Transnational livelihoods and the Somali diaspora

Presentation Notes.

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DRAFT

This presentation is based on my PhD and one chapter in particular.

It draws on time I spent with two Somali men, in Bristol, when I was doing my PhD. We met regularly over a couple of years and I followed various activities they were involved in, in both Bristol and transnationally in relation to Somalia and Ethiopia.

I'd like to start with an introductory scene that captures that captures the multi-dimensional lives and livelihoods of these two, referred to as Abdi and Nuur.

So we begin in a mosque and community centre located in an inner city area of Bristol. It is a rather dilapidated ex-factory building occupying the space of several average-sized houses. It has been acquired from a private landlord and is being physically converted to suit the needs of the centre. There are no outward signs that it represents a religious building other than a small sticker on one of the front doors. Some windows have been broken by vandals and the frontage is full of weeds and rubble. The nearest building, across the road, is a pub. Both are overlooked by several nearby tower blocks of social housing that characterise the local area. A significant number of the surrounding population are Somalis, most of whom have moved into this area within the last ten years. The vast majority of the initial funds for the centre, a significant figure, come from the local Somali population. [although this has evolved over time as the Nuur has been able to access funds from the Middle East through mosque based networks in the UK]. Inside the building is a large hall for prayer, lined with donated carpets, as well as a number of small rooms used for educational and other purposes. One of these rooms is the main office, where Abdi and Nuur, two of the leaders of the project, are seated: one behind the main desk and computer, the other on a row of chairs.

It was the summer of 2011 and the Somalia famine was in the news. [260,000 people died. Pictures of starving children on TV]. It was also Ramadan, the fasting month in Islam, a time of religious observance and fund-raising for the poor. Nuur, behind the computer, was on the telephone arranging an interview with one of the local T.V. stations who were interested to hear about how the local Bristol population was affected by, involved in, and responding to the famine. Abdi was texting a prominent Somali sheikh in Nairobi, asking for his details, so that he could transfer several thousand pounds that had been raised by attendees of the mosque to support the sheikh's efforts to assist famine victims, through the work of the mosque that he leads there. Abdi had arranged a discounted rate with one of the local xawilaad – Somali money transfer enterprises – who would faciliate the transfer of funds to Nairobi. This Sheikh had recently been invited to the UK by a group of Somali mosques, and spoke at different venues including in Bristol. His visit would help to support ongoing fund-raising for the centre. During this same approximately two hour period, Abdi had received a call from Finland, from a friend who invited him to attend an important meeting of the Somali population there, where a significant number have settled in recent years. There was a

constant coming and going of people into and out of the office, consulting with Abdi and Nuur about various activities.

In the evenings Abdi, sometimes with Nuur, would often be busy on his laptop managing the website he ran, which was focused on bringing information and generating discussion on Somali Region of Ethiopia, where he and some of his friends, felt discourse and information was being monopolised by the Ogaden National Liberation Front.

And this was the time when Al Shabaab and other militant Islamic groups were active in southern Somalia, and another activity they were involved in was extensive telephone calls to southern Somalia where they were attempting to influence relations between Al Shabaab and another group, Hizbul Islam.

Introduction

These opening scenes provide a brief glimpse into the multi-sited and multi-layered lives of Abdi and Nuur and of course many other immigrant populations, referring to different locations, and the transformation of place in the UK, the connections to other countries in Europe and back home, the use of technologies such as cheap international telephone calls (Vertovec – enabling the social glue), website, Somali remittance companies and local organisations (mosque).

In our increasingly interconnected world, Held emphasises that globalisation processes can be located at different levels, on a continuum between the local, national and regional (Held et al. 1999: 15). In a similar light, Lyons and Mandaville point out that while political processes have become globalised and transnationalised they remain 'intensely focused on specific locations, nations, identities and issues' (Lyons and Mandaville 2012b: 2). I try to pay attention to these different levels in the presentation/chapter.

Somali context

For those of you unfamiliar with the Horn of Africa context – its political and environmental volatility – and the context of 'crisis' we are looking at …

The Somali territories – of Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti – provide a vast, contiguous and inter-connected physical space. Significant areas within are characterised by political volatility, recurrent conflict and drought, manifest at different levels from the local to the national and international.

Displacement and migration have been one of the outcomes of this volatility and one of the strategies adopted to manage this environment.

Abdi and Nuur's migration history illustrates this:

both were born in Somali Region of Ethiopia and displaced to Somalia during the Somali-Ethiopia war in the late 1970s. Abdi grew up and was educated in a refugee camp close to the Somalia-Ethiopian border (an opportunity he has always been grateful for). Nuur was raised in educated with relatives in Somalia. Abdi moved to the UK after the collapse of the Somalia government and civil war in the early 1990s. Nuur moved just prior to the collapse. Both lived in at least one other city before settling in Bristol, where they first met.

Bristol as an emerging Somali territory.

Over the last ten years, Bristol has become an emerging Somali territory of sorts. It is one of three well known cities in the UK with significant Somali populations, and is prominent on the list of places to visit by Somali politicians, looking to address diaspora groups when in the country. As such, in terms of its identities and political discourses, it represents and embodies some of the fragmentation and volatility of the wider region.

Local organisations in Bristol

The development of the mosque referred to previously was preceded by Abdi and Nuur's engagement with a number of other organisations and fora.

- One was a loose association of Somali professionals (networking and discussion group)
- One was a local NGO/charity, focused on education, but with a strong identity and affiliation with a certain family or clan (seen as their organisation)
- Another was a new charity (Somali Resource Centre) that evolved out of the experience of the previous.

Each of these fora and organisations became sites which represented both social and political tensions but also provided opportunities to address them.

Abdi and Nuur were prominent in advocating for the Somali NGO and then the Somali Resource Centre to be opened up to represent the wider Somali population and their interests and concerns. They did this by influencing the Board composition and the staff recruitment process. Organisations that receive and disburse money and pay staff are sought after where financial opportunities may be limited. Exactly as is the case if you look at the politics of NGOs back in the region.

Website and Telephone Networking

(I mentioned a website).

The ONLF ran a number of websites that represented their antagonistic political position, vis-à-vis the government of Ethiopia. Until recently, and very much unlike neighbouring Somalia, where there are no media restrictions, information on political (or any other) subject in Somali Region of Ethiopia was very difficult to obtain (lack of infrastructure and strict controls).

The ONLF discourse and ideological perspective influenced what you heard and understood about the region.

Abdi, Nuur and others wanted to challenge this perspective and so started a website. They were able to access information through 'reporters' that they paid and friends that were working in the region. Sometimes they would provide information on a government meeting before it had even finished (as someone would report back during a break).

As the political direction shifted in Somali Region, the website became fairly prominent. Abdi was threatened (with violence) by the ONLF. He was also invited to the signing ceremony of peace agreement that took place between the Ethiopian Government, a faction of the ONLF and another Islamic group.

Telephone links to Somalia

Finally, Abdi and Nuur were both engaged in regular discussion with one of the militant Islamic groups in Somalia. Their claimed motivation was to 'drive a wedge' between it and, who they saw as a more dangerous actor, in Al Shabaab. This was enabled in part by the cheap telephone calls (a £5 phone card for example, can give you an hour's airtime to places like Somalia).

Conclusions and Discussion

In concluding I'd like to make a few points:

Engaging in crises is the everyday normal for many migrant and diaspora populations, and can be manifest in both local and transnational forms, as we have seen in Bristol and in the Horn of Africa.

The UK in this case offers a safe (non-violent) place/context to engage in political processes which can be extremely unsafe for those who are the protagonists in situ i.e. in Ethiopia and Somalia.

There is now a large literature on the role of diaspora populations in transnational politics; this can occur with the diaspora as aggressors but also as mediators and peace-makers, attempting to overcome some of the factures upon which politics and violence takes place.

The institutions and technologies I've mentioned have both local and transnational meaning; in particular, some of the activities and work done by by Abdi and Nuur is part of the development of their political experience and the gaining of their own social and political capital; they are able to draw upon the individuals and networks they have been involved in in the UK to activate or access individuals or groups in the Horn of Africa.

Both Abdi and Nuur have since returned to the region, one to work for the government and the other working on research projects with myself.

Their 'simultaneous incorporation' into social and political processes located both in a destination country and transnationally is the 'every day normal' of Somali society and is part of a reformulation of society and politics beyond the borders of the nation state. The paper explores the multiple identities, technologies, organisations and networks through which agency is expressed; these include clan and national identities, 'community' organisations, a mosque and a website, each with different local and transnational meaning. The notions of social fields and social remittances are drawn upon in order to help define and locate these processes, which are also analysed as expressions of livelihood.

The following is a chapter from the PhD, upon which the presentation is drawn

Chapter 4: Bristol and the Somali territories

While the previous two chapters provided an introduction to and overview of the migration history and transnational connectivity of Somalis and the Somali territories, this chapter takes up the case of two individual actors who are embedded within that history and landscape. From their physical location in an urban U.K. context, these individuals are explored for their agency in relation to multiple settings; the UK, Ethiopia and Somalia. Their 'simultaneous incorporation' into social and political processes located both in a destination country and transnationally is part of a reformulation of society and politics beyond the borders of the nation state (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1003).
The specific aim of this chapter is to explore the multiple identities and technologies mobilised and referred to by Somali actors which enable the pursuit of social and political goals in these diverse settings. The notions of social fields and social remittances are drawn upon in order to help define and locate these processes, which are also analysed as expressions of livelihood.

Bristol provides the geographic anchor for the two key actors identified. These actors both represent an Ethiopian Somali 'national' and 'clan' identity and migration history, evident and analysed in relation to their transnational political engagements. This identity and history enables a long-distance nationalism – or more accurately, nationalisms, extended beyond a typical dual – 'host' and 'homeland' – iteration, to two homelands, Ethiopia and Somalia, and multiple politico-territorial processes. These transnational engagements take place alongside an unrelated but simultaneous engagement by the same two actors in their 'host' setting, where different identities and institutions are evident. The empirical findings of the chapter raise attention to the 'flexibility and multitude of identities' embodied and mobilised by specific Somali actors within these various settings (Brons 2001: 113).

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of key social and political concepts drawn from transnational migrant studies. Personal biographies of the two central actors of the chapter are then presented, outlining and locating their migration histories and socio-economic positionings and identities. The remainder of the chapter is divided into the national and transnational fields in which agency is explored. The first section

concerns Bristol, the site within which the chapter is based; it describes its 'Somali' history and demography, as a relatively new but significant and evolving urban 'territory' within a global Somali archipelago. Agency in Bristol is explored through four forms of association and organisation, in which the two primary actors have played a prominent role. The first transnational political engagement of these same two actors takes place in relation to the Somali Region State of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian-Somali diaspora; this region and its diasporic identities are neglected in both Somali and Ethiopian studies (Khalif & Doornbos 2002: 88; Hagmann 2005b: 2). The second and final transnational vignette concerns political engagement in relation to different political processes and actors/institutions across the border, in Somalia, reflecting Somalia's internal political fragmentation.

The concluding discussion speaks to the question of the compatibility of assimilation/incorporation processes alongside strong and enduring transnational political engagement (see Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). The chapter's empirical findings are discussed from an actor-informed and livelihoods perspective, reflecting on the 'inter-locking actor projects' that such an approach offers (Long 2000: 197). In other words, different networks, organisations and technologies are employed in these varied settings.

Simultaneity, social fields and social remittances

Much traditional migration-related scholarship has focused on the processes and implications by which the immigrant is incorporated or assimilated into his/her 'host' country-society (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Basch *et al*. 1994). Transnational migrant studies over the past twenty or so years, growing in line with notions of 'globalisation', have been at the forefront of challenging this approach to migration and society; the term 'methodological nationalism' captures the many ways in which a 'container' view of society and politics has been prevalent alongside the rise of the nation-state and the social sciences in general (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Various social theorists and transnational migrant scholars have been moving debates beyond these restrictions, arguing that mobility and migration should be placed more centrally within theories of social transformation (Shery and Urry 2006; Castles 2008;

Vertovec 2004a; Glick- Schiller and Faist 2010). While many different concepts have been developed to evoke and capture the social and cultural implications of a more inter-connected world (see Appadurai 1996), Levitt distinguishes the massive and 'faceless' global radiation of ideas and behaviours from the more personalised character of social remittances (1998: 936). In a similar light, concerned with concerning the implications of globalisation on politics, Lyons and Mandaville point out that while processes associated with globalisation have de-linked politics from territory, 'this does not mean that transnational politics generally focuses on universal issues or global approaches to social justice. Rather, much of the new transnational politics is intensely focused on specific locations, identities, and issues' (2012b: 1). In other words, local issues remain fundamental to politics while political processes are increasingly globalised (ibid).

The social character of both local and transnational processes are important to this chapter and thesis, and the notion of the social field is drawn upon to conceptualise agency within this chapter. Levitt and Glick Schiller define a social field as a 'set of multiple inter-locking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed' (2004: 1009).[1] Such fields may be composed of different actors and institutions. In so doing, the authors note that the notion of a social field has evolved from more locally limited arenas, to more spatially separate or distanced but inter-connected urban-rural connections, to their transnational scope. A social field is therefore not limited to specific boundaries, but defined by the nature of the actors, institutions and relations within it. The location and directionality of resource flows and social relations provides a further area of enquiry. The term 'social remittance' was originally developed in order to capture the transnational flow of ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital, initially defined as 'flow[ing] from receiving- to sending country communities' (Levitt 1998: 926). The uni-directional and north-south flow remains, arguably, a common place understanding, particularly where financial remittances are often the focus of attention and do in reality tend to embody these characteristics,

[1] The authors acknowledge Pierre Bourdieu, the Manchester School and Basch *et al.* (1994) as influences in their work.

reflecting global inequalities. However, the directionality of social flows is more complex and relational, as the original author herself later acknowledges (see Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011), reflecting multi-directional or circulatory flows, expressions of identity and the accumulation of social capital in individuals through social engagement. Social capital is created and accumulated through social relations mediated by notions of trust, social norms and reciprocity (in Levitt 2007: 230).

The notion of social remittances is important to this chapter in that it is the social rather than the financial content and flows that are the focus of attention. In relation to transnational political engagement for example, diaspora populations were originally characterised for their role as belligerent actors, captured by the notion of 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1992); other early research (Collier 2000; Kaldor 1999; Demmers 2002) reflected this. However, this characterisation and notoriety has become more balanced and nuanced in recent years and includes reference to both financial and social remittances (Hoehne *et al*. 2011: 76). The notion of long-distance nationalism can be broadened to include a 'set of ideas about belonging that link together people living in various geographic locations and motivate or justify their taking action in relation to an ancestral territory and its government' (Glick Shiller and Fouron 2001, in Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1021-1022). This reflects a growing literature that captures the multiple forms and meanings of transnational political engagement, where conflict generation is only one possibility. Such engagement can also include direct and indirect forms of conflict mediation, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction (Lyons and Mandaville 2012a; Hoehne *et al*. 2011). Economic and educational investments, for example, have been argued to be forms of long-distance nationalism with a peaceful purpose and symbolism (Hoehne *et al*. 2011; Lindley 2005). Transnational political engagement may include social and political mobilisation and lobbying targeted at the 'host' country as well as direct engagement with the 'home' country (see Horst 2008).

Another field of enquiry is brought into view by adopting a broad definition of transnational political engagement and social remittances, and focusing on individual actors involved in locally defined (rather than transnational) processes and social

fields. According to Ndofor-Tah, migrants 'come together in all sorts of formal and informal associations, which unite members of a faith, political groups, nation-state, age group, gender, profession, business group; those in need of welfare or refuge; members of burial societies, rotation saving groups, sports and arts clubs' (2000, in Mercer *et al*. 2008: 58). The purpose of such migrant associations or 'collectives' may be primarily transnational, local, or both, and their social, developmental and political content is easily blurred and artificially separated (Mercer *et al*. 2008: ibid). This plethora of associational life occupies a prominent role in the process of adaptation and integration of immigrants and refugees in their new host countries and, in the case of the African diaspora in the UK, Mercer *et al*. suggest that little is known about the 'quotidian range of associational life of the African diaspora', and that immigrant and refugee populations are frequently problematised and 'made visible through their transgression of legal, geographical or cultural boundaries' (2008: 57). Within this wide range of migrant 'collective', it is also acknowledged that 'official' organisations funded to (notionally) support integration are only one of many forms that may contribute to processes of integration, and the extent to which they are instrumental in such processes can be questioned (see Griffiths *et al*. 2006).They are however one of the predominant lenses through which migrant (and refugee) incorporation is understood. Such associations and organisations may also serve different purposes, according to those who run them and those who access their services. (Hopkins 2006; Griffiths 1997; Lister 1999).

4.1 Migration histories

The following section introduces the two key actors through which local and transnational processes are explored. [2] Abdi and Nuur were both born in the Ogaden area of the Somali Region State (SRS) of Ethiopia. Both were displaced to Somalia as a result of the Ogaden War in the late 1970s when they were young boys, where they then lived for just over ten years. Abdi is a member of the Ogaden clan, part of the Darod clan family, one of the major clans within the Somali clan lineage structure

[2] The names of the key actors, and the organisations and websites they have been involved in, have been anonymised for the protection of their privacy.

(Lewis 1961). The Ogaden clan is considered the largest single clan in the SRS and the region itself has historically been – and continues to be – referred to as the Ogaden. Whereas many Somali clans occupy a contiguous area which often traverses one or two 'national' boundaries within the Horn of Africa, the Ogaden are unusual for their two discontiguous locations, one being within the SRS of Ethiopia, the other traversing the southern Somalia-Kenya border area. This separation derives from migration processes thought to have originated in the nineteenth century (Turton, 1975, in Little, 2003: 27). Many of the same sub-clan identities are found in both places and kinship connections exist through these spaces on the basis of the Somali lineage system. This Ogadeni clan identity therefore provides a distinct territorialised agency within Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. Furthermore, Abdi is from a specific sub-clan lineage of the Ogaden, the Reer Warfa, which are considered by Ogadenis and non-Ogadenis interviewed for this thesis to be one of the most internationalised families of the Ogaden lineage family (particularly gathered in the U.S.A.). Reasons given for this by interviewees include: the original large size of this sub-clan and its location in the area most affected by the Ogaden War and the anti-ONLF campaigns of the Ethiopian army; the fact that a number of prominent educated individuals from one of the few schools in the region sought better opportunities elsewhere, including in the Middle East; the fact that a senior member within the refugee aid industry was from this particular clan and may have further contributed to this movement; and a 'deliberate strategy of forming a community abroad'. In Kenya, the 'capital' of the Ogaden clan is Garissa, several hours from Nairobi by tarmac road. The Ogaden have also attained considerable political influence in Kenya, with several clan-members holding senior positions in the Kenya government (including the Speaker of Parliament and Minister of Defence).

As a result of the Ogaden War, Abdi lived for many years in one of the large refugee camps located outside Belet Weyn, in central Somalia, close to the border with Ethiopia. This camp was recognised for its significant Reer Warfa clan membership, a function of its proximity to the original clan territory. He went to school in the refugee camp, which he credits with giving him an education he claims he might not have otherwise received, and later undertook some of his secondary education in

Mogadishu. Following the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia from the late 1980s onwards, Abdi returned to the SRS. He remained for several years, working in his original home area in local government positions. These areas are also those identified with opposition groups such as the ONLF and Al Itihad. Prior to moving to the UK in the early 2000s, he lived in Easteigh in Nairobi (Kenya) for one to two years. Eastleigh is the Somali-identified area of Nairobi, known for its significant 'indigenous' Somali-Kenyan population, as well as for hosting 'refugees' from Somalia and Ethiopia, and a major crossroad connecting the Somali territories with the Western diaspora (Lindley 2010).

Nuur is not from the Ogaden clan, but from a small, religious clan known as the Reer Hassan. They are considered to originate in the Ogaden area of SRS, Ethiopia, but have a close and historical relationship with the Ogaden clan. In contrast to the nomadic camel-rearing nomads, such as the Ogaden, the Reer Hassan are known to be more sedentary, urban and educated. They are more engaged in agriculture and cattle-breeding (although the Ogaden are also cattle pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in Somalia-Kenya). As a religious clan they are considered politically neutral and are not expected to engage in war or conflict. As a smaller, dispersed clan they do not have the same political identity as the major clans. The Reer Hassan have migrated throughout the Somali territories over time but as a small clan they are, according to interviews, most well known within the Ogaden and neighbouring areas of central Somalia, due to their historic ties to these areas. In other areas they have often become incorporated into other religious clans, in a process of 'adoption' between clans that is common throughout Somalia (Luling 2006: 473). Following his displacement as a result of the Ogaden War, Nuur was moved to, raised and educated in Belet Weyn town, in Somalia, where he stayed with relatives and where he retains many contacts. The proximity of Belet Weyn to SRS/Ethiopia meant that he was able to visit his home area in Ethiopia from Somalia many times, from his new base in Belet Weyn. He did national service in Somalia, gaining in education in both Belet Weyn and Mogadishu. Nuur left Somalia at the end of the 1980s, via Zambia, where he had an uncle. He was on his way to the U.S.A. but was held in the UK, claiming asylum. He has continued to live here ever since.

Abdi and Nuur met for the first time after the former's arrival in Bristol in the early 2000s. Nuur has been in the UK for over twenty years, living in Bristol for just over half of that time, having previously lived in a number of other cities in the country. Both Abdi and Nuur have young families in Bristol as well as siblings and other kin in the UK, Europe and north America. They both have parents and other close family members living in the SRS, Ethiopia, as well as friends and relatives throughout the Somali territories. Nuur obtained a degree in the early years of his time in the UK while Abdi, of a similar age, obtained a UK degree in 2010. They are both in regular employment, Abdi in the education sector and Nuur as a self-employed translator/interpreter.

The migratory histories of Abdi and Nuur clearly locate them within the enmeshed Ethiopian-Somali and Somalian political and migratory history (see chapter 2). Their mobility and migration has been accompanied by periods of settlement and residence in different places, all of which are constitutive of the generation of social ties and exposure to different political systems, values and institutions (see Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1012-1013). Somalia offered Abdi and Nuur a safe haven, a 'national' identity or affiliation, as well as opportunities in education, all of which were much more limited or circumscribed in Ethiopia, reflecting Somalia's post-independence political and developmental trajectory and rhetoric (see previous chapter). Brons characterises Somali society for its 'multiplicity and flexibilities of identities' (2001: 113). She explains that 'in addition to clan it is economic and educational assets, age, gender and religious learning that define social status', and that neighbourhood and school-based also generate friendship and bonds (ibid; see also Simons 1995: 115-116). These social processes have historical resonance and meaning and continue to generate new relations and possibilities in their diasporic setting, as the remainder of the chapter explores. Where Simons (1995) describes these processes for Mogadishu, they can equally apply in new 'urbanisation' processes occurring in the diaspora.

Within their U.K. context, Abdi and Nuur are part of the wider Somali diaspora, living in the same areas, using many of the same social, religious and economic venues and

attending shared religious and cultural events.[3] Like their peers, they are also embedded in transnational kinship networks, within which they send financial remittances and engage in social relations. There are some further nuances to their transnational engagement however, reflecting the influence of the state in Ethiopia; while many of their peers support education projects in state-less Somalia, they are engaged in transnational 'chapters' that work in relation to the public education sector in the SRS, Ethiopia.[4] Their financial remittances to relatives in the SRS have also been mediated by the availability of supporting infrastructure, and for many years they had to send financial remittances via Somalia, to relatives in Ethiopia. Physical return has also been mediated by security concerns in which the discursive influence of the ONLF is apparent; interviews for this thesis explain that the dangers of returning to Ethiopia are exaggerated by the ONLF. During Nuur's time in the UK, he returned to Ethiopia three times and has sent his wife and children without him. Abdi returned for the first time in over ten years, in 2011. These transnational kinship networks and education 'chapters' provide examples of two distinct transnational social fields. However, the remainder of the chapter focuses primarily on their transnational political engagement and parallel national processes.

4.2 Somalis in Bristol

The following sections explore the livelihoods of Abdi and Nuur in relation to their 'local' and 'transnational' settings and processes; taking place in Bristol, and from Bristol to Ethiopia and Somalia.

Bristol is the sixth largest city in the UK, with a population of approximately 400,000, and the 'regional capital' of the west of England (Tallon 2007: 74). It is a recipient of different 'ethnic minorities' over the centuries (see Dresser and Fleming, 2007). Somalis are one of the more recent groups, first recorded in 1950 and estimated as compromising of only one hundred people by 1989 (ibid: 210). Consistent with Somali diasporisation at the time of the dissolution of the state, the Bristol Somali population

[3] Somalis from Somalia often distinguish themselves from Somalilanders and Somalis from neighbouring countries, using the term 'Somalian' (Hammond 2012:).
[4] This was not explored in detail but these 'chapters' – groups defined by country of residence - mmeet periodically, increase the financial returns for teachers, monitor performance (including changing teachers if necessary).

had expanded to 2,000 by 1991, and up to 10,000, ten years later, with estimates of 20,000 by 2007 (ibid). Bristol City Council has since estimated the Somali population as 'likely to be between 6,600 – 10,000', in 2010.[5] Within this growing Somali population there are significant clan-based identities that have been highlighted previously in other urban, western contexts (see chapter 2), but rarely explored in detail. Interviews for this thesis suggest that the early migrants and first expansion, up to 1991, was predominantly drawn from the Isaaq clan, from present day Somaliland, consistent with British-Somaliland connections and history (Lindley 2006).[6] Within this broad clan-family identity, a particular sub-clan family, the Haber Awal/Isse Muse/Reer Samater, is prominent. A clan-based territorialisation in Bristol was pointed out in an interview by a Somali man who mentioned that he was made to feel that Bristol was 'their territory' when he first moved to the city. The Reer Samater, in Somaliland, originate close to Hargeisa, the capital and seat of power in Somaliland, and many of their number are considered strong Somaliland nationalists. According to informants, Bristol is one of the key U.K. fund-raising cities for politicians from Somaliland. In public life (including in a prominent local museum), the majority of faces and names are those associated with this clan-identity, reflecting long-standing relations and networks with other public actors in the city.

In 1999, Bristol became one of the 'dispersal' cities, following the U.K. Asylum and Immigration Act, designed to reduce welfare costs and the pressure on London (Home Office 1999); in 2004, the Schengen agreement allowed free movement within Europe. Both events are associated with new migratory patterns, with the Somalis particularly noted as moving from several European countries to the UK in significant numbers (Nielsen 2004). As well as leading to a broader clan-based identity within Bristol, another particular clan-based identity has become prominent – the Hawiye clan family, one of the major Somali clan-families from the central regions of Somalia, who dominate the politics of Mogadishu. Within this, the Hawiye/Abgal, the sub-clan of a

[5] See www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/document/council_and_democracy/statistics_and_census_information/Somali Community Calculator_summary.pdf

[6] Small numbers of Dhulbahante and Warsangeli, from the Somaliland Protectorate have also been part of this movement (see chapter 3).

recent President of Somalia (in power from 2009-2012), is prominent (referred to further below). This clan-based clustering is likely to reflect a social security and networking logic. It also has specific political ramifications – Somaliland nationalist sentiment, for example, including public lobbying for recognition (see Hammond 2012), as well as its multi-party politics evident in Bristol; nationalist lobbying is highly sensitive within the wider Somali population. In addition, many amongst the Hawiye are well connected to internal political processes of the troubled Transitional Federal Government. These clan and sub-clan identities and their constituent local actors and politics provides an interesting layer of analysis for the remainder of the chapter.[7]

This Somali socio-political milieu exists within a wider national, urban, and immigrant-populated context in the U.K. characterised by its 'super-diversity', and defined as 'involving the interplay of country of origin (with different religious traditions, regional and local identities, cultural values and practices), migration channel (related to gender and social networks) and legal status (implications for access to employment, relations in localities, responses by local authorities, service providers and local residents' (Vertovec 2007: 1049). In Bristol, the significance of changing demographics have been highlighted in an official report, which describes the speed and scale of diversity in the city (Cantle *et al.* 2009). Eastern European and Somalis are the most prominent, but not the only, newcomers (ibid). The overall rate of growth is said to be faster than in the South West and England as a whole and is driven by international migration (ibid: 9). This context, for Somalis, reflects Crisp's observation that 'global networks and transnational communities of which refugees are part, rarely (if ever) consist solely of refugees [and] those networks, linking together people of the same family, community, ethnic group or country, are far more likely to incorporate a variety of different migrant categories' (1999a: 3).

Bristol is known for distinct patterns of social segregation and the initial expansion of Somalis, during the 1990s, was into the historically immigrant-populated inner-city areas of St Judes, St Pauls and Easton, where significant Muslim populations already

[7] There are many other clan-based, national and other Somali identities in the city.

resided (see Fleming and Dresser 2007:). These areas now have a visible Somali identity, reflected in the many businesses, social venues and mosques owned and frequented by Somalis, as well as in the significant number of Somali children in several local schools (Cantle *et al.* 2009). While many Somalis face labour market barriers, related to language skills, immigration status, racism and discrimination, poor literacy and the difficulty of converting professional qualifications that may have been gained elswhere (Bloch and Atfield 2002, in Lindley 2010: 115), there are also some specific niches. These include taxi driving, security work, cleaning, and work within a large post office depot (see Lindley 2010: 115). A number of Somalis are employed within the public and voluntary sector as interlocuters with and/or representatives of the wider Somali population. These inner city areas are also known for their poor social and development (see Bristol City Council 2010, for Bristol specific examples). Social issues, noted in the wider Somali diasporic context, such as *qaad* consumption, domestic tensions and social isolation, are also the case in Bristol (Cantle *et al.* 2009; Griffiths 2002; Harris 2004; Warfa *et al*. 2006; Gardner & El Bushra 2004).

The following vignette is located within this Bristol context, but also in relation to a distinctive new pattern of settlement, which occurred from the early 2000s onwards, into an area adjacent to the inner-city neighbourhoods mentioned above. This is characterised by informants as a 'white working class' area, where many generations of Bristol families have lived. It was part of a significant local developmental initiative in the years 2000-2010, and part of the Labour government's 'New Deal for Communities' (NDC). It was conceived prior to the arrival of Somalis, but coincidentally implemented as their numbers expanded dramatically in this area (see MacLeavy 2009).

Within this urban Western context, the literature on Somali 'community organisations' provides some insights into the social and political dynamics within the diaspora, generally describing a fragmented socio-political picture (El Solh 1991; Griffiths 1997; Hopkins 2006; Kleist 2007). This is most commonly explained in relation to the legacy of the civil war and the continuing salience of clan-based identities, the context from which many of the refugees fled. As previously indicated,

social support and security networks as well as political identity mobilisation continue to have a clan dimension (El Solh 1991; McGown 1999; Griffiths 1997). However, the role of clan as the primary explanatory framework for Somali social and political life is deeply contested in Somali studies (see Besteman 1998 for example.[8] In Tower Hamlets in London, for example, Griffiths acknowledges clan dimensions but suggests new processes of identity construction, which are localised and fluid, and ascribed to a younger generation, and which he suggests 'may be contributing to a decline in the authority of clan identities' (1997: 19). In relation to the functioning of 'community organisations', clan-based identities are said to be associated with ownership/management and access (Hopkins 2006; McGown 1999). However, such organisations also face other challenges, such as organisational capacity, access to resources, and often being highly personalised, and are said to be focused primarily on local, rather than transnational, issues (Hammond *et al*. 2011: 34).

Many of these patterns are evident in Bristol, where many such 'grassroots' organisations have dissolved or become stagnant over time and are associated with specific clan/family identities (White 2011: 25-28; Chan 2006). They typically offer support to other locally-based Somalis in areas such as health, education or immigration, and include some specialist services such as supplementary education and/or targeting of certain 'vulnerable groups' such as the elderly (Chan 2006: 64). In 'official' Bristol circles, the Somali 'community' has also been characterised by its fragmentation. This however also reflects the tendency for media and authorities to assume that only a few people are able to 'speak for the community' (Kleist 2007: 193), therefore setting up a process of misrepresentation and misunderstanding. This also reflect the simplistic idea that society is made up of various 'communities', often ethnically defined (Alleyne 2002). That said, many Somalis themselves acknowledge the problematic role that such societal fragmentation can play in relation to addressing social difficulties in their new diasporic settings, as is further discussed below.

[8] In short, the two broad positions expressed are those that emphasise the role of genealogy (such as I.M. Lewis (1961)) and those that emphasise stratification on the basis of gender and class (such as Besteman 1998).

4.2a Local 'organisations' and networks

Over the past five years, as the Somali population in Bristol has grown, Abdi and Nuur have become involved in a number of organisations and networks which have been inter-connected representing different social goals and holding diverse symbolic meanings. These are introduced briefly below and then discussed as part of these goals and meanings:

Somali Network Forum (SNF)

The SNF was an informal gathering of Somalis that met for several years from 2005 in Bristol. It was an open invitation gathering but predominantly consisted of formally educated men in their thirties and forties who could be described as a 'loose group of profesionals'. Meetings were held approximately monthly and were chaired and minuted. Abdi was the nominated Chair of this group for its lifetime. Many of the participants were educated to undergraduate level, some in Somalia just prior to the dissolution of the state, others in the UK. Some had been in the country and in Bristol since the early 1990s, while others had arrived more recently. Occasionally non-Somali researchers and other interested individuals would attend. The meetings would take place partly in English or Somali or both, depending on who was in attendance. Most of the participants were comfortable English speakers. Its participants were drawn from all over Bristol and represented different clan identities. Its purpose was an informal information sharing and discussion forum, and meetings were conducted in different venues.

Amina Education Association (AEA)

This organisation was run by Bristol Somalis on an informal basis for many years before it was officially registered in 2006. It was linked to a number of local primary schools where it provided supplementary education classes. This organisation is one of the older and better known Somali organisations within the city. Within the Somali population it is strongly identified with a particular sub-clan family, part of the older clan in Bristol, the Reer Samater, identified previously. It has received funds from the City Council and other sources over time. Abdi became a board member and Chair for

some years. It's older status is reflected in its location in the historically immigrant populated part of the city.

Somali Centre (SC)

The SC was formed in 2006 with financial resources from the developmental programme mentioned above. Located in the newly populated Somali area of the city, itt operated as an informal centre for its first year and was then formally constituted and registered in 2007. It is currently predominantly known as an 'advice centre' but has provided different services over time depending on the public funding that it secures. It is located in the newly populated Somali area of the city. Abdi and Nuur were both part of the creation of the SC and continue to be board members.

Nabad mosque and community centre

This is a new facility based in the same area as the SC. The premises, previously housing a small factory, were identified in 2009 when agreement was made with the landlord to rent and then buy it, although as a concept, it had a longer history. It remained unused for some time while planning permission for 'change of use' was being applied for and renovations were taking place. It was actively used from early 2011, providing space for worship, social gatherings and Islamic education. Abdi and Nuur are prominent amongst in its leadership. The project has been entirely funded by the local Bristol Somali population, through their individual donations, to date, although national and international fund-raising processes have recently been initiated. In 2011, the project received planning permission.

4.2b Education and social mobilisation

Education inequalities are very high in Bristol, and Somali children, located within the 'disadvantaged' inner city areas, have been identified as having particular challenges (Cantle *et al.* 2009). Two of the regular members of the SNF were employed in the local education sector under the New Deal programme, and their role was focused on consolidating links between parents and primary schools in order to improve poor education results. One of these individuals was Abdi. Other members of the SNF were also working in the education sector, including in the local secondary school and the

Amina Education Trust. The importance of education within the Somali diaspora has been highlighted by various scholars, particularly in transnational form, where remittances contribute to the creation and/or maintenance of education facilities, from schools to universities (Lindley, 2005; Samater 2001; Horst 2008: 334). At one Bristol primary, the head teacher confirmed this sentiment locally, suggesting even that expectations were often unrealistic. In transnational terms, funding of the education sector has been argued to play multiple roles in relation to Somalia, as a form of development assistance, as a symbol of post-conflict re-investment, as an alternative to potentially violent pathways for the youth, and as a symbol of cross-clan co-operation (Lindley 2005; Hoehne *et al*. 2011). Samater (2001), for example, argues that the Amoud University in Somaliland is deliberately not designed as a clan-based institution, and that it provides an alternative to unemployment and joining militias.

The most prominent Somali organisation in Bristol involved in education in the mid-2000s was Amina Education Trust. It is strongly identified with the original Bristol clan identity, the Reer Samater, as mentioned earlier. Local education issues and difficulties provided a major topic of conversation and concern within the SNF forum. According to a Somali participant, who also worked for the Bristol City Council, the SNF was 'about professionalism – getting professionals together, practitioners, not tribal'. The composition and attendees of the SNF were very mixed in terms of clan. In part, as a result of discussions within the SNF, there was an agreement to target Amina, and to 'open it up', in terms of its clan-based identity, as well as to develop its structure and capacity. At the next Annual General Meeting, board and management committee membership was opened to include different clan members, better representing the local Somali population. A Somali man explained that Amina 'matured a bit and got people with capacity'. The new positions included those appointed largely for symbolic value, representing important local clan-based identities, as well as those appointed for their 'professional' skills (some had both qualities). According to Abdi, the chair of the SNF, who had also become the vice-chair and chair of Amina, the SNF provided an important forum for some time during this period, for exchanging information and developing strategies with education as an 'important driver'.

4.2c Public space / local territory

According to interviews for this thesis, the expanding Somali population, particularly into this area with its small immigrant population, was accompanied by considerable social tensions. Within this new environment, Somalis pointed out that virtually all of the public spaces and organisations were 'no go areas' for them, as they included drinking venues, were Christian and/or housed long-established local residents. Discussions within the SNF – and within wider social fora – included an expressed need for a 'Somali community space' or 'Somali community centre', in the Barton Hill area. Modood (2005) argues that public recognition through public spaces is an important part of integration in a secular, multi-cultural society, and that the key concerns for Muslims in Britain is the need and demand for public spaces, public respect and public resources.

Different opinions were expressed as to the need for such a space within the neighbourhood. A Somali member of the Bristol City Council, who had seen many Somali organisations come and go, questioned the utility of tying financial resources tied to the recurrent costs of premises, suggesting that money would better be used for funding a resource person. Other local community development workers were reported to be interested in creating a formal organisation and structure. An employee within the NDC project, with long experience in the voluntary sector in Bristol claimed that the Somalis she spoke to were saying 'they didn't feel ready for that' and 'didn't want to repeat the same mistakes of other community organisations that had been set up and dissolved and accused of malpractice'. According to her, people said they 'didn't want to be Amina-ed'. The result of this was that, in 2006, the Somali Centre was opened. It initially consisted of nothing more than a dilapidated room that had been a shop in the local parade between the tower blocks of social housing in the locality. It received very little funding to get started (several thousand pounds) but provided a safe 'space' within the locality with a Somali identity, in which different informal activities could take place (including as an informal meeting place for women and education venue for children).

In 2007, a year after it was opened, the SC became formally constituted and the principles of cross-clan representation developed within the SNF and Amina were carried on in the SC; many of the same people provided the leadership for all three organisations. While women were not particularly evident within the SNF or at the board level of Amina, many women worked for Amina as volunteers or paid employees, and were more in evidence within the SC (see below). The first manager of the SC was Arten. He explained that he had seen the advertisement for the job some months after his arrival in Bristol. He had moved to Bristol from the Netherlands where he had lived for some years, obtaining a diploma there where he worked in the private sector with a large commercial company. He had obtained his degree in Somalia just prior to the dissolution of the state. He was from southern Somalia (with a Hawiye clan identity). When he first applied for the SC manager's position, he claimed 'few people knew him and he knew few people' as he had mainly been working and studying in Bristol following his arrival. He claimed that his lack of local contacts and appointment reflected a meritocratic process. While agreeing that most Somali organisations have an individual or clan-based identity, Arten spoke with some passion about 'challenging anyone to make the slightest suggestion that there was bias', in relation to both his appointment and the operations of the SC. He referred to the composition of the board as one example of this. Reflecting on this period, one of the men involved in the SC suggested it 'made other organisations think'.

4.2d Religion and local mobilisation

As the SC was being established, according to informants interest was growing in the need for a place of worship, given the absence of any mosques in the newly populated areas. Religious institutions and networks play an important part in fulfilling local needs as well as in maintaining connections to 'home' (Ajibewa and Akinrinade 2003; Beck 2001; Riccio 2001). In the UK, McLoughlin suggests that mosques 'represent perhaps the major investment of Islamic communities in Britain', and, 'play a large part in Muslims' social and political organisation, both locally and transnationally' (2006: 1046). According to McGown, for Somalis in the diaspora, 'having lost status, wealth, family, homes, they also feared losing their culture and religion' (1999: 42; see also Vertovec 2000; Levitt 2007). While there are several mosques in Bristol, the two

predominantly used by Somalis are located in the neighbouring immigrant-populated areas. Religion has been argued to provide a unifying force above clan-based loyalties in Somalia's history, although different Islamic sects and belief systems (as well as underlying clan dynamics) are also evident (Lewis 1961; Le Sage 2004; Menkhaus 2009a).

In Bristol, women were widely mentioned by local men for their role in the initial idea for the mosque and community centre, and in its evolution. This may be a new phenomenon, both in Somalia and the Western diaspora (UK and Canada); in Somalia, according to McGown (1999: 39) there was little Somali tradition of women going to the mosque prior to the civil war. Afrah, one of the prominent women supporters and fund-raisers for the mosque project, explained that she had been involved from its beginnings, describing how originally 'women came together and consulted with Abdi and Nuur, saying they need a place for worship in Barton Hill'. In so doing, she pointed out the links between the SNF, Amina and the SC, explaining that she was a board member, a volunteer and a part-time staff member of the SC, and that it 'included members from every tribe, was trusted, and involved men and women'. She had also worked for Amina previously. Over the course of a long discussion, Afrah indicated that the mosque could serve multiple purposes; 'there were a lot of needs in the Somali community' and 'a lot of people are struggling to know what people need'. She went on to explain that it was 'God's house; you can socialise; you can discuss things, always related to religion'. In the West, mosques have come to be seen as safe Islamic spaces which can 'provide 'secure' religio-cultural environments away from the dislocating experiences of migration, and the social exclusion of racism and unemployment (Kalra 2000, in McLoughlin, 2005: 1048). This diversity of meaning and multiplicity of practical purposes resonates with McLoughlin's analysis (ibid).

While representing a locus around which social mobilisation could take place, this process was challenging other forms of social and political affiliation. A Somali woman indicated that other women would often say to her, 'so you're working with Darods', reflecting the clan identity of Abdi (and that associated with Nuur). She was from the

Isaaq clan and explained such accusations as a function of 'a whole lot of baggage dividing people and lot of mistrust around' … 'if you have [a] strong identity and [a] strong belief in your goal I think [it] is good'. The Islamic identity of the mosque initiative was also subject to contestation. The local primary school head described religious tensions within the Somali population, specifically between those supporting the co-existence of Islamic identity and practice within the West, and others arguing for a more isolationist direction. Exactly this tension was identified in Canada in the 1990s (McGown 1999: 96). One of the other Somali-frequented mosques in the city, for example, represents a much more conservative identity, whereas the Nabad centre has cultivated good relations with many other local actors and institutions.

Islamic identity and institutional organisation is also notable for its transnational resonance. A number of interviewees referred to the mosque leadership as 'Itihad', the term for the umbrella group of militant Islamists active in the Somali territories of the Horn of Africa since the late 1980s/early 1990s (see previous chapter). Some of these labels emanated from individuals affiliated to different religious groups, such as the *Ikhwani*/Muslim Brotherhood groups in Bristol. Abdi and Nuur themselves have close family members within both of these other groups, but have deliberately adopted an open and non-affiliated status, where other groups are allowed to use the mosque for meetings but the mosque is not aligned with any. This position comes at a cost, as such an independent alignment means they cannot access established fund-raising networks. Instead, the mosque has relied heavily on local funding generated from the neighbourhood and the wider Bristol Somali population. In addition, Abdi and Nuur are not themselves religious leaders such as sheikhs or imams, who would typically lead such an initiative, although they are devout and knowledgeable Muslims. This 'independent' position has also been adopted in relation to one of the most frequent questions that is asked about the mosque by the local population who fund it; namely, 'who will run it in the future?'. This question is said to have arisen in part because of the experience of one of the other local Somali mosques, which was locally funded, but later taken over by a particular non-mainstream, conservative group. While the leadership of the local mosques does not necessarily reflect the beliefs of many of

those who use them (as sites for worship), mosques can become sites of ideological, factional and sectarian struggle (see Werbner 1991, in McLoughlin 2006: 1049).

4.2e Building local relations

The previous analysis has focused on the internal Somali socio-political milieu. However, all of the above organisations are located in a wider public social and institutional context, which includes many non-Somali actors and organisations. In this regard, Putnam has distinguished between social capital that is 'bonding', reinforcing homogenous identities and positions, and 'bridging', coming from networks encompassing people from a wide spectrum of social strata and political ideologies (Putnam 2000; in Levitt 2007: 230). The mosque project provides an interesting example in this respect. It has been a relatively complex organisational challenge, requiring planning permission as well as a degree of local acceptance. A local consultant was recruited to lead the planning permission application explained that he had had a number of Somali clients over the years and had developed an empathy, describing the Somalis he knew as 'honourable'. He contrasted this position with the comments he noticed many others making, typically: 'do they pay?'. He pointed out that understanding the regulatory processes was difficult, even for those not familiar with them, pointing out that some of his (Somali) clients face problems and increasing costs just because they have not read, understood or responded to an initial warning letter. While using a local consultant, Abdi and Nuur have had to be pro-active and strategic in relation to the planning permission process, particularly by lobbying with local MPs and the City Council as and when necessary. An experienced local voluntary sector worker who attends a lot of 'community' meetings across the inner city area pointed out that in its early days the people behind the mosque made considerable efforts to talk to local residents and local organisations. This investment and the motivation required of building 'bridging' capital is put by Afrah as: 'capacity is familiarity with the system' (this comment was directed at Abdi and Nuur).

4.3 Transnational Engagement across the Somali Territories – long-distance nationalisms

While Abdi and Nuur are engaged in various locally focused initiatives in their city of residence, the following section explores their simultaneous transnational political engagement – long distance nationalism/s. These vignettes are situated in relation to political dynamics in Ethiopia and Somalia, whose context was discussed in the previous chapter.

4.3a Vignette 1: The SRS and the Ogaden Diaspora

Kormeeye

In 2003, a political 'movement' was launched within the Ethiopian Somali diaspora in the UK. It was called '*kormeeye'*. The purpose of the movement, according to those within it, was to advocate for an end to violence and a dialogue-based political engagement with actors in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian-Somali diaspora. Abdi and Nuur were part of this movement. From the late 1990s, the ONLF had come to dominate political discourse within the Ethiopian Somali diaspora with regard to the political and developmental trajectory of the region. The ONLF used its own websites, supporting others who were sympathetic to its views. These included: www.onlf.org and www.ogaden.com . The content of these sites appealed to the historic identity of the Ogaden people and their resistance to colonial occupation, typically articulated in relation to the Abbysinian and European empires. The ONLF had strong ammunition in appealing to and producing an Ogadeni group identity, based on the history of conflict and displacement by Ethiopian Somalis, particularly Ogadenis, during the Ogaden War and the banning of the ONLF from regional politics in the mid-1990s (see previous chapter).

The first meeting held by *kormeeye* was in West London, deliberately in an 'ONLF stronghold' according to those involved. At this stage, the ONLF had a strong presence in the SRS, in large part due to its support from Eritrea; on the ground, in the SRS, significant areas of the bush were controlled by the ONLF who were engaged in guerilla warfare with the Ethiopian National Defence Force (Hagmann and Khalif

2006: 10). According to the meeting organisers however, they received good support, and 'people liked them for speaking out', a position that resonates with that also reported by Hagmann and Khalif (2006: 11). *Kormeeye* members reported meeting with the chairman of the ONLF and the first President of the SRS, in the UK, at this time. The group also attempted to make contact with the Federal Ethiopian government, through letters, but with no response. As a political movement, *Kormeeye*'s life was shortlived, however its formation represented and symbolised an alternative and moderate political position within the Ethiopian Ogaden diaspora, as well as a political forum through which contacts could be developed and meetings organised.[9]

Following this aborted 'movement', some members continued their political engagement through a website of the same name, produced in the Somali language. Abdi and Nuur have been prominent in running *kormeeye*, the website. This website is considered a significant discursive presence according to all interviewees (Ogaden and non-Ogaden), although it can be assumed to be mainly read by Ogaden clan members, particularly with moderate political positions. It is the only website referred to as 'widely read' in a recent study which commented on the use of websites by Somalis from Ethiopia.[10] The internet now provides an influential forum for framing political discourses, as well as for enabling political entrepreneurs to gain prominence (Lyons and Mandaville 2012b). Isse-Salwe describes the proliferation of websites in the case of Somalia as reflecting a lost national identity and as important for its 'oral expressiveness' (2006: 58). One of the specific themes of *kormeeye* was to bring out information on the malpractices of the Regional government in Jijiga, the regional capital, where the majority of government staff lived and where there was 'widespread political, organisational and financial disorganisation within different branches of government' (Lister 2004: 20). In its early years, *kormeeye* was not always or necessarily antagonistic to the ONLF, as the ONLF was also a vocal critic of the regional government. One informant suggested *Kormeeye's* role was more to lobby for

[9] The short-lived existence of the movement was not researched in detail although informants suggested this was partially due to individuals claiming membership of *koormeye* in order to gain political positions in the region.
[10] This was sourced from a confidential report for the UK government undertaken by a well known academic, and is therefore kept anonymous.

a different approach and strategy, rather than to be directly critical of the ONLF. For their part, according to *Kormeeye* members, the regional government largely ignored them as the diaspora at this stage was not a significant actor in the patronage politics located within the region. That said, *Kormeeye,* was able to access information on political processes emanating from the region, through paid reporters and government insiders. This co-production of websites between local and diasporic actors is common in the case of Somalia (Isse Salwa 2006; Hoehne 2011a: 399).

Nuur, a more occasional participant in *Kormeeye*, explained his involvement as derived from a concern for the future of the region and its position vis-à-vis developments in neighbouring Somali territories. For him, the ONLF contributed to a predominantly negative view of the SRS and this resulted in many Ethiopian Somali diaspora investing in Somalia and Kenya instead. This is enabled in part through Ogaden clan identity and therefore relations in each country. Living within the wider Somali diaspora in the UK and the West, the 'actually existing development' (see Duffield 2002: 153) taking place in other parts of the Somali territories are evident, with many of their peers able to travel between the UK and Somalia/Somaliland and Kenya. For many of these 'revolving returnees', the Somali territories are 'virgin territory' and a land of opportunity (Hansen 2003: 14-15). As Hagmann notes, 'region 5 [that is Somali Region, Ethiopia] also lags behind its ecologically and economically more similar neighbours: Somaliland, Puntland and southern Somalia' (2005a: 2). While the Somali territories are frequently portrayed for their regressive qualities, for Somali studies scholars as well as Somalis themselves, diverse political and developmental trajectories are clearly evident.

From 2006, the political trajectory within the SRS evolved dramatically from increasing violence to a military ceasefire and peace agreement, the latter established in 2010. Initially, violence intensified as a new Ogadeni military leader achieved notable successes against the ONLF. In 2006, this resulted in a visit to the UK and the U.S.A. by Ogadeni elders, who called for the Federal Government to talk to the ONLF and who were 'desperate' to end the violence (Hagmann 2006). *Kormeeye* carried pictures of this visit on its website. *Kormeeye* members were part of the reception

committee of the elders but to their dismay, the ONLF refused to meet them, at least officially; they were accused of being government puppets. This contributed to a more antagonistic position developing between *kormeeye* and the ONLF, which was reported to have became very personalised. Isse Salwa (2006) refers to the 'media war' in describing the antagonistic constitution of much of the Somali media. These tensions between the ONLF and *kormeeye* take place in relation to a conflict described as 'shadowy', where local grievances interplay with regional geo-politics, and there is great difficulty in establishing reliable information (HRW 2008; Khalif and Doornbos 2002; Hagmann 2005b: 510). Claims and counter-claims of military missions and victories are made by both government and the ONLF. Within this violent and contested arena, Abdi and Nuur claim to have used *kormeeye* to try and uncover the dynamics behind a local conflict in order to attempt to mitigate its continued escalation.

In 2007, the ONLF claimed a major attack on an oil/gas exploration mission, involving the deaths of Chinese and Ethiopian nationals (Abdullahi 2007; HRW 2008). The resulting Ethiopian crackdown was well publicised in Western media, which in turn may have influenced a changed strategy by the Ethiopian government regarding the ONLF and the Somali diaspora. In 2009, the Ethiopian government engaged in peace talks with ex-members of Al Itihad, who had reformed under the name UWSLF, as well as a faction of the ONLF (the Karamarda Group 2010), that had split from the main organisation. Key informants report a deliberate engagement with the Somali diaspora by Ethiopian Federal and Regional governments, thought to be motivated by their wish to weaken the ONLF. Senior Somali officials have been placed in Ethiopian embassies in the US and UK in recent years. This has happened while Ethiopia has been conscious of the power of the wider Ethiopian diaspora following its role and influence in the 2005 elections (Lyons 2012).

During the discussions about the ceasefire and peace agreement, Abdi and Nuur were both consulted by the UWSLF and the Regional Somali government. This took place through the kin and personal links they had to members of both organisations, via telephone and e-mail contact. Their support for this direction was also carried on

Koormeye. Their support for the ceasefire resulted in a variety of accusations being levelled at them, including being 'itihad', a mouthpiece for the 'UWSLF', and 'supporting a particular faction of the ONLF'. An influential report by an experienced UK scholar for the British government refers to *Kormeeye* and Bristol being part of the UWSLF (ex-*Al Itihad*) Islamic network.[11] Discussions with Abdi and Nuur reveal a more complex and nuanced position. Abdi, who lived for many years in the SRS, during the 1990s, acknowledges a 'sympathy for' Itihad/UWSLF'. He ascribes this to aspects of life in the SRS where he lived for many years in the 1990s; 'if you do not chew [qaad] you tend to socialise more in groups where Itihad sympathisers are also found'. This is not an unusual position in Somalia itself, where *Al Itihad* itself has been acknowledged for providing improved security, anti-corruption campaigns, and social services in specific areas (Le Sage 2004: 100-101; Menkhaus 2009; Marchal 2007), and that many Somalis have a 'loose association with or are generally sympathetic to the group' (ICG 2002: 16). Their religious affiliations can also be analysed in relation to the mosque project in Bristol, where 'itihad' is also an occasional accusation they face, and where they claim a non-affiliated religious position and a 'bridging' social identity/practice. Such labelling may better reflect Levitt and Glick Schiller's distinction between 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging' in social fields, where the former signifies an embeddedness but not identification with a label associated with that field, while the latter refers to more conscious and deliberate practices to identify with that field (2004: 1008).

Abdi's return

Finally, as well as being involved in political processes regarding the SRS through a 'movement' and telecommunications technology (website, e-mail and phone), encompassing activities in various domains – diasporic and transnational – Abdi was able to return to the SRS in 2011 for the first time since he left, for the ceasefire ceremony in Addis Ababa. This visit was hosted by Ethiopian public resources as part of a strategy which enabled and funded several hundred diaspora members to return to the region. This funding covered flights, accommodation and internal transport.

[11] The report is 'restricted' and so is not cited.

According to informants, many other 'near' diaspora members returned through their own means from neighbouring countries according to informants. This enabled Abdi to return and see his mother and siblings (a point he mentioned frequently), whom he had not seen for many years (or at all in the case of some siblings), as well as to re-inforce or develop new contacts in political and economic areas.

4.3b Vignette 2: Bristol to Mogadishu, Kismayo and 'Jubaland'

This second vignette reveals a second long-distance 'national' engagement of Abdi and Nuur, expressed in relation to multiple territories and political processes.

Bristol – Mogadishu connections

Many Somali commentators noted that the appointment of Sheikh Sharif, the 'moderate' Islamic leader, as President of Somalia (the TFG) in 2009, was received with much celebration and excitement throughout the Somali world. This appeared to signal a change of direction and the endorsement of a 'political Islamic' leader by Ethiopia and Western interests, following many years of violence centred around Mogadishu. In Bristol, a prominent local venue (a converted church) hosted a large-scale celebratory event, with many Somalis present as well as local dignitories such as Councillors and MPs. 'Universal TV', the main Somali satellite TV station, was also present. The new President of that time has close family and wider clan-members living in the city (for example, Bristol was the only city, other than London, visited by the then President during his attendance at Somalia Conference in February 2012.[12] They and other Hawiye/Abgal clan members made up the majority of the participants. However, talk in the Bristol teashops at this time was of tensions between the President and the leader of the opposition, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, a previous leader of Al Itihad (see UN Monitoring Group Report 2010). Both were previously senior figures within the Council of Islamic Courts. Abdi and Nuur were, like many Somalis, concerned with these tensions and decided to try and mediate between Sharif

[12] see www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17131208 .

and Aweys, both of whom are from the the Abgal/Hawiye clan, distinct from the clan identities of Abdi and Nuur.[13]

Bristol itself offered opportunities for the development of transnational political engagement given the presence of many of the President's relatives in town. Abdi and Nuur began a concerted effort over several weeks to develop their networks to the President and his government, as well as to the 'opposition'. This was entirely carried out through telephone calls and personal networking, where five British pounds buys approximately two hundred minutes of airtime. Vertovec emphasises the global reach and transformation enabled just by cheap international telephone calls and pre-paid phone cards (2004b). Family members of the President boasted – while waving their phones – that they could get the President on the phone. This opportunity reflected in part the particular Somali clan-based demography in Bristol, where most Somalis live in relatively close proximity to each other, and the new urban-based relationships, resonant of those born of processes of urbanisation pointed out by Simons in the case of Mogadishu (new neighbours, common employment, common schooling) (1995: 115-116). It also reflects the 'bridging' social capital expressed by Abdi and Nuur in Bristol where 'bonding' ties are also evident within the Somali diaspora. Abdi, for example, took a prominent organisational role in the celebratory event for President Sharif where many others, particularly from non-Hawiye clans, did not (for example, very few Isaaq clan-members attended this event). This personalised dimension of social networking is important in the Somali context - Levitt refers to the personal 'reference' as part of the notion of 'social remittances' (1998: 936), and that distinguishes it from 'faceless' features of globalised communications. For Abdi and Nuur this reference contributed to opening possibilities for political mediation in Mogadishu. Abdi and Nuur were also able to access senior figures within the 'opposition' Islamic organisation, through their own personal and clan-based identities and contacts – which traverse the Somali territories of the Horn of Africa and extend to the Western diaspora.

[13] History of third party conflict mediation is common in Somali conflict scenarios (see Walls and Kibble 2011).

This transnational political engagement is time-intensive in comparison to its financial cost. Time is required to build rapport and trust and test lines of communication for credibility and reliability; it may not be possible always to speak directly to key decision-makers, in which case messages are passed through interlocutors. Strategies must be developed for establishing whether messages are being accurately passed in both directions. Abdi and Nuur felt this was often not the case in this engagement. They also referred to the (political) skills and confidence they had gained through their activities within *kormeeye*, as part of the reason they undertook this effort at mediation. Engagement through a website operating in the highly contested Ethiopian-Somali political context, at the diasporic level and with actors in the region itself, provided a platform for learning, and for generating social capital. In addition, this transnational engagement signified an emotional and political affiliation with Somalia, a sentiment arguably applicable to many Somalis regardless of 'nationality'. Nuur refers to the country as 'my Somalia', although most of his social and financial transnational engagement is targeted at the SRS, Ethiopia. Ultimately, the efforts of Abdi and Nuur in conflict mediation regarding the TFG and Mogadishu did not materialise into anything significant and they switched their attention westwards.

Bristol to Kismayo and Jubaland

Kismayo and the surrounding Somalia-Kenya border area of Lower Juba provide a complex social and political setting (see Little 2003; Menkhaus). The coastal port city of Kismayo is an economic hub contested by different clan-based groups and 'warlords' since the collapse of the state, with Harti, Marehan and Ogaden providing the competing genealogical groupings (Narbeth and McLean 2003; ICG 2010: 10). There are also many 'minority' groups within the city and the surrounding rural areas (Narbeth and McClean 2003). Following the establishment of the TFG under Sheikh Sharif, Kismayo became the site of tensions between two Islamic opposition groups, Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam (UN Monitoring Group; Bradbury 2010). Sheikh Aweys, who had been a prominent leader within Al Itihad and the CIC had become leader of Hizbul Islam, following his exclusion from the TFG. HI was a new group created from four different factions (ICG 2010: 9-10; UN Monitoring Group 2010; Bradbury 2010).

One of these factions had an Ogaden identity and strong connections to the SRS, Ethiopia.[14] Abdi and Nuur's engagement at this time was based on a claimed motivation to 'drive a wedge' between the two organisations; they claimed Hizbul Islam provided a better alternative to the global jihadist rhetoric of Al Shabab.[15] Underlying these claims, clan-based connections to HI were also evident. This transnational engagement consisted of direct telephone-based exchanges with senior members of HI, where ideas and information were discussed. While Abdi and Nuur claimed moderate influence in dividing the two organisations, they also saw their overall strategic interest fail as Al Shabaab emerged the stronger group and continued to gain territory, by 2009 and 2010 controlling large parts of southern Somalia (see ICG 2010).

The final political arena of transnational engagement within Somalia, still ongoing at the time of writing, concerns 'Jubaland'. The expansion of Al Shabaab from 2009 included control of much of the border territory east of the Somalia-Kenya border. Much of this area, traversing the current national border, was known as Jubaland in colonial times (Little 2003:). The presence of Al Shabaab in this area was now threatening Kenya as well as affecting cross-border trade, in which the Ogadenis had been prospering. Unlike Ethiopia, Kenya has not intervened physically or militarily in Somalia since the dissolution of the state. The continued failure of internationally sponsored state-building intervention under the umbrella of the 'war-on-terror' – exemplified by the TFG-AU/Amisom-Western donor alliance – led to a renewed interest in the principles of the 'building blocks' approach, where de-centralised political entities were given credence (see Hagmann and Hoehne 2009; Chatham House 2012). Somaliland and Puntland, to varying degrees, still embody this de-centralised trajectory, and other 'mini-states' have arisen, the most successful of which has been Galmudug (Chatham House 2012). The possibility of a mini-state or autonomous area of Jubaland was proposed in 2009, although this had been a recurring theme over the years (ibid; ICG 2012). The most recent iteration of this idea

[14] The far southwestern corner of Somalia has provided a safe haven for militant groups from SRS.
[15] Their reasoning was that HI had more potential to talk to the TFG and that it was the only organisation that might militarily challenge Al Shabaab.

is associated with a French Somali diaspora member, from the Ogaden clan. He is reported to be backed by the Kenyan government, particularly senior Ogaden figures within the government. Military and civilian training has been undertaken by the Kenyan government (see ICG 2012). The possibility of a 'Jubaland' has involved diasporic mobilisation processes in the UK. At such a gathering in Birmingham, attended by Abdi, an informal association was created. This involved a small financial contribution, the mobilisation of an individual to travel to Kenya on a fact-finding mission, and the organisation of a small conference including teleconference calls with a representative of the Jubaland initiative.

A potential Jubaland mini-state is of particular interest to Ethiopia, given the Ogaden connections between the area and the SRS, and the position of the ONLF within this. Interviewees suggest that the leader or of this initiative, Professor 'Ghandi', has sympathies with the ONLF. Another of the prominent political and military actors within the Jubaland area, Madobe, the leader of *Hizbul Islam*/*Ras Kamboni*, contests Professor 'Ghandi''s position. Madobe is a regular leader of *kormeeye* whom Abdi was able to meet on his return to Ethiopia. Abdi has since become involved in the creation of a 'diaspora contact group' for Madobe, which has attempted to open up lines of communication with the Foreign Office in the UK. The Jubaland story continues to evolve.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter introduced Bristol as a new, evolving and significant hub in the global dispersal, urban clustering and re-territorialisation of Somalis. Migrants (and refugees) are acknowledged as important actors and contributors to changes taking place within cities, with both local and transnational resonance (Caglar and Glick Schiller 2012: 19). Somalis themselves talk about putting Bristol 'on the map' in terms of national and global social, religious and political affairs. This is evident in the regular invitations to, and visits of, well-known Somali political figures and religious leaders, as well as consultations by UK state actors.[16] The history of Somalis in Bristol reveals both older,

[16] As mentioned previously, during the 2012 Somalia Conference in London, Bristol was the only city visited by the then President Sheikh Sharif, other than London; ex Minister 'Formaggio' also visited in

clan-based identities and newer ones, reflecting known historical and contemporary patterns of migration, and an ongoing mobility. These have associated clan-based socio-political subtleties which have been brought out in this chapter. The two largest or more dominant clan-based identity groups within the city connect many residents to the centres of power and political processes in Hargeisa, in Somaliland, or to Mogadishu, in Somalia, although these are far from the only such transnational connections, as evident in the Ethiopian-Somali political engagements that have been examined.

The notion of a 'social field' is useful in conceptualising this simultaneous incorporation, with its 'set of multiple inter-locking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed' (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1009).
Within these social fields, social remittances - the 'flow of ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital' – add further meanings (Levitt 1998: 926). In relation to their transnational political engagement, the two actors focused upon in this chapter embody particular national and clan identities, and a migration history, that are broadly understood but for which there is little detailed and socially informed analysis. Within this context and these fields, the contours of genealogy as an enabling network and identity are particularly evident. Abdi and Nuur's migration history, from Ethiopia, through Somalia, as well as their continued interest in Somalia, reflects this history and its identities. It also captures an emotional attachment and a recognition of the ongoing inter-connections between Ethiopia, Somalia (and Kenya), particularly through an Ogaden clan identity. Common clan identity is not the only determinant of engagement, however. Attempted conflict mediation in Mogadishu, in relation to Hawiye clan-actors and politics, reflects the role that a third clan-actor can play in such processes (see Walls and Kibble 2011). Islamic networks, personal and neighbourly friendships in diasporic locations were also evident in these processes.

2012; Sheikh Umal from Nairobi, Kenya was another visitor. Some of these visits are part of visits co-ordinated between groups in different cities, with invitation costs shared. Actors in Bristol are now prominent within many of these processes.

Within Bristol, a locally defined social field, the contours and tensions of genealogy are evident, but locally meaningful goals and identities have been privileged to help overcome these fractures; a core group of actors – the 'loose group of professionals' – have joined together, through different forms of association, to pursue wider social goals related to education and religion. These processes are evident historically and in other settings. However, they do appear to have a distinct local meaning and history as referred to by Somali actors themselves, evident in the links between the networks and organisations.

In totality – locally and transnationally – these processes reflect the 'flexibility and multitude of identities' embodied by Somali actors within these diverse settings, and how they are referred to and mobilised in different settings and according to differents needs (Brons 2001: 113).

The multi-sited agency expressed by Abdi and Nuur can be further captured and analysed from a livelihood perspective, where different technologies, organisations and networks provide the means of expressing agency in relation to these multiple settings. The website, *kormeeye*, is such a technology, arguably contributing to the opening up of political discourse in relation to the SRS, Ethiopia (see Hoehne *et al*. 2011). The website also has meaning as a site within which political capital and capabilities are learned and accrued, a form of 'diasporic capital' suggested by Hansen (2003: 15). Maintaining the discursive flow and relevance of a website requires a significant investment of time and energy (far more than of money). Transnational political engagement is not only an arena of wider political discourse and contestation, but one within which individual political actors and entrepreneurs appear (see Lyons and Mandaville 2012a). In the case of Abdi and Nuur, they represent a younger, diasporic generation (not from the old Somalia political elite), although a cohort raised within the Somali environment.

Within the UK, an informal network, two 'community' organisations and a religious-based initiative enabled locally directed goals to be pursued, with wider social significance. These are also understood as sites within which skills are developed, and social capital is accrued and contested. These skills and social capital are primarily

locally relevant and meaningful, or limited, other than in the case of the mosque and community centre which has opened up new transnational relations and networks. This again is qualified, as the mosque did not tap into institutional Islamic transnational networks.

Abdi and Nuur appear to provide an example of the compatibility of assimilation/incorporation alongside strong and enduring transnational political engagement (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1002). Such a position may be conceptualised in relation to the 'bridging' capital they embody; while investing in strong religious and cultural identities and institutions, and motivated to maintain these in relation to the wider Somali society and for their children, they are able to form relations across hardened Somali clan-based identities as well as outside of the Somali population. In this they, and the 'loose group of professionals' with which they associate, comprise a relative minority of the local Somali population, where interviews suggest that 'bonding' ties along clan and sub-clan lines, and hardened identities are more common – with their own 'internal' relations and opportunities operating in local and transnational social fields.