had developed across the world, and its complex inner forces, largely unaddressed. Considering the rather large body of anthropological work on the state and the many fine accounts of local processes of state formation it is unclear what a general (and brief) account of the genesis of the state, based on a foundation as imprecise as that of Deleuze and Guattari, adds to the literature. One wonders why the editors do not position their account more precisely in opposition to, or in conversation with, other accounts of the anthropology of the state. Why are the many significant contributions to the analysis of violence, ethnic strife and civil war largely absent? The introduction, its many insights notwithstanding, actually raises the question whether civil war and indeed violence as such really are symptoms of any crisis of the state? Are not violence and civil war the very preconditions of arguments for the formation of the modern state, theoretically stylized as a «covenant», as readers of Hobbes and students of the peace of Westphalia will know? The idea of modern sovereignty and modern legal regulation as a solution to civil strife and endemic violence was the ideological core justification of the colonial era that ultimately extended the modern state form across the world. This globalization of the modern state form certainly reshaped social and political conflicts everywhere, but it also made the very idea of the modern state integral to the political imagination of what a proper society, proper justice and proper social order should look like.

As the editors and many of the contributors point out, the modern state is indeed a major part of the problem that (re)produces and structures violence in many guises. However, as is clear from the best and most ethnographically sensitive contributions in this volume: Finnstroem on Uganda, Loefving on Guatemala, Boserup writing of the alternative state structures during Algeria’s war of liberation, and also Utas’s account of the predatory state in Liberia, Bertelsen on the ambivalences of state functions in Mozambique, ideas of another, more responsive or caring, state, continue to generate resentment of the violent dispensation of the present.

Other contributions are more beholden to an a priori critique of the state and ethnic ideologies, or concerned with more specific regional agendas. Some valuable ethnographic contributions notwithstanding, the very sweeping introduction and the somewhat imprecise analytical rubrics it deploys, as well as the lack of a shared analytical perspective across most of the pieces, give the volume a somewhat disjointed feel.

Many anthropologists follow Clastres in his foundational critique of the modern state, a critique strongly shaped by the intellectual and political polemics in France in the 1970s. In some cases, such as in the recent work by David Graeber and indeed this volume, it produces a suggestive but highly general account of the state that privileges the state as a locus of destruction and violence. Others, such as this reviewer, believe that the task of anthropology is to describe and analyse the vernacular and cultural life of the history of the modern state – violent and productive at the same time – and the multiple political imaginaries and registers of everyday action it has shaped. Like modernity itself, the modern state is «beyond good and evil» and may best be analysed in that spirit.

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Response to Thomas Blom Hansen’s review by Bruce Kapferer and Bjørn Enge Bertelsen

Hansen’s interesting critique of our edited volume is largely aimed at the Introduction and this unfortunately skews his discussion away from the other contributions that deserved, in our opinion, closer consideration. The Introduction is criticized for its ambition, «sweeping» or encompassing character as well as for its use of Deleuze and Guattari and what Hansen
declares to be their imprecise formulations. This seems a little unfair, and even sweeping in itself, because, in our opinion, Deleuze and Guattari are quite clear in their abstractions, although Hansen himself certainly betrays a confusion in his own understanding of them. He is certainly right to say that we are influenced by Clastres (which Deleuze and Guattari expand critically). However, he trivializes Clastres by reducing his scope to a debate in French politics. It was much more than this! Clastres was making a major statement against neo-imperialism in the context of Vietnam, which had relevance to both old and new imperialisms in anthropology and its evolutionism – all of which had a major influence in a thoroughly Euro-American statist political anthropology.

At the close of the review, Hansen throws off a passing reference to Nietzsche’s work *Beyond good and evil*, co-opting him to legitimate the approach Hansen recommends. Nietzsche should be rolling in his grave given his outrage at the bourgeois state and the conventional, status quo, tone of Hansen’s remarks. It would seem that Hansen is using Nietzsche to prescribe an approach to the state that is neither for nor against the state, liberal, non-committal, apolitical, and empiricist. Hansen asserts that “The task of an anthropology of the state is to describe and analyze the vernacular and cultural presence of the state in quotidian life.” He writes with imperious authority for a very limited anthropology of the state which we think hides his purpose, which is to defend an approach largely pursued from the kinds of anthropological centres he represents that both ignore the literature of long-standing importance concerning the state outside anthropology in preference for a rather self-enclosed anthropological and ethnographic myopia (see, e.g., the critique of Marcus, Kapferer). Certainly, anthropology should examine the place of the state in everyday life, but surely as important anthropologists of the state of anthropology’s past understood (e.g. Wolf, Gluckman and the Manchester School), larger scale processes (not to be glibly reduced to relatively empty terms such as «globalization») must be grasped because these are implicated in local processes, even conditioning them, although they may not be obviously addressed or conceptualized in the vernacular.

The entire point of our Introduction was to attempt a reconceptualization of the larger processes involving the state (processes that are unsatisfactorily often glossed as «neo-liberalism») and which are involved in generating violent possibilities that do not fit the kind of Hobbesian terms in which Hansen seems to want to confine the discussion. On the contrary, our argument is directed to suggest dynamics in which state forms are taking radically new shape. Certainly the kind of approach which we essay is attentive to diverse historical contingencies – a point we make very clear. It is a development in certain ways on Deleuze’s seminal discussion of «Societies of Control» in which we argue that rhizomic dynamics are more closely intertwined with arboREAL, hierarchical processes. Hansen, on the other hand, simultaneously argues that the state «has developed in different historical forms across the world», emphasizing the «complex inner forces» within states and privileging «local processes of state formation», and, contradictorily, pointing out how colonial interests «reshaped social and political conflicts everywhere.» In our view his first argument, then, is oriented towards relativizing and localizing the state privileging the multitude of forms and its «inner forces» while the second argument presents us with a diffusionist (and evolutionary) vision of a singular form of organization centrifugally and sweepingly being exported and implemented. While this slippage between the notion of a universal (and universalized) modern state form and the notion of uniquely local processes of state formation is problematic, it goes some way towards explaining Hansen’s misreading of the notion of «state»
and «war machine» in the Introduction to our book. Our use of Deleuze and Guattari’s powerful notions of «state» and «war machine» is to be able to discern and analyse the dynamics of state formation in a way to avoid an evolutionary approach to statehood and to understand precisely what is translocal in «local processes of state formation.» Put differently, these dynamics enable us to consider contemporary global processes and what we argue to be the ongoing, contemporary corporatizing transformation of the state form internal to these. In our view, the state approached as a political order with a totalizing dynamic analytically captures key processes of reformation, crisis and violence inherent to a changing global order without confining our analysis to actual states.

Hansen also laments that, to his mind, many «significant contributions» to both «the anthropology of the state» and the domain of violence and civil war are absent from our Introduction. As Hansen refrains from specifying any work that he finds missing and as he does not comment on the 73 references in our Introduction – some among which we emphasize as «significant contributions» – it is difficult to see his argument as anything else than a call for a regular «state of the art» section. Both editors of the volume have undertaken such overviews in various other works (and perhaps of interest to NAT readers Bertelsen co-authored such an overview of anthropology and the state in this journal in 2006). However, as should be clear from the above, our Introduction was not intended to assume the well-trodden ground of the conventional literature review. Instead, our use of Deleuze and Guattari, Clastres, Foucault and others was intended to contrast our approach to state formation from those that do not acknowledge, for instance, the important Marxist literature on the state. Our position enables us to develop a critical position vis-à-vis the state – an approach we believe better serves anthropological debates on the state than the more conservative analyses made by Das, Gupta, Ferguson and others.

Given that our volume was originally published in 2009 (paperback 2012), one could argue that the usefulness of the perspective presented may be tested against events that have since occurred. Currently, and especially given the recent violent reformation of the apparatus of the state in Libya (processes likely to be undertaken in other countries in the Middle East), we hold that a probing of the shifts in the dynamics of the state at the heart of the volume – what we have chosen to see as the rise of the corporate state – is crucial to understand current violent events. Again, it seems highly unproductive to restrict oneself to Hansen’s above-mentioned prescription for anthropology («to describe and analyze the vernacular and cultural presence of the modern state in quotidian life») if we are to analyse such circumstances. Rather, we maintain, anthropology must also analytically and empirically engage the very dynamics of statehood and theorize the enduring crisis at its heart.

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Blom Hansen has declined further engagement.