing assault on the city can hide from view other forms of unspectacular, everyday violence that characterize mobility across the town. The violence traced in the *Kala wareeg* database curated by Mohamed Abdimalik (2019) pulls from ACLED data in order to map police violence against *bajaaj* (auto-rickshaw) drivers in the capital. This low-grade violence permeates much of the violence in the city, and unlike the violence of spectacular terror, it is clearly targeted against the poor and vulnerable in the city. *Kala wareeg* is an evocative phrase, as it is an order to ‘turn around,’ which is often barked at checkpoints in the city. Cars cannot traverse particular boundary lines (on roads that lead toward the protected zone), and thus vehicles must drop their passengers and then turn around, and passengers must then proceed on foot or to another vehicle that waits on the other side of the checkpoint. Large sedans carrying VIPs flanked by armed guards, however, are very rarely constrained by these rules.

Taken together, the punctuation of spectacular violence combined with the very real threat of low-grade interpersonal violence shapes the possibilities of reconstruction in important ways. In one sense, the organised destruction of particular establishments adds an element of transience to the project of reconstruction. Some hotels, such as the famed Makka al Mukarama hotel, were bombed and reconstructed only to be bombed again, in a complicated cycle. Reconstruction, then, takes account not only of the violence of the far-removed past, but also the continual experience of routinized political violence that marks and constrains the livelihoods of Mogadishu’s contemporary city dwellers.

### **Reconstruction to where? Property disputes as sites of transition**

In the final two sections of this chapter, I will place conflict-related property disputes in the context of Mogadishu’s ‘reconstruction.’ In one way, the occupation of land and properties creates alternative genealogies of land use that sometimes makes reconstruction *possible* – with or without

the consent of the titled. In another, conflict-related property disputes can be the vector through which ‘return’ is made possible or necessary.

### *Emergent genealogies of land ownership*

Occupants of disputed properties often create claims through alternative genealogies of land access. These narratives make contested land *available* to further use, sale, and reconstruction. These genealogies, when taken at face value, are necessary to elide the intransigent blockages that conflict-related property disputes can create for a ‘transforming’ city. As entire neighborhoods were dispersed during the years of conflict in Mogadishu, this displaced a wealth of social knowledge about the makeup of neighborhoods, relationships between urban communities, and broke down the formal and informal relations between former neighbors. These new genealogies of ownership prefigure urban reconstruction. It is this contest between displaced pre-war knowledges and new post-war urban systems that sets the stage for the political contestation over the wider city. The complicated ways that *legal rights* divert from *ownership and usage* sets the stage for confrontations about which genealogies and tracings of ownership matter, and in what ways. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, testimony, documentation, and witnessing are all registers through which these confrontations take place.

One such trajectory can be seen in the Caputo case, relayed to me by a former senior judicial official (Interview, Bashir, 2019) who oversaw the legal proceedings. Before state collapse, a landmark general store in Mogadishu’s urban center went by the name of its Italian owner – Caputo. Caputo’s supermarket was a fixture in elite urban social life, and formed a part of the romantic recollections of the pre-war city. With the exile of non-Somalis from Mogadishu after the outbreak of war, the space lay dormant for a time before it was converted into a new site of commerce by different owners.

In 2013, a young woman began proceedings with the Municipality to create documents for the business space, verifying her legal occupation of the land with the government. She argued that Caputo had transferred responsibility for the property (*wakiil*) to her in 1990, and later sold the space to her when it became clear that Mogadishu would not be safe for the return of non-Somalis. A further investigation found that, contrary to popular belief, Caputo was in fact a tenant of the property, not its legal owner. Before state collapse, Caputo rented the space from a Somali family who also rented an adjoining space to a Somali butcher. The family came forward with the



original documents, the testimony of the Somali butcher in the adjoining space, as well as evidence that they had approached the young woman explaining that the land on which she operated her business was theirs. The former senior judicial official (Interview, Bashir, 2019) was struck by the insistence that the young woman, who would have been under ten years old at the time in question, had argued before the Court that she was made *wakiil* (overseer) over the property and later purchased it. After this investigation, the case was decided in favor of the Somali family – against the young woman.

These stories, and others like them, were constructed in the aftermath of political violence to legitimate new narratives of ownership and lineages of purchase. These stories make possible the forging of new relationships to the lands and properties other than simply legitimating “theft” – they make the land and property open to further productive usage, reconstruction, and often, sale. They also make usable lands and properties that might have lain dormant or unused for more than two decades, opening them up to the current residents of the city. These emergent genealogies of land and property use accumulate legitimacy over time.

### *Passages into and out of the city*

Conflict-related property disputes are not simply contests over transitions from one kind of ‘knowledge’ of the city to another, but also stem from the multiple passages of city dwellers into and outside of the city. As many respondents informed me, their disputes came from a conception that the original occupants ‘wouldn’t return’ (Interview, Shermarke, 2019; Interview, Ladan, 2019) or from newcomers to urban space settling down in available structures (Interview, Sahro, 2019; Interview, Ladan, 2019).

This relationship between conflict-related property disputes and passages of exile and return can be seen through the case of Ali, recounted to me by a former high-ranking official in the Ministry of Internal Security (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020). In the early days of the war, individuals would sometimes informally dispose of their properties on the eve of their move from the city. Ali had a large number of homes which he sold on the backdrop of state collapse in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As there was no formal state structure to register those sales, Ali could not legally transfer the ownership to the new owners. He did, however, accept payment and involve witnesses (*marqaati*) to the property transfers. Ali left the city, and did not return until after the reconstruction of the federal government, and found that in intervening years, the values

of the properties he had sold had multiplied. Ali proceeded to launch numerous claims in the Courts with the original documentation (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020), and has succeeded in a number of his cases. Ali is not the only individual who has exploited the informal nature of interpersonal property sales in the early days of conflict, but he is considered by some state officials to be the most prolific (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020).

Ali's navigation of the multiple passages into and out of the city (first in exile, and then in the contemporary 'return'), highlights the ways that conflict-related property disputes can be sites in the nexus of transition. For some, these last-minute property sales were a way to fund an escape from urban violence and can be easily situated in the context of the violent reconstruction of belonging in the city. However, Ali's exploitation of those from whom he has profited, twice, seems like an attempt to instrumentalize the state against 'legitimate' informal sales. What emerges is a sense of indeterminacy in conflict-related property disputes and the skillful exploitation of the multiple informal structures that emerged to facilitate exile and return.

Taken together, these emergent genealogies of land ownership and navigation of passages through the city place conflict-related property disputes directly in the center of contemporary 'reconstruction.' Emergent genealogies of land ownership fulfill a necessary narrative task, creating space for 'reconstruction' or 'refurbishment' when legal occupiers are absent or unwilling, making possible the further use of productive space. Conflict-related property disputes also originate from waves of passage into and out of the city, bringing into confrontation distinct groups of city-dwellers with different accounts of their place in the city.

### **Placing reconstruction: intimate territoriality and conflict-related property disputes**

In Chapter 4, we explored conflict-related property disputes through the prism of constellations of public authority – accruing in formal courts, in cash, in documents, as well as in social location. In Chapter 5, we connected conflict-related property disputes to narratives of belonging in the city. In this chapter, we looked at how conflict-related property disputes are a vantage point through which to read the reconstructing city. The newfound "stability" of the city has encouraged the "return" of diaspora, which has incited both the 'building boom' as well as the contestations over who owns what plots of land, and under which specific circumstances. We also explored how conflict-related property disputes guide and shape the reconstructing city, by serving as sites of transition through which reconstruction takes place. In all of these discussions, temporal, spatial,

juridical and political contestations were animated through conflict-related property disputes. Through these frictions, conflict-related property disputes became sites of intimate territoriality – contests not just over brick, mortar, and dirt but over the fashioning of Mogadishu’s past, present, and future.

Part of the *intimacy* in intimate territoriality is in the way it manifests not just as a struggle over space, but also over place. Place is about the interactive, affective relationship between space and individuals. Place is the collective texturing of space with meaning, memories, and values through practice. These attachments and meanings to material landmarks can ‘serve as symbols or icons that contribute to place identity’ as part of a mutually constitutive process of constructing place and self-identity (Hull et al, 1994, p.110). As Hull et al. (1994, p.110) note, the physical landmarks that serve as symbols of place fix ‘(in bricks, mortar, steel and stone) periods of time,’ allowing ‘encounters with objects... to recreate vivid sensations of an earlier self’ (Hull et al, 1994, p.110). Place, for Tim Cresswell (2004, p.39), is performed, it comes into being through reiterative social practice. This means that it is ultimately dynamic, a fluid and changing event rather than ‘a secure ontological place rooted in notions of the authentic’. John Friedmann (2010, p.154) adds to Cresswell’s understanding of place, arguing that it must be small, inhabited, and sentimentally valued by the residents.

During her interview, Hamda (Interview, 2019 and 2020) recollected her experience of watching the Mogadishans reckon with the consequences of a fire that swept Bakaara market in 2017. While many had their buildings and belongings burned, there was a question about what should be rebuilt, and for whom. Should only those who could present legal ownership have their legal rights reinstated? What about those who had their livelihoods trapped in the inferno, but were unable to demonstrate legal ownership? Should they also be restituted? Hamda (Interview, 2019 and 2020) recalls having difficulty sympathizing with an individual who was emotionally making a claim for full reconstruction regardless of legal properties:

The man is yelling! “I was living here for 30 years.” *Illegal aad kuu degganeyd!* [You were living there illegally!] For 30 years *dad baa iska laha dhulkaan* [people owned that property]. Legitimizes the fact that he was living there and no one claimed it.

This is demonstrative of different registers of belonging, animated by different understandings of ‘ownership’ to be sure. But it also represents distinct emplaced belongings, histories of traversing

the city, and imaginings of what the city is at an ontological level. Hamda had trouble accepting the argument that thirty years of what she considered ‘illegal usage’ validated a claim to compensation in the case of this blaze. And yet, occupants made an embodied claim that decades of living, working, and making life in this space was tantamount to ownership, in a way that exceeded pieces of paper and legal acknowledgment. These disjointed understandings of ‘ownership,’ cast either through legal documentation or through usage, filter through these emergent genealogies of ownership. In effect, the question sets contemporary use against past use, making the issue one of whether an ‘original sin’ of occupation overrides three decades of settlement, or put another way, whether *recent* use supersedes *historical* use before state collapse.

These emplaced relationships that occurred over the course of three decades validate a kind of extra-legal squatter’s rights as individuals and communities form affective, social and economic relationships with space as short-term use extends into decades. While *legal* rights to ownership might not be transferred over time, I was consistently reminded during my interviews that for many people, their own occupation and usage of land and properties was all the occupants had ever known. As one high-level policy respondent (Interview, Mukhtar, 2019) noted, a generation has come to adulthood in a different context, which has meant a loss of ‘*aqoonta iyo tariikhdi hore*’ [the knowledge and history from before]. What is at stake, here, is not simply knowledge of the city ‘before,’ but also competing understandings of what constitutes ownership, usage, and claims to space in the contemporary city.

However, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, these gaps in knowledge can extend in both ways. Returnees to the city can have difficulty navigating the new urban context, and in doing so have trouble making sense of Mogadishu as it stands today. By way of example, the large-scale demographic shifts, waves of exiles and influxes, have led to shifts in the use of urban space, but also in the naming of urban space. During my interview with Mahad, who has lived in Mogadishu since 1977, he charted the shifting names of urban spaces - Medina District is now known as *Kaxda*, *Xaraf* is now known as *Garasbaaley*, the Mogadishu Water Supply/Lafoole area is now called *Ceelasha Biyaha*. New neighborhoods have risen from the ground with whole new names. Others have been abandoned or made to suit new purposes. These shifting names are evidence of shifting populations, but also evidence of shifting *places*. As the populations that give these places names change, so too do their character and the affective relationships that make them up. Conflict-

related property disputes have been a site through which these contested emplacements come to a head.

In this way, conflict-related property disputes can be a remarkably important way to envision many of the deepest-seated contestations for the city to come. Mogadishu, as this dissertation has demonstrated, has long been a site of shifting belongings, meanings of ownership, and emplacements. Through conflict-related property disputes, the inscriptions of multiple uneven mappings of what the urban future can, or should, hold come into play. In this way, conflict-related property disputes can be reconstruction politics in miniature – an exercise in multiple kinds of claims-making through which the city is defined or contested.

*Mogadishu markings, reconsidered*



*Figure 16: Markings on a Mogadishu wall, reproduced with permission*

We can enrich our thematic considerations by thinking again about the markings on the Mogadishu walls encountered by Suuban, the architect (Interview, 2019 and 2020). In the context of urban reconstruction, the relative social power of different populations becomes deeply important. Some Mogadishans can inscribe their place in the city through the reconstruction of villas and apartment blocks, whilst others are made to make their markings on walls in ambivalent legal circumstances that can change at any moment. Once absented, their presence is only noted by those who care to

notice. This insight was recollected by an interviewee who wondered who had passed through her home in the intervening years of her exile (Interview, Suuban, 2019 and 2020).

There is the question of territoriality, the bounding of space for multiple kinds of use governed by shifting circumstances over time. Returning to Blomley's (2016a, p.595) prescient point, 'property is not a relation between a person and land, but a relation between people, in regard to land... You can't sue an acre. Nor is a boundary dispute a dispute between you and a boundary.' These disputes come to be about demarcating space for the present and future city in ways that overlap with contentions about urban use and urban presence.

Somewhat out of view, but deeply significant, is the question of public authority and how disparate populations can make use of it or be constrained by it. As explored in Chapter 4, there are multiple kinds of buttressing and conflicting sites through which power congeals and dissipates, making the navigation of these networks deeply precarious and difficult for those involved. In an uncertain urban context, conflict-related property disputes became a site of 'inventive political technology' (Simone, 2013) to navigate and create pathways through deeply ambivalent contexts.

But at the core, there is the issue of belonging. Belonging is about the rebuffing of strangerhood in contemporary Mogadishu, the multiple competing frictions over autochthonic narratives, cosmopolitan narratives, disparate histories of triumph and victimization that legitimate the right to inscribe one's presence in the city, or at least a specific corner of it. Through conflict-related property disputes, these narratives take the shape of plots of land and houses of stone. But their political, historical meaning is far deeper.

Reconstruction, then, is another chapter in Mogadishu's conflicted urban history. Through multiple moments of fracture – colonial segregation, post-independence 'modernity,' state collapse and urbicide – belonging has come to be a potent force in the shaping of urban space. Through conflict-related property disputes in this moment of transition, these contests over the meaning of the city have assumed new forms.

## CONCLUSION

Suuban joined in during my second conversation with Abdirahim who was explaining his perspective on the central problem with the Land Disputes Committee (*Guddiga Xalinta Khilaafaadka*). In a moment of recognition, Abdirahim turned to Suuban for architectural expertise, asking ‘will Xamar Weeyne and Shingaani ever be the same? How it was?’ Suuban sighed, and asked ‘do you want to me to tell you the truth, or a lie?’ That was enough of an answer for them both. They chuckled somewhat wistfully, and the conversation turned to other matters. Through subtext, Suuban made the case that those old parts of Mogadishu had been transformed into something different, perhaps irrevocably. This stinging implication brings to bear Broch-Due’s (2005, p.2) characterization of the paradox of political violence, whereby violence is both ‘subordinating and producing,’ simultaneously both ‘destroying and creating’ order. What, in the aftermath of urban war, remains? What transforms? These are the questions contemporary Mogadishans are grappling with, including through conflict-related property disputes.

In this dissertation, I argued that through an analysis of the politics of belonging, one can come to grips with Mogadishu’s contemporary multivalent political landscape. These contests draw from disparate parts of Mogadishu’s contested history. In the Theoretical Framework, this dissertation defined the concept of intimate territoriality as the linking of exclusive claims to the use of property and land in Mogadishu with wider claims of belonging in the city.

The first substantive move of this dissertation was to argue that the contested legacies of urban use and belonging in three periods (colonialism, independence and military rule, and urban war) shifted registers of ownership and belonging in the city and created the context in which belonging is a central site of contestation in the contemporary city. In Chapter 1, Colonial Transformations of Mogadishu, this dissertation considered how town mapping, colonial law, and practices of eviction shaped both the shape of the city and its place in the wider Somali territories. Chapter 2, Post-colonial Modernities in Mogadishu, examined the impact of political transformations leading to independence, the brief democratic interlude and military rule. It considered how political centralization, land registration, and the politics of “modernity” shaped ownership in, and access to, the city. In Chapter 3, Violent Line(age)s, this dissertation charted Mogadishu’s urban war through the prism of urbicide, finding that the city’s shape and peopling was transformed through conflict – as was the meaning of ‘belonging to the city.’

The second argument of this dissertation traced the contemporary politics of conflict-related property disputes in Mogadishu. Chapter 4, *Dispute Pathways, Governance and Document Politics*, traced the multivalent sites of public authority organized to mediate disputes, and how conflict-related property disputes shaped constructions of order in the city. Chapter 5, *New and Old Mogadishans*, considered the larger political and historical discourses that heighten the stakes of disputes, examining how through conflict-related property disputes, both “autochthonous” and “cosmopolitan” claims to the city are reified. Finally, Chapter 6, *Urban Reconstruction in an Uncertain City*, traced the uneasy politics of Mogadishu’s building boom, arguing this ‘return to the city’ has ignited a passionate debate on who the city is ultimately for. Here, conflict-related property disputes become a site of transition and ways of negotiating what kinds of urban futures are possible, and who gets to decide.

Taken together, this dissertation argued that Mogadishu’s conflict-related property disputes are a site of intimate territoriality. Belonging and its attendant politics suffuse the brick and mortar of disputed territories into a site of struggle over contested pasts, presents, and futures. Through this process, the homes and places in conflict-related property disputes became suffused with larger meaning, they became the stuff of ‘dynamic material, imaginative and political accumulations’ (Smith, 2019, p.180) both calling back to the past and staking a claim to the city of the future. Smith (2019, p.181), argues that in Nairobi, ‘urban belonging emerges as a future-focused possibility.’ In Mogadishu, I argue that both the future and the past are at stake. Conflict and contested legacies of boundary-making in the city warps the temporalities of these intimate spaces, making them the site of wider struggle. The city becomes, in some ways, a bundle of these discrete struggles fought across multiple fronts. Determining what Mogadishu means, and who it is for, is a vital, fraught, site of contest.

This dissertation’s elaboration of intimate territoriality is important for three main reasons. First, a consideration of intimate territoriality allows us to think of land disputes in Mogadishu as more than simply base-level economic contestation or elite power politics. Intimate territoriality takes seriously the registers of contestation that individuals undergoing disputes, and those mediating them, understand to be at stake. This is a “return to the political” in a way that move beyond conceptions of zero-sum political settlements, but instead takes seriously the ‘inventive political technologies’ (Simone, 2013) that urban denizens use to live, work, and remake their lifeworlds.



Second, intimate territoriality materializes contestations over the city. Through intimate territoriality, claims to Mogadishu are made concrete (in both senses of the term). This tangible, material politics of urban claims-making transforms titles and deeds, Court documents, buildings, businesses, homes, streets, and even pre-war tax receipts into anchors for wider claims to the city's past and present. Thus, intimate territoriality helps to show how claims-making is more than just the discursive reconfiguration of contested pasts. Instead, claims-making impacts how the material world of the city is understood and navigated.

Finally, intimate territoriality demonstrates the vitality of contestations to the city in contexts of urban uncertainty. The fractured pasts and contested futures of the city are sites of vital struggle, making conflict-related property disputes a very emotive, evocative, and *affective* register of claims-making. This emotion, this affective field of contestation, comes from the contested legacies of Mogadishu's past and attempts to lay claim to the city's present and future. This is missed by depictions of Mogadishu as endemically failed *and* optimistically rising. Imagining Mogadishu as nothing more than a failed city neglects to account for the reasons that individuals, from all over the world, would go to such lengths to lay claims on this city in the first place. Imagining Mogadishu as a rising city fails to see how even the aesthetics of urban "reconstruction" is underwritten by contested legacies and violent pasts. Intimate territoriality allows us to account for the ambiguity, and ambivalence, of urban claims-making in Mogadishu.

### *Urban futurities*

Mogadishu today is a city constantly on the *verge* of remaking, but what direction those changes will take is anyone's guess. That is why tracing possible urban futurities in Mogadishu is a frustrating task. When moving beyond optimistic visions of "Somalia rising," and pessimistic visions of endemic violence, it is striking how much the uncertain and unsettled nature of the city obfuscates potential visions of city-making. The prospect of violence makes certain claims about the future seem uncertain. Indeed, in mid-February of 2021, during the writing of this dissertation, fighting broke out between opposed forces in some quarters of Mogadishu as a result of the extensive delays in the indirect (s)election process and President Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmaajo's" attempted extension of his mandate for a further two years. In a tragic *déjà vu*, streams of the displaced from those embattled neighborhoods set out on foot to seek shelter, carrying what belongings they could manage transport on their bodies. The fighting came to an

end, a political settlement has been struck. At the time of writing, the indirect (s)election is still forthcoming. Whatever the outcome of this political process, Mogadishu, as the site of political power in Somalia, continues to be a site of struggle and the materiel through which that struggle is waged.

This helps to explain the current ambiguous constitutional status of Mogadishu. The Federal Government of Somalia is, as the name suggests, a federal system composed of five Federal Member States: Puntland, Jubaland, Galmudug, Hirshabelle, and South-West State.<sup>12</sup> According to the Provisional Somali Constitution of 2012, these Federal Member States were to be cobbled together through the combination of *two or more* of the 18 administrative regions in effect before 1991 (Article 49a, Article 49b of the Somali Constitution). The bicameral Federal Parliament is composed of an Upper House, representing states, and the House of the People, currently “proportionally” representing clan families.<sup>13</sup> The contentious question of how Mogadishu would be represented in these political structures is unresolved, and the Draft Constitution of 2012 is silent on the matter.

Some local politicians and urban denizens have called for a “Banaadir State” or a Federal Member State that encompasses the capital and its environs, as a way of including Mogadishu into the government infrastructure. They claim that Mogadishu’s residents experience inequitable taxation, and their constituency is not represented in government. Opponents argue that technically, the region of Banaadir alone does not meet the Constitutional criteria of joining two or more of the 19 administrative regions of the pre-war state, and thus does not qualify for statehood. Underneath these legalistic arguments lies the real concern is that Banaadir statehood could be seen to offset a politico-clan elite balance of the proportion of Federal Member States. In any case, in May of 2020, a Joint Parliamentary Committee did add 13 seats in the name of Banaadir to the Upper House, bringing the total number of Senators from 54 to 67 (Mahmoud, 2020). Even so, this discourse gets caught in the complicated politics of belonging. Some interviewees have argued that Banaadir statehood is nothing less than a claim to autochthony dressed in a different garb (Interview, Suuban, 2019 and 2020; Interview, Shermarke, 2019).

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<sup>12</sup> This list has the notable exception of the secessionist state of Somaliland. While representatives from Somaliland do sit in both houses of the Somali Federal Parliament, these representatives are unrecognized within Somaliland, itself.

<sup>13</sup> This is organized through the “4.5 system,” wherein each of the four “major” clan families allocated equal representation to one another (Darood, Hawiye, Dir, Digil and Mirifle) while the remaining .5 proportion is allocated to a coalition of “minority” clans. These allocations are further subdivided by sub-clan within each clan family “majority” and “minority” does not refer to numerical accounting, but to relative power.

Others claim that this critique forecloses the possibility of urban citizenship based on residence, which would escape the autochthonous connotations of the state (Interview, Abdirahim, 2019 and 2020). Critically, however, the demographic shifts of urbicide continue to shape these fissures.

Just as in our examination of conflict-related property disputes, these contests are about the right to claim, order, organize, and *make* Mogadishu's future. This affective politics is mobilized in just about any political or material question regarding the political status of the city, escaping simplistic solutions to the problem of "fragile" institutions, such as access-to-justice reforms or the inculcation of the "rule of law." In many ways, the simple creation of new, ostensibly 'impartial' institutions alone is inadequate to address the contested politics of memory and space. The attempt to divorce law from politics appears as an attempt to 'compensate for, or overcome, the political problems involved in peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction' (Chandler, 2004, p.314). But in the highly politicized context of the aftermath of war, law cannot be separated from politics. As almost all political activity around Mogadishu is mediated by contested claims-making, it is important to understand how the politics of home, of space, and of belonging come to bear on how individuals situate themselves in communities, and in the world.

If this analytical work is left undone, the intransigence of identity-based conflict is too easily ascribed to the 'primordial,' 'natural,' or 'essential' nature of the community. Following Edward Said (2000, p.183) it is only by grappling with 'that special mix' of space and historical memory, which both represent 'arresting forms of invention', that one can begin to grasp 'the persistence of conflict and the difficulty of resolving it.' It is this politics of space, time and belonging that so firmly entrenches identity-based conflict in the practices of city living, filtering political activity through its lens.

#### *Departures for future research*

There are many points of departure for future research. For one, this dissertation's examination of conflict-related property disputes examined only private disputes. With a significant amount of land in the capital owned and managed by the state before state collapse, the politics of formerly-public land in Mogadishu is a critical area for future research. As one government official put it, with the coming of the war, a new ethos emerged that 'wherever the government was, you can easily occupy,' which brought about a widespread re-ordering of formerly state-owned land (Interview, Mukhtar, 2019). This future research agenda places "post-conflict urban

reconstruction” in dialogue with “state reconstruction,” and can illuminate how the nascent state legitimates its own power. Small scale efforts towards this process, such as the ill-fated *Guddiga Badbaadinta iyo Soo-celinta Hantida Qaranka* (the Committee for the Reclamation of State Land) have opened up new institutional forms of contest alongside the kinds of nostalgic reconstructions of pre-war urban landmarks touched upon in this dissertation. Future research into processes of state “return” in the context of urban reconstruction can help to illuminate the intersections of power and space in the contested city.

This dissertation seeks to open up meaningful possibilities for Somali Studies and urban studies. Extant scholarship has deconstructed the role of clan in Somali social structures, and invites researchers to think critically about *how* clan is important in the Somali territories, undermining assumptions of clan as the essential Somali condition. This research has produced important thinking about race in Somali Studies (Kusow 2004; Besteman 1998), the formation of clan and its transformation over historical and contemporary time (Samatar, 1992; Kapteijns, 2013a; Kapteijns, 2004), and Somali identity across the diaspora (Abdi, 2015). Pushing this agenda forward, it is important to assess the striated politics of Somali identity across space, with specific reference to the city. This offers potentially vibrant new ways of thinking about social transformations over time, including possible futurities. This could lead to interesting interrogations of how Mogadishans find ways to creatively adapt, negotiate, and challenge the contested and murky terrains of their city. These are valuable and potentially generative points of critical interrogation.

For urban studies, this research agenda could help to bring the Somali territories into generative discussion with other conflicted urban contexts, particularly ‘contested’ (Pullan, 2013) or ‘wounded’ (Till, 2012) cities. Insights into the political trajectories of “reconstruction” in Beirut (Sawalha, 2010) or in Sarajevo (Bădescu, 2017) can helpfully tease out similarities and variations across the sites of interest. This also reduces the impulse to think of Somalia as an “exceptional” case of study and helps to trace how ‘the material substance of the city and the transformative labor of urban residents are entangled with larger projects of city-making that play out across multiple scales and temporalities’ (Smith, 2019, p.180). These trans-continental considerations can be mutually generative for scholars of the Somali territories and for urban studies scholars generally. In this way, this dissertation attempts to trace connections between scholars involved in urban conflict and those concerned with the Somali territories.

In the end, the concept of intimate territoriality becomes important because it attempts to capture how discrete groups of Mogadishu's urban denizens make claims upon their city. Through intimate territoriality, a building or a lot becomes a space of wider, almost cosmic, contestation suffused with the legacies of violence past and present. Mogadishans make claims on this city because it *matters* – albeit in different ways. This struggle to belong matters for some because it reaffirms a way of city-making before state collapse. For others, this struggle to belong is about carving out a space of belonging through kinship, as “others” have been able to accomplish elsewhere in the Somali territories. For still others, the struggle for the city is about basic survival. All these contradictions and contestations over belonging bend and reorder temporalities. Was Mogadishu a cosmopolitan paradise until the coming of war? Was it, instead, a site of colonial and post-independence hoarding that excluded all those who came before? Which plunder matters? Where do you start the clock? These questions are not just relevant today, but will be for some time in Mogadishu, and in the wider Somali territories.

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