

A black and white photograph showing a large group of people, mostly men, sitting on the ground in front of a building. They are arranged in several rows, looking towards the camera. In the foreground, two men are standing with their backs to the camera, looking towards the group. The man on the left is wearing a striped shirt, and the man on the right is wearing a dark suit. The ground is dirt and gravel. The building in the background has a corrugated metal roof and some windows. A red banner is visible in the upper right corner.

RIFT VALLEY INSTITUTE | USALAMA PROJECT
INSECURITY IN THE CITY
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A SYSTEM OF INSECURITY

UNDERSTANDING URBAN VIOLENCE
AND CRIME IN BUKAVU

RIFT VALLEY INSTITUTE

USALAMA PROJECT: INSECURITY IN THE CITY

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A System of Insecurity

Understanding Urban Violence and Crime in Bukavu

MICHEL THILL



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THE USALAMA PROJECT

The RVI Usalama Project is a field-based, partner-driven research initiative examining armed groups and their influence on society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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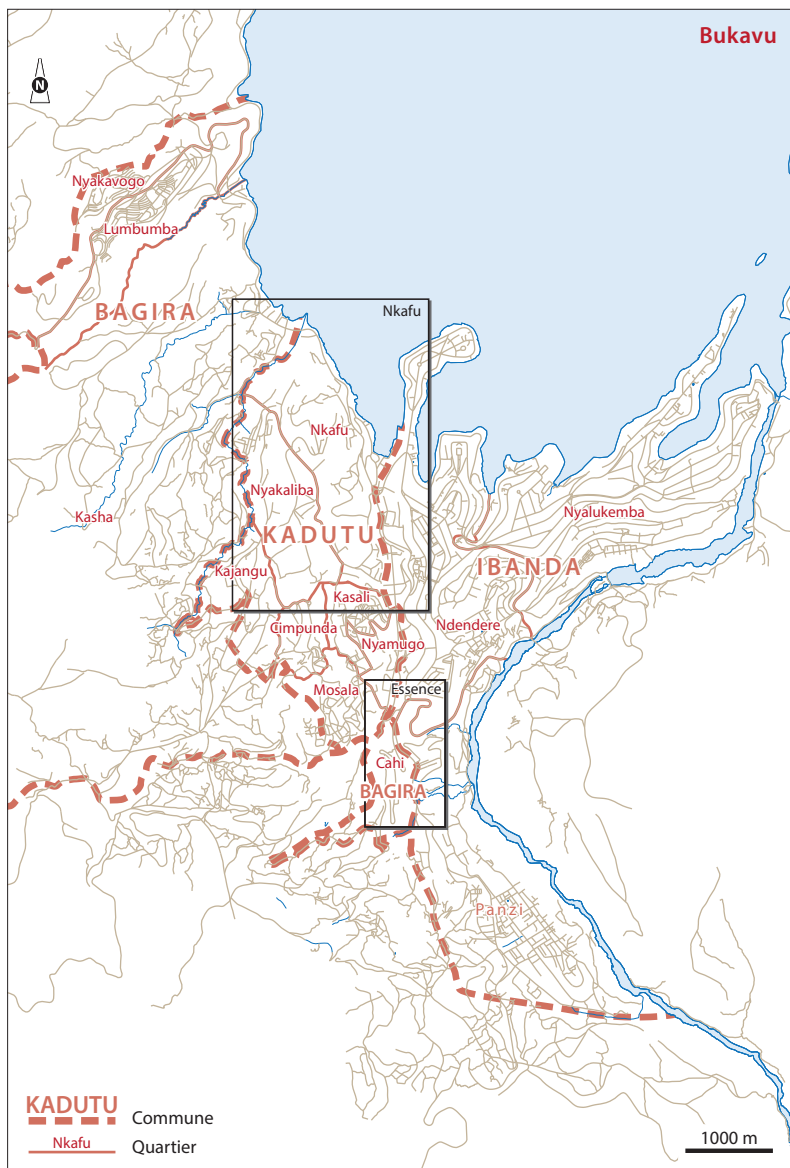
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COVER: Bukavu's civil society hold an exchange meeting with residents on the city's main road where money changers had been violently attacked and robbed the day before.

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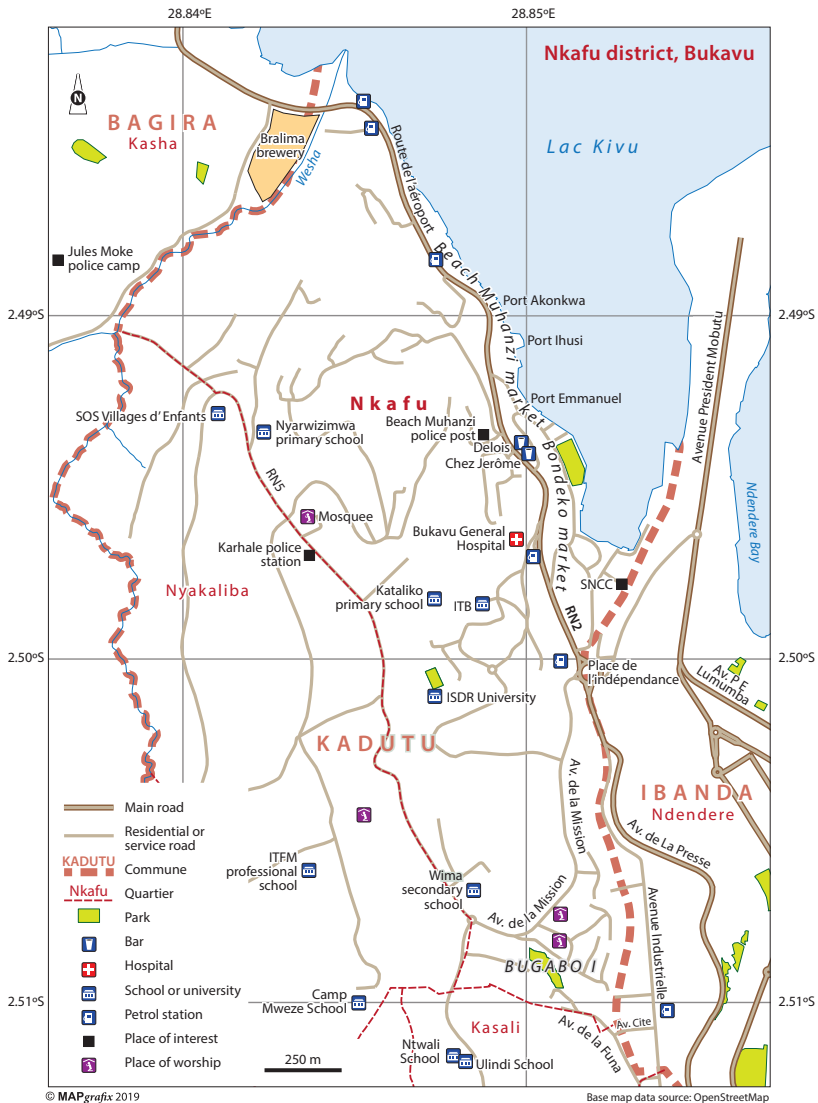




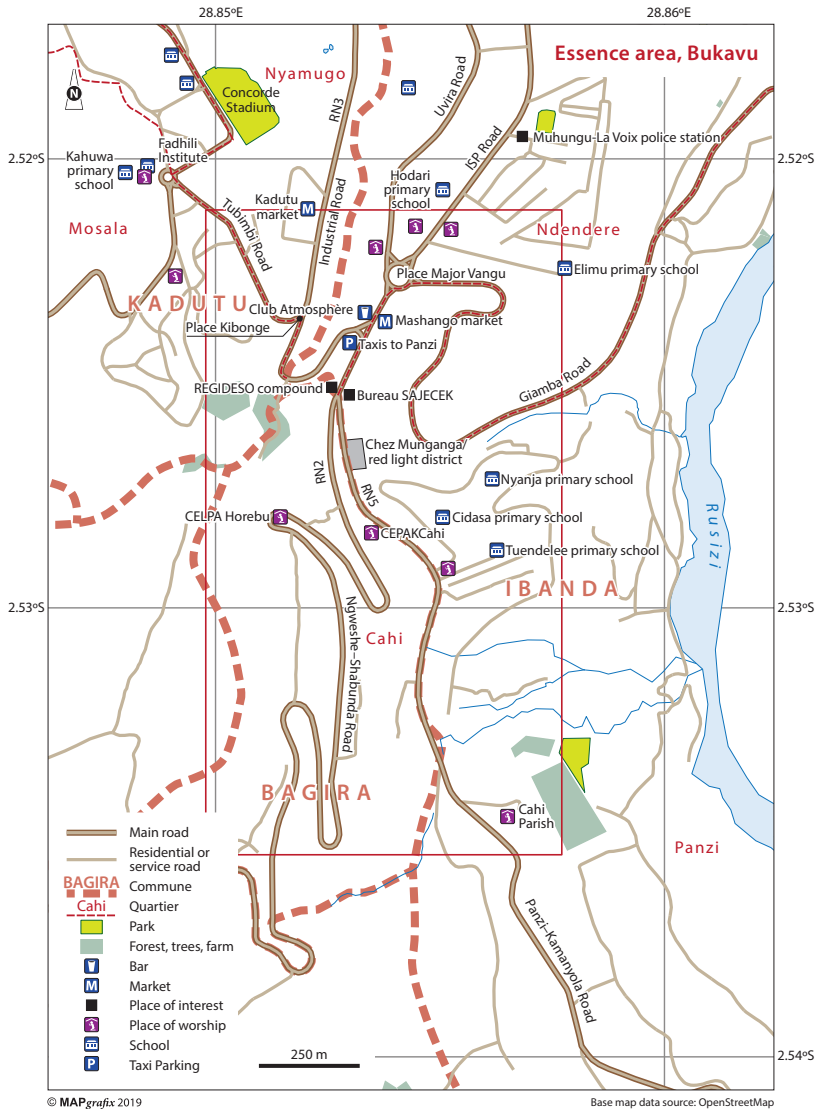
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Data source: OpenStreetMap

Map 1. The city of Bukavu



Map 2. The district of Nkafu, Bukavu



Map 3. The neighbourhood of Essence, Bukavu

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Preface

The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been mired in violence for two decades and continues to be plagued by rampant insecurity. Yet, the drivers of this insecurity remain poorly understood. The Rift Valley Institute's Usalama Project (Usalama means 'safety' or 'security' in Swahili) is a field-based, partner-driven research initiative that aims to examine dynamics of conflict and violence and their effects on Congolese society.

The first phase of the Usalama Project (2012–2013) focused on 'understanding armed groups' while the second phase (2015–2016) investigated 'governance in conflict'. The third phase (2018–2019) explores 'insecurity in the city' and the role of state and non-state actors in the provision of security, and citizens' perceptions of, experiences with and responses to insecurity. The third phase was carried out in partnership with the Bukavu-based *Groupe d'Etudes sur les Conflits et la Sécurité Humaine* (GEC-SH). The project is guided by a series of questions: Who are the main agents of security and insecurity in the city? What are the drivers, logics and trends of urban insecurity? What are residents' perceptions of insecurity? And how do they deal with insecurity in their everyday lives?

The project takes a primarily qualitative approach, drawing on extensive fieldwork by both international and Congolese researchers. Fieldwork for this report took place between March and April 2019. A total of 83 interviews and 4 focus group discussions were conducted in Bukavu, complimented by the author's previous research, and desk-based research with a variety of academic, government, media and NGO resources. Many of the interviews for this report were conducted on condition of anonymity. Therefore, identifying information is limited to a neutral indicator with a location and a date, e.g. Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Bukavu, 25 March 2019. In the course of the research, accounts of potentially disputed events were confirmed by multiple sources with first-hand knowledge of the events under discussion.

The 'Insecurity in the City' phase of the Usalama Project is part of the Solutions for Peace and Recovery Project (SPR), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Summary

- Despite their rapidly growing populations, cities have largely been sidelined in discussions about conflict and insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). But researching insecurity in cities is crucial to gain a better understanding of how state and society engage around key prerogatives such as security and justice.
- Throughout colonial history, cities played a key role in developing plans on how to police and discipline colonial subjects. Some colonial policing practices have endured to the present day, while new ones have emerged since independence. From the 1980s, a shift in the social contract between the state and its people occurred, with the state progressively withdrawing from primary obligations, such as security.
- Crucial to Bukavu—the subject of this report—are its experiences of war, rebellion and occupation, in particular the Rwandan genocide and its consequences, and the Congo Wars of the 1990s and early 2000s. A continuing rural exodus, growing pressures on urban land, dispossession and oppression by occupying forces and easily available small arms have seriously tested the social cohesion of Bukavu residents.
- Facing growing urban insecurity, the residents of Bukavu have taken matters into their own hands either by engaging in criminal activities to survive or by mobilizing against them. Improvising, fending for yourself (*débrouillez-vous*) and taking care of oneself (*auto-prise en charge*) have become logics of personal action ingrained in the minds of the city's inhabitants.
- Insecurity is a fact of everyday life for most inhabitants of Bukavu. Two of its more turbulent neighbourhoods—Essence and Nkafu—display a staggering diversity in the forms that this

takes. Coping with this drains physical and mental energy, steals time, hampers mobility, triggers anxiety and undermines neighbourhood trust.

- Some people also benefit from insecurity. Facing a state withdrawing from public security and a stagnant formal economy, many residents of Bukavu have carved out spaces to make a living where opportunities exist. This has led to the flourishing of a complex economy around insecurity marked by a degree of collective complicity.
- Despite the daily struggles to make ends meet, the majority of Bukavu's residents manage to stay clear of this economy, often showing considerable creativity and bravery in responding to its many challenges. There are, however, clear limits to what can be done to fight a system upon which so many rely.
- Security has become inextricably linked to insecurity. At the heart of this system are the tensions between structural forces and the agency of the people who are affected by them. This has produced an ambiguous order in which a plurality of actors compete to achieve the near impossible: to survive, thrive and provide security all at once.
- This report suggests five areas that should be considered for those working to combat insecurity in Bukavu:
 1. Support and invest in the creation of safe urban spaces, for example, by expanding public lighting and closing down illegal brothels;
 2. Commit to police reform. Past donor efforts have had some successes, and these should be built on, invested in and repeated;
 3. Mobilize the positive potential of youth by offering alternatives to the economy of insecurity;
 4. Build on local best practice when tackling insecurity,

reviving street-level neighbourhood security committees and reinvigorating the important role of low-level urban administrators;

5. Foster bottom-up social inclusion, including by creating safe spaces for encounters between urban security actors, administrators and local communities.

Acknowledgments

The Bukavu-based *Groupe d'Etudes sur les Conflits et la Sécurité Humaine* (GEC-SH) is a relatively new research unit, its office, previously home to bee hives for honey production, then rabbits for local consumption, was only established in the summer of 2016. And yet, in this short period, its Director, Professor Godefroid Muzalia, has not only managed to assemble around him a group of excellent young researchers, he has also motivated them to stay on his side despite the steep challenges a new organization faces anywhere, but particularly so in the eastern Congo.

For the RVI Usalama Project—Insecurity in the City—I had the privilege to work with nine of GEC-SH's researchers and associates. They conducted much of the research and several of the report's ideas are theirs. Language barriers and tight deadlines may have prevented them from contributing to the writing process and critically reviewing the various versions, but the report is as much the fruit of their work as it is mine. Their names are: Alice Mugoli, Bienvenu Mukungilwa, Cubaka Muderhwa, Eric Batumike, Francine Mudunga, Gentil Kulimushi, Irène Bahati, Julien Namegabe and Robert Njangala. Thank you!

I would also like to thank Maren Larsen and Abel Cimanuka for insightful exchanges on parts of this report. All ambiguities, misrepresentations or errors which remain are entirely my own.

1. Introduction

Since the late 1990s, violence in the eastern Congo has drawn much attention from researchers, activists and policymakers. Land and identity, exploitation of natural resources, armed group mobilization, peacekeeping and governance are areas that have received most research. Much of this has focused on rural areas, which harbour armed groups, bear the burden of their violent activities and are prone to fall under their influence. Cities, such as Bukavu, have been largely sidelined in discussions about conflict and insecurity in the region.¹

The urban population in the Congo is the third largest in sub-Saharan Africa and is growing by one million per year. At the current rate, the number of Congolese living in a city will double in the next 15 years.² Researching their everyday experiences, which are considerably shaped by insecurity, is a crucial step to a better understanding of the urban, as well as overall socio-economic and political, realities in the Congo. Moreover, it is in the ever-growing Congolese cities where the state and its security services are most visible, where youth groups and civil society organizations are loudest, where trade and commerce are vibrant and where inequality is starkest. Researching insecurity in the city thus also provides valuable insights into how state and society engage around key prerogatives such as security, and what that may indicate about the workings of urban governance.

1 Exceptions include: Karen Büscher, 'Conflict, state failure and urban transformation in the Eastern Congolese periphery. The case of Goma', PhD thesis, Ghent University, Ghent, 2011; Gillian Mathys and Karen Büscher, 'Urbanizing Kitchanga: spatial trajectories of the politics of refuge in North Kivu, Eastern Congo', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 12/2 (2018): 232–253.

2 World Bank Group, 'Democratic Republic of Congo Urbanization Review: Productive and Inclusive Cities for an Emerging Democratic Republic of Congo', Washington, DC: Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, 2018.

Like much of the eastern DRC, many of Bukavu's residents have been drawn into a flourishing economy of insecurity, which provides them with diverse opportunities to survive and thrive, albeit to different extents. At the same time, there is no shortage of community and state responses to insecurity. Brave administrators, police officers and civilians have come up with creative ways to face daily risks and dangers. However, investment in security comes at a high price and many such initiatives struggle to endure. As a police officer interviewed for this project stated intriguingly, 'security changes shapes. It is a system.'³ Questions of what this system entails, how it functions and how to confront it, including the economy it has created, are becoming ever more urgent for researchers and decision-makers alike.

3 Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Nkafu, 14 March 2019.

2. A History of Insecurity in Bukavu

Insecurity in Bukavu reflects the socio-economic and political context of the city. This has been shaped by its colonial history, the nature of governance and civil–security relations, economic decline, a shift in the social contract between state and society, and legacies of rebellion, violent conflict and occupation. Together, these factors underlie the specific landscape of insecurity in Bukavu.

The colonial period

Throughout the colonial period, cities played a central role in discussions on how best to police and discipline colonial subjects. This was no different for the Congo. Situated in the lush hills of the western Rift Valley at the southern tip of Lake Kivu, Bukavu was founded in 1900 as a military outpost of the Belgian King Leopold II's Congo Free State. Its main task was to monitor German colonial expansion across the lake and the Ruzizi river, which now marks Congo's border with Rwanda and Burundi.

Initially established on the peninsula of Muhumba in Nyalukemba, the military post took a few decades to flourish. The contested border with neighbouring German Rwanda, coupled with the advent of the First World War, slowed the pace of European settlement. Resistance from the *mwami* (paramount customary chief) of Kabare, ruler of one of the most important Bushi kingdoms, also contributed to the slow pace of settlement. Bukavu began to grow in the years following the First World War, when its tropical, yet temperate climate and fertile soil started to attract colonial administrators and settlers. It was given the status of an urban constituency in 1925 and shortly

afterwards became the capital of Kivu district.⁴

Little is known about insecurity in the early years of Bukavu. It was, however, in urban settlements where the colonial administration was the most visible and where most Europeans lived. Despite intensely guarded racial boundaries, strictly controlled movements in and out of the city, and firmly enforced segregation policies, urban settlements were also where the elite white population felt threatened by the 'African underclass'.⁵ Colonial policing was thus a project of containing a specific category of people and keeping another in power—a legacy that has proved difficult to overcome. For the Congo, across the colony, white administrators were constantly beset by anxiety and fear in their dealings with their supposed subjects. Faced with the creativity, elusiveness and resilience of those they had colonized, the Belgian colonial administration found itself in a never-ending struggle to categorize the population, enforce dubious laws and maintain public order.⁶

Insecurity after independence

The turbulent history of Bukavu since independence forms the immediate backdrop to the complex economic, social

4 Canda-ciri Njangu, 'La Résistance Shi à la pénétration Européenne (1900–1920)', Lubumbashi: National University of Zaire, 1973; Gillian Mathys, 'People on the move: Frontiers, borders, mobility and history in the Lake Kivu region, 19th–20 century', PhD thesis, Ghent University, Ghent, 2014; Pilipili Kagabo, 'Contribution à la connaissance des origines du centre de Bukavu (Kivu) de 1870 à 1935', MA thesis, Lubumbashi: National University of Zaire, Lubumbashi Campus, 1973.

5 Andrew Burton, *African Underclass: Urbanization, crime and colonial order in Dar es Salaam 1919–61*, Oxford: James Currey, 2006.

6 Amandine Lauro, 'Maintenir l'ordre dans la colonie-modèle. Notes sur les désordres urbains et la police des frontières raciales au Congo Belge', *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés* 15/2 (2011): 97–121; Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, And Reverie in Colonial Congo*, London: Duke University Press, 2016; Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918–1940*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

and political factors underlying current urban insecurity and responses to it. Several of these factors are not specific to Bukavu but affect the country as a whole, such as the troubled relationship between the security forces and the people, the nature of governance and the dismal state of the economy. From the days of the Congo Free State (1885–1908), state security forces have recurrently been involved in violent oppression, abuse and theft. The coercive arm of the state, the army and the police, has served to keep the ruling elite in power at all cost and enrich them in the process. From punitive raids against resisting villages under King Leopold II, to the forced mobilization of labour under the Belgian colonial administration (1908–1960) and the suppression of political opposition under President Mobutu Sese Seko (1965–1997), the security services have always been a central tool used by Congolese elites to maintain their grip on power.

A second factor underlying the strained police–community relationship is the governance structure in Congo. It consists of a presidential patronage network, the central objective of which is the survival and enrichment of those in power. As a result, state institutions have become rent-producing structures, whereby public resources and positions are used for private purposes. The security services are no exception. Indeed, they have always had a penchant to live off the population not just in order to feed the established hierarchy, but also to nourish themselves. Consequently, a diverse set of extractive practices has developed, ranging from charging for services and inventing infractions, to stealing goods during raids and robbing civilians at night. Such practices are the product of both oppression and scarcity, simultaneously guaranteeing the survival of the patronage system, and state security institutions and their employees. Throughout history, state security actors have always also been actors of insecurity, undermining their relations with the population and triggering a profound crisis of trust and

legitimacy.⁷

A third factor is the rapid economic decline of the Mobutu regime from the late 1970s onwards. In Bukavu, as in other cities, a multitude of residents were forced into the rapidly growing informal economy, which became the real source of most urban livelihoods. It is in this context that Mobutu called on his subjects to *débrouillez-vous* (fend for yourself), also known as Article 15, referring to an imaginary part of the 1960 constitution of secessionist South Kasai, which encouraged state employees to improvise in times of need.⁸ Article 15, however, has not only encouraged the private use of public functions. It also represents a retreat of the state from its official duties, including those of security, in which place a new socio-economic arrangement between state and society emerged. With insecurity worsening, and a declining state capacity to respond to it, people had little choice but to take matters into their own hands, which was often encouraged by state officials.

In 1982 in Bukavu, in response to growing popular frustrations due to a series of armed burglaries, Mwando Nsimba, the commissioner of the region of Kivu (a Zairian administrative entity), told residents to defend themselves and take justice into their own hands—a discourse commonly referred to as *auto-prise en charge*. Residents did not hesitate to follow this instruction, leading to the rise and spread of *justice populaire* (popular justice), a practice that consists of a group of people beating to death

7 Thomas Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984; Michael Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

8 Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985; Godefroid Muzalia, 'Insécurité dans la ville de Bukavu au Sud-Kivu: Perspectives historiques (1960- 2018)', Bukavu: *Groupe d'Etudes sur les Conflits et la Sécurité Humaine*, forthcoming.

supposed thieves or burning them alive.⁹

Auto-prise en charge turned state employees into common thieves and common civilians into police and judges. The logics of Article 15 and *auto-prise en charge* are manifestations of a major shift in the social contract between state and society. As the state has increasingly retreated from public life, it has given a licence to state employees to siphon off public funds and has encouraged its citizens to take security matters into their own hands. This shift has fundamentally blurred the boundaries between public and private, and obscured the responsibilities of security provision. It has led to the rise of alternative responses to insecurity and the proliferation of non-state security actors. The impact this has had on everyday insecurity is difficult to overstate.

Insecurity in Bukavu has been shaped significantly by the history of rebellion and violent conflict in the eastern Congo. For example, in 1967, Belgian mercenary, Jean Schramme, and his troops, who had supported Mobutu's weak central army, had a disagreement over their payment, which led them to occupy Bukavu. After looting the central bank, and facing Mobutu's US-supported army, they eventually withdrew after five months via Rwanda, but leaving behind arms and ammunition. In the years following their occupation, the first criminal gangs emerged in Bukavu and a first wave of what is commonly referred to as *vols à mains armées* (armed robberies) hit the city.

Weapons left behind by rebels and mercenaries, along with the presence of idle demobilized soldiers, created fertile ground for this initial rise in crime. At the time, the response of President Mobutu's security services was generally swift and the most notorious thieves were hanged in Bukavu's biggest public square. Where state security services were too remote, the population

9 Muzalia, 'Insécurité dans la ville'; Timothy Raeymaekers, 'The Power of Protection: Governance and transborder trade on the Congo-Ugandan Frontier', PhD thesis, Ghent University, Ghent, 2007.

of Bukavu set up their own alert systems, making noise with pots and pans, or tam-tams and whistles, to mobilize neighbours to scare away robbers, a practice still in use at present.¹⁰

The Congo Wars and their aftermath

The 1994 Rwandan genocide and its repercussions in the wider region has arguably had the most influence on insecurity in Bukavu. Hundreds of thousands of refugees, including large parts of the defeated Rwandan army and the paramilitary *Interahamwe*, set up camp on the outskirts of the city. Fear and distrust spread among communities in Bukavu, with resident youths starting to patrol the streets at night. The First (1996–1997) and Second (1998–2003) Congolese Wars followed, inundating the country with foreign troops and triggering a rural exodus of considerable proportions. As a consequence, Bukavu had to harbour a fast-growing number of internal refugees, straining its already weak economy and severely testing the social balance of its urban communities. In addition, the city was awash with small arms, adding an unprecedented degree of violence to urban insecurity.

At the start of the First Congo War, youth and urban administrators joined hands with some of the Rwandan genocide perpetrators to defend their city against what they saw as Tutsi aggression in the shape of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo/Zaire* (AFDL, Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire), backed by Rwanda and several other African countries. When the AFDL captured Bukavu in October 1996, several of these youth, commonly referred to as *volontaires* (volunteers), were massacred.¹¹

10 This and following paragraphs: Muzalia, 'Insécurité dans la ville'. A tam-tam is a large metal gong.

11 Security Sector Accountability and Police Reform (SSAPR), 'Acteurs non-étatiques: Pratiques de sécurité et de justice: Matadi, Kananga et Bukavu', No place: DAI Europe, 2012.

During the Second Congo War, Bukavu was occupied by the Rwandan and Ugandan-backed *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD, Congolese Rally for Democracy). Many RCD cronies started to buy up or simply seize land and property in the city. Coupled with the unchecked and sprawling construction of makeshift housing by those fleeing the war, this not only led to ever more expensive land prices, but also to a myriad of land conflicts with severe repercussions for the peaceful coexistence of neighbours and communities.

In the hinterlands of Bukavu, the RCD fought the Mai-Mai, local armed groups that drew on the idea of *auto-défense* (self defence) to protect their homeland against what they perceived as foreign invaders. These fault lines seemed to have found their way into the Bukavu security landscape. Some youth formed gangs to resist the RCD occupation. Others, such as the *Armée Rouge* (Red Army), collaborated with some RCD commanders, who supplied them with arms to engage in criminal activities. While not much is known about these early gang dynamics and their direct or indirect links to ongoing conflicts, there is no doubt that they contributed to rising urban crime and insecurity.¹²

In 2004, only a year after the end of the war, former RCD commanders Jules Mutebutsi and Laurent Nkunda seized Bukavu. Previously, Mutebutsi had clashed with parts of the Congolese army, which resulted in reprisal attacks that killed several members of Mutebutsi's ethnic community, the Banyamulenge. With Nkunda's help, Mutebutsi decided to occupy Bukavu in what both claimed was part of an effort to

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12 Judith Verweijen, 'From Autochthony to Violence? Discursive and Coercive Social Practices of the Mai-Mai in Fizi, Eastern DR Congo', *African Studies Review* 58/2 (2015): 157–180.

protect Banyamulenge and Tutsi communities. During their two-week stay, their troops killed numerous civilians and committed multiple human rights violations. Their occupation further undermined urban security and once again fueled violent gang dynamics, leading to a peak in urban crime, which did not abate in the following years. This period also gave birth to the first anti-gang groups in Bukavu, youth groups that tried to stem the tide of insecurity and then became persistent features of the city's security landscape.¹³

Patronage and troubled police–community relationships, a distorted social contract and its manifestation in Article 15 and *auto-prise en charge*, and violent conflict and occupation—these factors may have their origins well in the past but the many strains they exert on urban communities are as real in 2019 as they were back then. They thus constitute the backdrop to the current forms and experiences of insecurity in Bukavu, as well as its residents' responses to it.

13 Human Rights Watch, 'D. R. Congo: War Crimes in Bukavu', Briefing Paper. New York: Human Rights Watch, June 2004.

Box 1: Urban administration in the Congo

The Congo has 26 provinces, which are divided into territories and cities. A city is sub-divided into *communes* (commune) and a *commune* into *quartiers* (districts). Cities and *communes* are decentralized entities; that is, they can raise their own taxes and have autonomy in the management of their administration and human, economic and financial resources. The city is headed by a mayor, the *commune* by a *bourgmestre* (sub-mayor) and the district by a *chef de quartier* (district chief). The mayor and sub-mayor are elected positions, whereas the district chief is appointed by the sub-mayor. There have not been any municipal elections in the Congo since independence in June 1960, however, which has led to recurrent crises of legitimacy in the governance and administration of Congolese cities.

On the organizational and governance plan, the *quartier* is further divided into *cellules* (cells), *avenues* (avenues) and, sometimes, *nyumba kumi* (ten houses). The *cellules* and *nyumba kumi*, however, are not officially recognized by Congolese administrative law. Their heads—the cell chief, avenue chief and *nyumba kumi*—work directly for the *chef de quartier*. Together, these low-level urban administrators up to the level of district chief make up the *cadres de base* (figuratively, grassroots representatives). As their name indicates, they function as an important bridge between the state and its people. In 2019, they continue to play an important role in the governance of the city, including in the realm of security. The absence of municipal elections, however, and the fact that the *cadres de base* do not have a salary but live off (sometimes arbitrary) fees for administrative services rendered has weakened their public authority in the neighbourhoods where they work.

The city of Bukavu stretches over 45 square kilometres

of land and is made up of three *communes*—Ibanda, Kadutu and Bagira—and 20 districts. In 2013, its population was estimated at 870,000. Reliable statistics on the economic, social and ethnic profile of its residents are hard to come by but their diversity certainly stands out. In 1978, there were already nearly 120 ethnic communities living in the city, of which by far the largest was and still remains the Bashi community, followed by the Barega and Bahavu communities.

Sources: Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo, 'Loi organique n° 10/11 du 18 mai 2010 portant fixation des subdivisions territoriales à l'intérieur des provinces', Kinshasa: Cabinet du Président de la République, 7 June 2010; Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo, 'Loi organique n° 08/016 du 7 octobre 2008 portant composition, organisation et fonctionnement des Entités Décentralisées et leurs rapports avec l'État et les Provinces', Kinshasa: Cabinet du Président de la République, 10 October 2008; Democratic Republic of the Congo/Prime Minister's Office/*Cellule d'Analyses des Indicateurs de Développement* (CAID), 'Ville de Bukavu: Fiche d'identité de la ville', no date, <<https://www.caid.cd/index.php/donnees-par-villes/ville-de-bukavu/?domaine=fiche>>; Republic of Zaire/Office of Research on Urban Administration, 'Enquêtes démographiques: Ville de Bukavu', No place: No publisher, 1978.

3. Everyday Experiences of Urban Insecurity

According to a local human rights organization, Bukavu witnessed 118 killings, 368 burglaries, 24 kidnappings and 14 cases of popular justice in 2018 alone. These numbers have led a Bukavu journalist to call the city the ‘capital of insecurity’.¹⁴ As in any other city, insecurity is spread unevenly across its *communes* and *quartiers*. Nevertheless, its overall high levels of crime affect the daily routines of all its residents.

Two Bukavu neighbourhoods are particularly known for their insecurity: Nkafu and Essence. The neighbourhood of Essence is made up of several densely populated avenues of around 30,000 people and is considered the beating heart of political opposition and resistance in the city. Nkafu is one of the larger districts in the city, stretching over five square kilometres and home to roughly 85,000 people. Due to their geographic locations on central arteries of the city, and their markets, ports and transport possibilities, considerable crowds visit both neighbourhoods on a daily basis. Taken together, their spaces, diversity and forms of insecurity draw a picture of everyday experiences of urban insecurity familiar to most residents across the city.

Spaces of urban insecurity

Essence and Nkafu attract a daily flow of people from inside and outside the city. Sometimes referred to as *mugu* (Swahili; those who are distracted, not well connected), villagers from the rural hinterlands of Bukavu stream in to seek opportunities in the city.

14 SAJECEK-Forces Vives, ‘Sud-Kivu 2018: 345 personnes tuées, 881 maisons attaquées par des bandits armés, 232 cas d’enlèvement et 36 cas de justice populaire en une seule année’, *SAJECEK Bulletin Nr. 60*, Bukavu: SAJECEK, 23 January 2019; Esther Nsapu, ‘RDC: Bukavu est devenue la capitale de l’insécurité’, *La Libre Afrique*, 13 September 2018, <<https://afrique.lalibre.be/24320/rdc-bukavu-est-devenue-la-capitale-de-linsecurite/>>.

They are joined by day labourers looking for small jobs, housemaids going grocery shopping, gold traders selling minerals, bus drivers chasing travellers and tired city dwellers looking for a drink. The countless *ngandas* (bars), nightclubs and *maisons de tolérance* (brothels) in these areas provide plenty of distractions. In a city with such hustle and bustle, where people circulate and where money exchanges hands, ill-minded opportunists are never far away. Villagers who lack the intricate knowledge necessary to navigate such spaces make easy targets. Police stations are few and far between. In fact, Essence has none. Several *ngandas* and brothels also offer hiding places for thieves and gangsters.¹⁵

Outside the lively areas in these neighbourhoods, insecurity thrives as well. In their dark and less accessible alleys, shady operators find places to hide. The forested zones of Nkafu provide a particularly favourable cover for bandits. Here, residents speak of discarded cars and abandoned sheds as security risks, in which the latter provide cover to surprise unsuspecting passers-by.¹⁶

The combination of commercial activity, a large number of potential victims, suitable places to hide and find entertainment, and a lack of police presence, have made Essence and Nkafu among the more insecure places in Bukavu. They have become fertile grounds for insecurity and are thus often referred to as *criminogène* (French; causing crime). As a young resident of Essence explains: 'A criminal is like a fisher. He [or she] cannot go fish where they know that there are fewer chances to catch a big fish.' Essence and Nkafu offer many ways to catch fish.¹⁷

15 Usalama Project III focus group with women, Nkafu, 8 March 2019 and Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019 and Essence, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 10 March 2019.

16 Usalama Project III focus group with women, Nkafu, 8 March 2019 and Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with pickpocket, Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019.

17 Usalama Project III interview with young resident, Essence, 13 March 2019.

Diversity of urban insecurity

In Essence and Nkafu, the diversity of insecurity is startling. A youth from Nkafu explains, ‘Nkafu *quartier* is entirely insecure but this insecurity differentiates itself across areas. There are areas that are hit hard and others that are less affected.’¹⁸ In Nkafu, almost every avenue seems to have its own insecurity dynamics. Moreover, in both neighbourhoods, each form of insecurity is enacted differently. As one woman in Essence explains, ‘They [the criminals] compartmentalize their tasks. Everyone has his [or her] own work.’¹⁹

Nevertheless, several forms of insecurity are common to both Nkafu and Essence—and indeed the city as a whole. Markets and transport hubs, for example, attract a variety of small-time thieves. There are the pickpockets, known as *deux doigts* (French; two fingers) or *misapistes* (from the Lingala word ‘*misapi*’, meaning fingers) and the *shamuleurs* (from the Mashi²⁰ word ‘*kushamula*’, meaning taking by force), who snatch handbags, phones and money from the hands of their victims. Many of them are *maibobo* (street children). In Nkafu, *maibobo* have established a stronghold on abandoned ships next to an illegal market on the shores of Lake Kivu. From there, they engage in a variety of activities from pickpocketing to *lance pierre* (French; throwing stones) at market women, who are then forced to take shelter, offering the *maibobo* an opportunity to steal their unattended goods.

More violent operators prefer the darker alleys or early mornings and late evenings to work. The *nyembese* (Swahili; catching) or *catcheurs* (French; catchers) grab their victims from behind, using a chokehold, and then steal their belongings. The

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18 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019.

19 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with women, Essence, 10 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Essence, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Essence, 17 March 2019.

20 Mashi is a Bantu language spoken by the Bashi people indigenous to these parts of the eastern Congo.

choqueurs (French; shockers), who are more violent, mug—or shock—people on the street. The *mupangeurs* (from the Swahili word ‘*mupanga*’ for machete) use machetes to intimidate victims and rob them of their goods. The oldest—and possibly most feared—form of insecurity is armed robberies, referred to as *vols à mains armées*. These perpetrators all too often get away with their identities unknown, which makes residents refer to them as *personnes non autrement identifiées* (people not otherwise identified). Worryingly, these nighttime robberies sometimes occur in the vicinity of police stations. Worse, some burglars wear army or police uniforms, which leads residents to suspect complicity by state security services, only further undermining their trust in them.

Both neighbourhoods also have their fair share of incidents among neighbours, which risk escalating if not dealt with quickly. A common cause of conflict is encroachment on a neighbour’s parcel of land. If left to fester, such conflicts can lead to both parties resorting to violent means to gain the upper hand. They may accuse their neighbour of witchcraft, which in turn can lead to acts of *justice populaire*. Others may pay thugs or even members of the security services to rough up their neighbours. Jealousy between neighbours is another common cause of conflict, with similar risks of escalation. A resident of Nkafu explains, ‘It is mainly jealousy. You see your neighbour with a valuable item, for example, or you know that he [or she] has money. You collaborate with thugs to threaten them.’²¹

More specific to Essence are *baswenai* (Swahili; those who

21 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III interview with member of civil society, Essence, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with cadre de base, Nkafu, 9 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with former cadre de base, Nkafu, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with male civil society member from Kadutu, Ndenderere, 26 March 2019.

smoke *snith*), drug addicts who steal anything they can lay their hands on to buy an opioid called *snith*. *Findeurs* (French; from the English infinitive ‘to find’) also operate in Essence. They are swindlers who sell fake diamonds, jewelry or phones. Selling fake phones is also sometimes referred to as ‘Operation Guangzhou’, as many fake phones presumably come from China.²²

Fraudsters also operate in Nkafu. Some women around the markets deal in counterfeit money, a practice referred to as *faux billets* (French; fake bills). They tend to use children to change their larger fake notes for real smaller denominations, for example, by purchasing goods from unsuspecting market women. In the forested hill of Karhale overlooking Lake Kivu, a phenomenon more specific to Nkafu is *Tia Na Sé* (Lingala; to put something down on the floor). It refers to a group of armed criminals operating in the shadows of the trees, who rob passers-by by telling them to lay their valuables on the ground to escape harm. Another form of insecurity is called *kabanga* (from the Mashi word ‘*mubanga*’, a heavy-duty cord), which made waves around 2007. The cord was used to strangle victims to death. An urban mythology arose around this cord, ascribing it magical powers. Victims of *kabanga* were often found with missing organs, spreading the rumour that organ trade was behind this practice. Even in 2019, strangled bodies are sometimes still found in the forested areas of Nkafu or washed up on the shores of Lake Kivu.²³

This enormous diversity in the forms and shapes of everyday urban insecurity has become a fact of life for the residents of Essence and Nkafu. The impact this has on their lives cannot be

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22 Usalama Project III focus group with women and youth, Essence, 10 and 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Essence, 9 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with a pickpocket, Essence, 10 March 2019.

23 Usalama Project III focus group with women and youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019; Eric Batumike, ‘La criminalité à Bukavu (1994–2016)’, Bukavu: *Institut Supérieur Pédagogique*, 2017.

understated.

The everyday impact of urban insecurity

Urban insecurity affects everyday life in the city in many different ways. First and foremost, insecurity constrains mobility. Circulating freely ends as soon as the sun sets and this restriction lasts until it rises again the next day. As a youth from Nkafu articulates, ‘It is impossible to pass the square [Independence Square] at 11 p.m. It is really impossible because if you do not encounter the *maibobo*, the police will be there and they will rob you of everything you have.’²⁴ At the same time, insecurity makes certain places off limits, further reducing free movement. Women and youth describe a long list of places that are impossible to pass or visit after a certain time—or at any time. Bars and their surroundings are high on the list, so are particular alleys and roads. Social events such as parties and weddings (and even funerals) must be carefully planned. Guests need to think about how they will get back home late at night, as thieves like to prey on returning attendees. A priest explains, ‘When there is a funeral in the *quartier*, people are afraid to go at night or stay together with the mourning family until late into the night as is our custom. Curiously, there are also some youth who come to the funeral and then follow people afterward to do their tricks [crimes].’²⁵

Not just social activities are affected. One student says that studying until late at night becomes a security risk:

To go read at the UOB [Official University of Bukavu]
because we don’t have permanent electricity at home, if
you leave the reading room at 10 p.m. or 11 p.m., you are

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24 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019.

25 Usalama Project interview with priest, Nkafu, 12 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III interview with cadre de base, Essence, 13 March 2019.

blocked. You feel that you are unsafe. There will be police who block you, bandits and armed thieves, who you may encounter. So one feels blocked.²⁶

At the same time, the risk of robberies in the evenings also forces people to stop their work early. A young man who used to work as a cameraman at weddings had to give up his job as he was too afraid that his equipment would be stolen on the way back home.²⁷ Market women and shop owners are also seriously affected. As they are forced to stop business early, they miss out on those who run their errands in the late afternoon and early evening. While this undermines their livelihoods, it also makes it hard for some residents to find food and house supplies at a later hour.²⁸

Insecurity also causes uncertainty, which in turn discourages any investment in the future—be this in terms of small businesses, manufacturing, agriculture or development. The risk of being robbed is simply too high. A former *chef d’avenue* (French; unofficial leader of the avenue) in Nkafu, for example, says, ‘Insecurity does not allow us to invest in our *quartier*. I had a shop close to the Wesha River but at 9 p.m. bandits emptied it and took everything.’²⁹

In a country where most people do not have a savings account or insurance, and where many borrow money from

26 Usalama Project interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019

27 Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 8 March 2019

28 Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Essence, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with priest, Nkafu, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with resident, Nkafu, 14 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 15 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with priest, Nkafu, 16 March 2019.

29 Usalama Project III interview with former cadre de base, Nkafu, 13 March 2019.

street lenders at exorbitant interest rates, such a robbery can have devastating repercussions, not only for the shop owner but also their family and friends, who may have to help bail them out of potential debts. Moreover, in Essence, the reputation of the neighbourhood plays out badly for its economic development. Youth from Essence struggle to find work elsewhere in town because they are suspected of being thieves. Meanwhile, outside investors are reluctant to invest in such a high-risk neighbourhood.³⁰

Worse, perpetrators seem to come up with increasingly brazen and mischievous plans. A gang of women operating in Nkafu, for example, has reportedly been robbing houses when parents are out working, telling the children they are part of the family.³¹ Such incidents—and general insecurity and the constant menace thereof—can have serious psychological consequences. Witnessing, let alone being a victim of, theft and robberies can be traumatizing, and there is almost no one living in Essence and Nkafu who has not experienced insecurity. One woman admits that, ‘When your heart aches, it means that you are not safe.’³²

A civil society member says, ‘The majority of Nkafu’s population is afraid of walking at night or in the late hours, and even during the day, because of the *maibobo* from Beach Muhanzi [Nkafu’s main market].’³³ One of the young female civil society activists in Nkafu adds, ‘At night, one is unstable at home. People wake you up all the time, call you to say, “I am threatened at this place. I am blocked by the police.” And I don’t know how to put an end to these stories.’³⁴ An artist from Nkafu

30 Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Essence, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with money changer, Essence, 9 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with taxi motorcyclist, Essence, 16 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Essence, 25 March 2019.

31 Usalama Project III interview with respected resident, Nkafu, 14 March 2019.

32 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with women, Essence, 10 March 2019.

33 Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019.

34 Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019.

summarizes, 'If already, psychologically, one is troubled, if one doesn't feel free, one doesn't manage any more to do one's chores because you say to yourself that you shouldn't stay out late, otherwise you cross people who will hurt you.'³⁵

Due to this fear and uncertainty, insecurity gradually seeps into the social fabric of urban communities, spreading distrust among neighbours. A youth from Essence highlights growing fault lines in the community: 'There is also a lack of trust in the population. People fear each other. In the past, if one met one's fellow neighbour on the road, one would undertake the rest of the path together. But today, one can walk with somebody else and suddenly, it is that person who tries to put you in danger.'³⁶

Everyday insecurity in the neighbourhoods of Essence and Nkafu is thus best seen as a constant drain on the personal and social lives of its residents, as it takes physical and mental strength to live with the constant threat of danger. Moreover, insecurity steals time by shortening one's day, it hampers mobility, triggers anxiety and slowly unravels the social cohesion of a neighbourhood.

35 Usalama Project III interview with artist, Nkafu, 12 March 2019.

36 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Essence, 12 March 2019.

Box 2. Identities and everyday urban insecurity in Bukavu

Everyday insecurity is certainly perceived and experienced differently by different people. Identities matter in this regard, be they class, gender or ethnicity. Wealthier people can more easily respond to insecurity on their own, for example, by hiring private guards, building higher fences and travelling in cars, while poorer residents are more exposed and are obliged to mobilize among neighbours to respond effectively. The former, however, are not representative of the Bukavu population, the majority of whom live economically precarious lives.

Women are more likely targets of some criminal operators than men as they are seen as weaker targets. Moreover, prevalent societal gender norms play into exposure to insecurity. Women, for example, are exposed to mugging when they fetch water early in the morning, when it is still dark and roads are empty. That said, they are certainly not only victims but also contribute to or are complicit in insecurity—as thieves and fraudsters, or as sex workers who protect their criminal clients. In general, however, both women and men seem to perceive everyday insecurity in much the same way, even if they experience its forms differently.

Ethnicity is rarely mentioned as a factor in conversations with Bukavu residents about everyday insecurity, although it does undeniably matter in the urban politics in Bukavu. From time to time, it also emerges in tensions between the many displaced populations who have settled in Bukavu more recently, and those who were born in the city and identify more closely with Bukavu as their home. Overall, however, it is important not to misrepresent the salience of ethnicity in everyday urban life in a city marked by such high diversity as Bukavu.

In sum, everyday insecurity affects everyone to some extent. As a city resident, young woman and Usalama researcher summarizes, in Bukavu, ‘everyone dances to its rhythm’.*

* Irène Bahati, Usalama Project III analysis workshop, Bukavu, 29 March 2019.

4. The Economics of Urban Insecurity

Abandoned by the state and let down by a failing economy, many Bukavu residents, security services and *cadres de base* have found inspiration in the logics of Article 15 and *auto-prise en charge*. Some have come to understand that insecurity can provide a space of opportunities. As a woman in Nkafu emphasizes: ‘If there is insecurity, it is because people have no jobs and develop survival mechanisms, including theft.’³⁷ Where the social contract has shifted, engaging in insecurity may have just become another such survival mechanism—and even an opportunity to thrive.

The police

Similar to other public services in the Congo, the police work in challenging conditions. Their salaries are meager and often paid irregularly, while some are not paid at all. They lack basic equipment from office space and furniture to means of communication and transport. These conditions make it difficult to focus on their mandated work. Moreover, many police officers are exposed to constant pressure not only to provide for their families but also for their hierarchy, a practice commonly known as *rapportage* (reporting). A police inspector explains, ‘The commander expects a report. Now this report happens to be money. Where do they [the police officers] find it? By harassing’; for a police officer, he says, ‘working is harassing’.³⁸

Generating income is a major part of police work in the Congo but this does not always consist of coercive harassment. Some officers rely on their social network of family, friends and

37 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with women, Nkafu, 8 March 2019.

38 Interview with police inspector, Ndendere, 29 November 2016. Also: Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Essence, 29 March 2019.

colleagues to get by; others charge for or sell their services, for example, by demanding transport and communication money or fees to open a case. These practices allow police to survive while also pursuing their job. Sometimes, however, this is not enough to meet the demands of *rapportage*. Harassing civilians is often the only way to do so and has thus turned some police, particularly specialized units such as those controlling traffic or rapid intervention units—into actors of insecurity.³⁹

Similar to bandits, much harassment from regular police occurs at night. As a female civil society member in Nkafu warns, ‘Police officers find people at night and start to ask for money and similar things.’⁴⁰ Besides such direct harassment, police and other state security services engage in a wide range of practices commonly referred to as ‘coop’ (from the English word ‘cooperation’)—win-win arrangements with thieves and thugs. Two of the most common coop practices are worth highlighting. One consists of charging protection money for illegal activities. In Nkafu, for example, police tax market women on a daily basis for them to be allowed to continue selling their goods on the street without a license or permission. In Essence, police are said to tax drug dens and brothels in order for them to continue operating.

A youth from Essence complains: ‘There are the PM [*police militaire*; military police and part of the army] and police officers who go and tax the owners of these ghettos [drug dens]. So it is a question of complicity with this theft and the state also contributes.’⁴¹ Thieves and *nganda* owners, in turn, share beers with police officers to strengthen their social network—often referred to as *parapluie* (French; umbrella), which protects them

39 Michel Thill, ‘Police at Work in Bukavu: Negotiating revenue-generation in urban pirate markets’, in *Negotiating public services in the Congo*, eds. Tom De Herdt and Kristof Titeca. London: Zed Books, forthcoming.

40 Usalama Project interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019.

41 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Essence, 12 March 2019.

during difficult times (rainy days). An Nkafu resident says, 'If you are friends with a police officer and you do something bad, you are protected by this police officer.'⁴²

A second coop practice is to work directly with thieves and share the profits. At Beach Muhanzi, the biggest market in Nkafu, on the shore of Lake Kivu, *maibobo* work with both police and the marines stationed there. They steal goods and return a share to the police and soldiers, or provoke fights so that the police can arrest those implicated and release them for a fee. These practices are well established to the point that both the police and the marines each have their own turf, upon which neither encroaches. As a police officer remarks, 'No police operation can be considered in areas controlled by the marines without their resistance. They protect these bandits.'⁴³ Moreover, the same police officer says that the *ngandas* operating on marine turf are often run by their wives and are thus protected against any unwanted interventions.⁴⁴

Peddling authority

The police are not the only state representatives who have come

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42 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with women and youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with pickpocket, Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with money changer, Essence, 9 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Nkafu, 16 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Essence, 17 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with sex worker, Essence, 25 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with drug dealer, Essence, 20 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Essence, 29 March 2019.

43 Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Nkafu, 30 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III focus group with women and youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 26 March 2019; Thill, 'Police at Work'.

44 Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Nkafu, 30 March 20. Also: Usalama Project III focus group with women and youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 26 March 2019.

to use their authority to feed themselves, their families and their hierarchies. All state institutions took Mobutu's Article 15 to heart. A police officer in Nkafu explains, 'Since the 1990s, your weapon is your salary in the army, as well as in the police. This phenomenon also makes judges use their work to free those bandits for money, just like soldiers harass with their weapons.'⁴⁵ A youth from Essence echoes this:

This thief already knows that if he [or she] gets caught, it is this or that attorney who will be able to help. That is how they know that they can pursue their scheming. They know they have their rear base. ... We don't know what complicity exists between the police, army and bandits. It is us, the people, who are the victims of that complicity.⁴⁶

Releasing thieves without proper trial is a major cause of insecurity. It not only fosters impunity but also discourages residents from denouncing thieves due to the fear that the criminals will seek revenge upon their return—sometimes even against the police who arrested them.⁴⁷

For the *cadres de base*, the situation is no different. These low-level urban administrators used to be crucial actors in securing their neighbourhoods, registering people coming in and out of their *quartier*, dealing with local feuds, mediating family disputes, mobilizing funds and organizing night patrols together with state security services. In 2019, however, in the context of a rapidly growing city, *cadres de base* struggle to keep up with the ever-expanding challenges. Similar to the police and justice systems, they have come to use their position to extract money from their fellow residents, for example, by demanding arbitrary

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45 Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Nkafu, 30 March 2019.

46 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Essence, 12 March 2019.

47 Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Nkafu, 30 March 2019.

house construction fees.⁴⁸

Several *cadres de base* face a crisis of legitimacy: all of them are appointed and not elected; some are known for merely seeking rents, others for not doing much at all; and still others are completely unknown by those they are meant to serve. While there are exceptions, all in all, most are not very effective security actors. As one *cadre de base* puts it: 'You cannot be interested in the security of the *quartier* if you don't have anything to eat for your kids.'⁴⁹ A resident of Nkafu repeats this perceived dilemma between security and survival: 'Police and *chefs de quartier* intervene only when they hear that someone wants to build a house or for a land conflict because they know that they will find something in terms of money. For the question of security, they are only pretending.'⁵⁰

In Nkafu, there is infighting between former and current *cadres de base*. Residents mention that a former district chief opposes the current one, which has led to a fight over their avenue chiefs, some of whom are still collecting taxes for the former district chief. This fight over taxes distracts them from focusing on security. At the same time, residents suspect them and other urban authorities of collaborating with the most infamous *ngandas* in the *quartier* because they are never shut down despite being havens for thieves and thugs.

In Essence, the *cadres de base* of the districts of Cahiri and Panzi

48 Kasper Hoffmann, Mariève Pouliot and Godefroid Muzalia, 'Constructed Anarchy: Governance, Conflict, and Precarious Property Rights in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo', Congo Research Briefs 1, Ghent: Governance in Conflict Network, University of Ghent, 2019. Accessed 20 May 2019, <https://www.gicnetwork.be/constructed-anarchy-governance-conflict-and-precarious-property-rights-in-bukavu-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>.

49 Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Essence 25 March 2019. Also: Michel Thill, Josaphat Musamba and Robert Njangala, 'Kukufa mu gratuité (to die for nothing): Making a living in Bukavu's police', *Polisi Siku Kw Siku* (Everyday police) blog 1, 12 December 2017. Accessed 20 May 2019, <https://www.kpsrl.org/blog/kukufa-mu-gratuite-to-die-for-nothing-making-a-living-in-bukavus-police>.

50 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with women, Nkafu, 8 March 2019.

are similarly accused of doing little to invest in security. A member of a civil society organization mentions that they are too scared themselves.⁵¹ 'Fair enough', as one *cadre de base* responds. 'The police harass the population of Essence. It is a source of insecurity. I have already been threatened by the police at night. It was at 10 p.m. close to *Chez Nestor*. They wanted to steal my belongings but when they were told that I was a *cadre de base*, they let me go.'⁵²

While persons with positions of authority use them as leverage to raise revenue in one way or another, others may simply benefit from the spoils of the Bukavu economy of insecurity as and where they can.

The spoils of insecurity

In many parts of Bukavu, insecurity is not just a part of everyday life, but has also become familiar in a literal sense. Residents of Essence know some of their neighbourhood thieves and the thieves know them. During a focus group discussion with women in Essence, for example, participants point out several pickpockets and fraudsters on the street. One of them says, 'If you come to tell us you were robbed at which place, we will tell you who the robber was.'⁵³ A youth explains that they grew up with some of the thieves and are well acquainted with them.

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51 Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Panzi, 27 March 2019.

52 Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Essence 25 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Nkafu, 16 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 27 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Essence, 29 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with fuel seller, Essence, 31 March 2019.

53 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with women, Essence, 10 March 2019.

Some residents thus claim that being born and bred in Essence gives them a sense of safety. Thieves who know them would not steal from them, they say. That does not mean, however, that they are safe from the many criminals that they do not know.⁵⁴

Over time, this familiarity with and proximity to insecurity may slowly erode normative boundaries and lead to a certain degree of banality with respect to crime. Some of the Essence youth and women, for example, argue that fraudsters are not real thieves but rather con artists. A woman explains, ‘The *findeur* is not a thief. I come and sell you something. We find an agreement but I don’t give you the real deal. I give you something fake. You will leave with the fake but I did not rob you. It is your problem [that you bought a fake].’⁵⁵

Moreover, in a context of general economic deprivation, the demand for cheap goods is high. Those who buy stolen goods from thieves or complicit suppliers thus become an important part of the economy around insecurity. As some youth from Essence mention, ‘Here in Essence, there is much complexity in theft. Inhabitants here are negligent. They are people who buy goods from thieves. ... That is the complicity of theft in Essence.’⁵⁶ A drug dealer confirms this, admitting: ‘When I see someone selling something and I ignore where it comes from, I buy it at a low price to resell it and gain something for myself.’⁵⁷ At the same time, others acknowledge that this supposed complicity merely reflects the poor socio-economic conditions in which people live. A market woman explains, ‘We are all human. Can

54 Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 8 March 2019.

55 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with women, Essence, 10 March 2019.

56 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Essence, 12 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 8 March 2019.

57 Usalama Project III interview with drug dealer, Essence, 20 March 2019.

I refuse [such an offer of cheap goods]?’⁵⁸ A taxi motorcyclist summarizes, ‘Everybody wants to be well off. We copy the life of others.’⁵⁹

While some residents may sustain thieves by purchasing their stolen goods, others go further. In some instances, people protect criminals from police arrest as they are either in collusion with them or dislike the police even more than the criminals. A money changer explains, ‘Everyone knows where these criminals spend their time. And in most of the cases, the police pursue them into some houses but the same population starts attacking the police.’⁶⁰ A pickpocket admits that some people protect them because, as with the police, they also stand to benefit from their illegal exploits.

If thieves have acquired some money, they share a beer with their friends in a *nganda*, who in turn feel a need to protect their sources of free beer consumption. Moreover, bandits are an important clientele of brothels and drug dens; and they are suppliers to kiosks and shops selling stolen phones, jewelry and other valuables.⁶¹

Facing the structural forces of state and economic demise, many Bukavu inhabitants—be they police, judges and *cadres de base* or thieves, thugs and ordinary civilians—have adapted to the shift in the social contract. Inspired by its manifestations of Article 15 and *auto-prise en charge*, they also have found a myriad of ways to make a living out of the few existing opportunities. This combination of structure and agency has led to the creation of a complex and flourishing economy around insecurity marked by a degree of collective complicity. Despite all the daily

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58 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with women, Essence, 10 March 2019.

59 Usalama Project III interview with taxi motorcyclist, Essence, 16 March 2019.

60 Usalama Project III interview with money changer, Essence, 9 March 2019.

61 Usalama Project III interview with pickpocket, Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with taxi motorcyclist, Essence, 16 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Essence, 25 March 2019.

struggles to make ends meet, however, the majority of Bukavu residents steer clear of the economy of insecurity—and even try to resist it.

5. Responses to Urban Insecurity

Living with everyday insecurity has given rise to as diverse a set of responses as there are forms of crime. As much as they work in negative ways, Article 15 and *auto-prise en charge* also inspire positive action. Bukavu residents have shown considerable creativity and bravery in responding to the many challenges insecurity poses. There are, for example, a range of individual precautions to avoid everyday insecurity—ranging from avoiding to walk alone at night and hiding valuables in specially made underwear, to hiring *maibobo* as body guards and denouncing thieves at the risk of them returning to seek revenge.⁶² The focus here is on community and state responses to insecurity.

Community responses

In Nkafu and Essence, a considerable range of community responses to insecurity exists. Some of them are initiated and funded by neighbourhood leaders, civil society organizations and *cadres de base*. Others are spontaneous but collective outbursts of anger and frustration.

Popular justice is a case of the latter. In the aftermath of former Governor Mwando Nsimba's public speech in the 1980s, *justice populaire* incidents rapidly multiplied across the city. This was

62 Usalama Project III focus group with women and youth, Essence, 10 and 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with church secretary, Nkafu, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with sex worker, Essence, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with young resident, Essence, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Essence, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with taxi motorcyclist, Essence, 15 March; Usalama Project III interview with priest, Nkafu, 16 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Nkafu, 16 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with respected resident, Nkafu, 18 March 2019.

especially the case in Essence, where the presence of gold traders attracted many robbers. After they were caught by residents, these thieves were summarily put on trial and violently punished. Encouraged by a discourse of *auto-prise en charge*, these instances of popular justice are best understood as acts of reclaiming socio-political agency.⁶³

A good example of the important, if tragic, role of mob justice in the history of insecurity in Bukavu is an incident still recounted by its residents in 2019. The incident involved an army officer nicknamed Chuck Norris, who was known in the 1990s for his violent harassment of the population in Essence. One day, he mistakenly shot an innocent boy in an altercation with one of his subordinates. This was the straw that broke the camel's back. It did not take long for a mob to form and start chasing the army officer. Running away, the officer shot in the air to deter the chasers. They simply counted the bullets out loud and once he ran out of ammunition, they beat him to death.⁶⁴

This incident marked a turning point in relations between Essence and state security services and its history of insecurity more generally. Ever since, Essence became known for its siege mentality: a strong distrust of police and army services and a will to defend themselves. A member of a youth policing group

63 Usalama Project III focus group with women, Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Essence, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with drug dealer, Essence, 11 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with taxi motorcyclist, Essence, 15 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Essence, 25 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with fuel seller, Essence, 31 March 2019; and Judith Verweijen, 'The Disconcerting Popularity of Popular In/justice in the Fizi/Uvira Region, Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo', *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights* 22 (2015): 335–359.

64 Interview with employee of commune of Ibanda, Ndendere, 28 October 2016; Usalama Project III interview with money changer, Essence, 9 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with pickpocket, Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Essence, 17 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, 20 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Essence, 29 March 2019.

explains:

It's been difficult to arrest people at Essence for a long time. That dates back to the death of Chuck Norris. With the notoriety this army chief had, nobody could have imagined that he could have been stoned to death. That instance made Essence a red zone. Since then, it is difficult to come and arrest someone in Essence.⁶⁵

Less violent responses to insecurity consist of neighbourhood initiatives driven by civil society, community leaders and *cadres de base*. Destroying abandoned sheds and kiosks, advocating for more public lighting, cutting trees to reduce dark corners and posting pictures and names of well-known bandits onto walls are examples of such measures.⁶⁶ A more robust strategy is to set up local alarm systems—a measure which has been around since at least the 1960s. Initiators distribute whistles and *vuvuzelas* (plastic trumpets) at community meetings, or people are encouraged to make use of their pots and pans in order to warn their neighbours in case of armed robberies. *Cadres de base* call the police as soon as the alarm is set off, although the latter frequently intervene much too late. A church secretary says:

Yes, Nkafu residents take care of themselves. Most of the time, it is after the incident that we see authorities arrive only to have a look and leave. For the prevention, it is the population itself. If thieves enter here, for example, those who are next door ring the alarm, they scream but you

65 Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 17 March 2019.

66 Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu and Essence, 8 and 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Nkafu, 13 March 2019.

won't see the police.⁶⁷

When insecurity is high, these alarm systems are often accompanied by youth night patrols. Each household makes a small contribution to afford coffee, tea and bread for the young patrolers. Sometimes the youth are armed with sticks and stones but robbers now often carry guns, making such patrols dangerous endeavours. Using language reminiscent of the spirit of *auto-prise en charge*, two youth members of such patrols admit the danger despite their bravery. One says, 'Despite these bullets, we the leaders of the *quartier*, we wake up and make noise because we have decided to sacrifice ourselves for our *quartier*.' The other adds, 'But we are limited because a person with a gun shooting from a hundred metres, and we who have small stones, which can merely reach five metres, we are very different.'⁶⁸

In Essence and Nkafu, the *cadres de base* discourage youth from mounting patrols because of the risks involved.⁶⁹ Therefore, some solicit mixed patrols with the help of the police. A low-level urban administrator in Nkafu, however, says that for the police to participate, they have to be motivated as well, and even then, they can be difficult: 'Sometimes they are complicated and refuse to help us but sometimes they accept to patrol with us. But they ask us to give them cigarettes, alcohol and other things. When they ask us like that, we are obliged to find something to meet

67 Usalama Project III interview with church secretary, Nkafu, 12 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III interview with civil society member, Essence, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with priest, Nkafu, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society members, Nkafu, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 20 March 2019.

68 Participants in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019.

69 Usalama Project III focus group with women, Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with former *cadre de base*, Nkafu, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with priest, Nkafu, 16 March 2019.

their needs.’⁷⁰ Such patrols, regardless if mixed or not, are all too often reactive and time-limited measures to insecurity: they depend on community solidarity and youth determination—a fragile basis in a context in which people have to worry first about how to make ends meet.

In some areas, though, such initiatives can be quite successful. In late 2018, after the assassination of a well-known money changer in one of the wealthier areas in Nkafu, Bugabo I, local leaders and respected figures came together to set up a *Comité de Développement* (CdD, development committee), which used to exist on each avenue. This committee keeps a fund to which the wealthier residents contribute to finance mixed patrols with police and support the *cadres de base* to follow up on security incidents. Since then, this avenue seems to be relatively calm.⁷¹

A civil society activist explains the success of Bugabo I by stating that it is an area inhabited by people who are born in Bukavu or have been living in the city for several decades and whose children go to school and university in the city—they thus have a stake in the safety and overall well-being of Bukavu. This, he says, is simply not the case in much of the rest of Nkafu: ‘There is no time to think about insecurity if your stomach is empty.’⁷²

Bugabo I is a good example of how the degree of security and insecurity in Bukavu has become a function of its socio-economic

70 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Nkafu, 9 March 2019; Usalama Project III focus group with women, Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Nkafu, 8 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with respected resident, Nkafu, 14 March 2019.

71 Usalama Project III interview with Bugabo I resident, Nkafu, 14 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with Bugabo I committee member, Nkafu, 14 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Nkafu, 16 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with committee member, Nkafu, 18 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society members, Ndendere, 26 March 2019.

72 Usalama Project III interview with civil society member of Kadutu, Ndendere, 26 March 2019.

context. This context changes from avenue to avenue. Whereas wealthier residents can come together to mobilize night patrols and fund the police to guard their neighbourhood, poorer neighbours have fewer means to respond to insecurity in a sustained and effective manner.⁷³ Moreover, solidarity and social integration matter. Nkafu is a vast *quartier*, which only started to grow after the start of the Congolese wars. Its residents are thus largely made up of rural immigrants, which is testing the integration and solidarity of communities in the *quartier*. Less short-lived solutions to insecurity, however, do not always have to depend on the wealth of a neighbourhood.

The rise of youth policing groups

In the second half of the 2000s in Essence, an alternative community response to rampant insecurity emerged. Facing unchecked crime, youth became more directly involved in everyday policing by forming their own policing groups. Two have become established associations and important actors in the Bukavu security landscape: *Syn rgie des Associations des Jeunes pour l'Education Civique, Electorale et la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme au Sud-Kivu–Forces Vives* (SAJECEK–Forces Vives; Synergy of Youth Associations for Civic and Electoral Education and the Promotion of Human Rights in South Kivu–Vital Forces) and Bukavu–Forces Vives, which also operates in Nkafu.⁷⁴

The main work of these two groups consists of arresting—and sometimes punishing—criminals. In their early days, they did so rather violently, publicly whipping supposed thieves at the Major Vangu square. Their ability to find thieves and render quick

73 Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 14 March 2019.

74 For a more detailed account, see: Judith Verweijen, Michel Thill and Maarten Hendriks, 'Ambiguous Order: Youth Groups and Urban Policing in the Eastern Congo', Usalama Project III briefing, Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, 2019.

justice made them quite popular: they became seen as more trustworthy and legitimate than the police. In recent years, their violent methods have subsided. Due to their intricate knowledge of the neighbourhoods in which they operate, they also occasionally function as informal extensions of the state security apparatus, helping police and prosecutors identify and catch criminals. As a thief from Essence says, ‘The youth from *Forces Vives* know us well. They know where we live. You can have a file with the police. They can come look for you but they won’t find you because they don’t know how to locate you. But the youth from *Forces Vives* know our doors. We cannot escape them.’⁷⁵

Moreover, to gain income, the *Forces Vives* locate and retrieve stolen goods for a fee. In such cases, they do not always, however, hand over the thieves to the police, thus becoming partially complicit in the economy of insecurity. As a taxi motorcyclist complains, ‘People steal in front of the SAJECEK office but they don’t react. They only wait for the victim to come and complain because that is when they also benefit.’⁷⁶ For SAJECEK members, however, drawing on the discourse of *auto-prise en charge*, there are few alternatives: ‘We know that what we do is illegal. But in the face of the insecurity that we suffer, and while the state is incapable of putting an end to it, we have to take care of

75 Usalama Project III interview with pickpocket, Essence, 10 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III focus group with women and youth, Essence, 10 and 12 March 2019; Usalama Project interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 8 March 2019.

76 Usalama Project III interview with taxi motorcyclist, Essence, 15 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Essence, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 10 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with drug dealer, Essence, 11 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Nkafu, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Nkafu, 30 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with fuel seller, Essence, 31 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Essence, 2 April 2019.

ourselves.’⁷⁷

The *Forces Vives* may be the best known of such youth policing groups but there are several other such movements, albeit often more fleeting. In Essence, some groups want to replace the *Forces Vives* and bring back public whippings, claiming that insecurity has returned due to their abandonment of these practices. At the illegal Bondeko market in Nkafu, volunteers wearing yellow vests patrol the stands to protect the market women from threats. One of them presents his group as follows: ‘We are the police without training because we try hard to maintain order in all of Bondeko.’⁷⁸ In return for protection from *maibobo* and thieves, the yellow-vested volunteers charge a daily tax on the market women, blurring lines between public and private security. At the same time, they also engage in the economy of insecurity, recuperating stolen goods to make extra money.

Youth policing groups exist at the intersections of crime and justice, public and private security, and insecurity and security. They are thus a highly ambiguous phenomenon.⁷⁹ State responses to insecurity are, perhaps unsurprisingly, equally messy.

State responses to urban insecurity

Formally speaking, addressing insecurity remains the responsibility of the Congolese state, and the police in particular. Every so often, when faced with an especially severe crisis of insecurity, the Bukavu governorate takes up that responsibility and

77 Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 14 March 2019.

78 Usalama Project III interview with member of volunteers, Nkafu, 25 March 2019. Also: Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Essence, 27 March 2019.

79 Maarten Hendriks, ‘The politics of everyday policing in Goma: the case of the Anti-gang’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 12/2 (2018): 274–289; Helene Maria Kyed, ‘Street Authorities: Community Policing in Mozambique and Swaziland’, *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 41/1 (2018): 19–34.

announces comprehensive security campaigns. This was the case in February 2018, when the provincial security council of relevant state authorities together with the *cadres de base*, announced the *Tujikingé* campaign (let's defend ourselves). As its name alludes, this campaign actively deployed an *auto-prise en charge* discourse.⁸⁰

From the beginning, the campaign called on all members of society to mobilize against insecurity. First and foremost, it involved all major state security actors. During the first months of the operation, police, army, intelligence and migration services conducted raids and patrols, and set up checkpoints. Civilian cooperation was enticed by financially compensating denunciations of arms caches and criminal hideouts. To receive reliable intelligence, the campaign solicited the support of taxi motorcyclists and some elements of the *Forces Vives* as their eyes and ears or, in their words, as their *éclaireurs* (French; scouts) and *non-apparents* (French; invisibles). Several urban authorities, including *cadres de base*, announced their support for the campaign but quickly realized that they had to raise their own funds if they wanted to contribute. They thus launched their own operations, with one district chief calling for information meetings with local residents, handing out whistles and even cooperating with his Rwandan counterparts to stop bandits fleeing across the border.⁸¹

Some initial successes were recorded. Arrested criminals were shown to the press and public, and weapons and stolen goods were recuperated. Voices of discontent, however, did not take long to emerge. In the early stages of the campaign, cases of

80 For a more detailed account, see: Michel Thill, Gentil Kulimushi and Godefroid Muzalia. 'La campagne Tujikingé et la gouvernance de la sécurité à Bukavu', Rift Valley Institute, 23 July 2019, < <http://riftvalley.net/news/une-gouvernance-securitaire-opaque-le-cas-de-la-campagne-tujikingé-a-bukavu> >

81 Usalama Project III interview with taxi motorcyclists, Ndendere, 11 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Nkafu, 12 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Nyalukemba, 13 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with journalist and taxi motorcyclist, Ndendere, 25 March 2019.

justice populaire seemed to multiply as overly eager residents, perhaps remembering the words of Governor Mwando Nsimba, took *Tujikingé* too literally. At checkpoints and during raids, valuables were stolen and many civilians complained about being harassed by state security actors. Worse, the Bukavu *Forces Vives* and members of civil society say that the supposed thieves who had been presented to the press had been spotted running around freely in the city.⁸² Meanwhile, other observers cynically remark that such campaigns were mere masquerades meant to give some politicians an opportunity to position themselves in upcoming elections.⁸³ Since the 2018 elections, operations have indeed fizzled out. In September 2018, it was in this context that only a mere six months after the launch of the campaign, a newspaper called Bukavu the DRC capital of insecurity.⁸⁴

To some extent, the *Tujikingé* campaign brings the story of insecurity in Bukavu full circle. It is an ambitious state response to insecurity that relies on the language of *auto-prise en charge* to get something done but then falls victim to the very effects of its own logic. State security services depended on ambiguous urban actors such as youth policing groups and taxi motor-cyclists to be effective. Some prosecutors and judges let arrested thieves go free. Some police officers harassed and stole from those they were meant to protect. Some civilians took justice into their own hands. Perhaps most tragically—and impressively—a neglected and unpaid district chief seemed to have outperformed state efforts with his own initiatives. For better or worse, Article 15 and *auto-prise en charge* have thus become the pillars of urban

82 Usalama Project III interview with member of youth policing group, Panzi, 28 March 2019.

83 Steve Mulindwa, 'ukavu:Des bandits arrêtés dans le cadre de l'opération TUJIKINGE circulent librement dans la ville', *Radio Maendeleo*, 24 April 2018, <<http://www.radiomaendeleo.info/bukavudes-bandits-arretes-dans-le-cadre-de-l-operation-tujikingé-circulent-librement-dans-la-ville/>>.

84 Nsapu, 'RDC: Bukavu est devenue la capitale de l'insécurité'.

security governance, the robustness of which unavoidably influences any initiative to address insecurity.

6. Conclusion and Policy Considerations

The introduction to this report included an assertion by a Congolese policeman that security is a system that changes. In Bukavu, economic decline, violent conflict and the state's retreat from public security obligations have resulted in the emergence of a system where security and insecurity have become closely linked together. In fact, they have become two sides of the same coin.

This system of insecurity has stimulated many forms of organized and everyday resistance. These include comprehensive state security campaigns, the mobilization of night patrols at district and avenue level and the organization of youth into policing groups. As well-intentioned as many of these efforts are, they can also result in security being undermined. Police regularly harass residents for money; judges release gangsters upon payment of bribes; youth policing groups cultivate mutually beneficial relations with known criminals; and civilians protect the thieves from whom they purchase stolen goods.

Bukavu's system of insecurity has permeated many levels of life. At its heart is the tension between structural forces and the agency of the people who are affected by them. This causes the system to continually change shape, resulting in an ambiguous order where a plurality of actors collaborate and compete to achieve the near impossible: to survive, thrive and provide security all at once.

Five considerations follow for those who seek to positively influence this system.

Create safe urban spaces

Making urban spaces less accommodating for insecurity is one way to tackle the problem. A first step would be a serious investment in public infrastructure. Almost every resident in Bukavu

mentions the lack of public lighting as a major source of day-to-day insecurity. Similarly, both police and residents cite the bad condition or lack of roads, and the resulting inaccessibility of certain urban areas, as a major obstacle to a secure environment. Finally, drug dens, brothels and *ngandas* are seen as attracting the wrong crowd. Drugs and brothels are illegal in the DRC and many *ngandas* operate without a licence, which should make it easy to shut them down. Investing in these low-cost initiatives would increase perceived security and, as importantly, rebuild much-needed popular trust in state authorities.

Commit to police reform

In the Congo, public security and order is the mandate of the *Police Nationale Congolaise* (PNC; Congolese National Police). From 2005, the PNC have been in a process of national reform towards the adoption of a community policing approach. For a time, *communes* and district chiefs in Bukavu hosted regular security meetings that brought together urban authorities, police and civil society. Supported by donors, these meetings fostered a sense of trust on security-related matters, while civilian leaders could hold police and their *bourgmestre* or *chef de quartier* accountable. It also revitalized the crucial role of *cadres de base* in security. At present these meetings are only held periodically and in a reactive manner.

A programme that provides support in the planning of city and *commune* budgets—stressing the importance of security-related expenses—could help liberate funds to institutionalize these functions. Moreover, Article 15 of the 2013 decree that created the CLSP provides for a fund to be established by the provincial governor to independently finance activities around security. Despite civil society efforts, this fund has never been set up. Notwithstanding the risks involved in engaging with security sector reform, donors should revisit police reform and contribute

to the CLSP fund.⁸⁵

Mobilize the positive potential of youth

Youth play a crucial role in security initiatives but are also a central feature in the landscape of insecurity. Mobilizing the positive potential of youth could unlock enormous opportunities. Much work is already being done in this realm, particularly in leadership training, civic participation and education. The continued support and partnerships between donors, international NGOs and youth organizations in Bukavu could offer more opportunities that keep youth away from criminal activities.

Several youth organizations already mobilize residents to perform *salongo*—providing free labour once a week for community development projects. Such initiatives could be financially supported and combined with vocational training, which increases the sense of safety in neighbourhood communities. As important, it may also provide some youth with an improved sense of societal belonging.

Build on local best practice

There are many existing community responses to insecurity. Some of these do work, albeit often only on a temporary basis. The more promising initiatives tend to build on existing structures, such as the *Comité de Développement* (CdD) at avenue level, or the night patrols that were once mobilized by the *cadres de base* during the RCD occupation. Such platforms could be incorporated into decentralized urban administrative structures, giving residents and *cadres de base* the means to mitigate security threats

85 Michel Thill, Robert Njangala and Josapaht Musamba, 'Putting everyday police life at the centre of reform in Bukavu', Briefing paper, London: Rift Valley Institute, March 2018.

and address problems. To support the activities of these committees, donors could offer to match the financial contributions made by residents and local organizations.

Fostering bottom-up social inclusion

Tackling insecurity requires a society-wide response. Given the relative success of local initiatives, helping to foster a bottom-up approach—as exemplified by the CdD—could be the most effective role that donors can play. As seen with the police reform, creating spaces of encounters between state and society is a significant and feasible first step in fostering a true sense of social inclusion and in giving Bukavu's residents a meaningful stake in their city's security.⁸⁶

86 Usalama Project III interview with *cadre de base*, Essence, 13 March 2019; interview with *commune* of Ibanda employee, Ndendere, 21 October 2016 and 30 October 2016.

Glossary of Acronyms, Words and Phrases

AFDL	<i>Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo/Zaire</i> (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire)
<i>auto-prise en charge</i>	(French) taking care of oneself; a popular phrase used in various contexts but mostly refers to taking matters of security and justice in one's own hands
<i>bourgmestre</i>	(French) sub-mayor, an officially elected urban administrative position heading the commune
<i>cadres de base</i>	low-level urban administrators
CAID	<i>Cellule d'Analyses des Indicateurs de Développement</i>
CdD	<i>Comité de Développement</i> (Development Committee); a meeting platform of respected voices in the neighbourhood to discuss urgent matters (e.g. security, hygiene, development) and mobilize community responses to them
<i>chef de quartier</i>	district chief; an official position in the urban administrative structure and officially appointed by the elected bourgmestre
CLSP	<i>Comité Local pour la Sécurité de Proximité</i> (Local Committee for Community

	Security); a security exchange, coordination, analysis and accountability platform bringing together civil society, police and urban authorities commune level
<i>commune</i>	(<i>French</i>) the largest administrative entity of the city
coop	abbreviation of the English word ‘cooperation’; refers to a variety of mutually beneficial arrangements between criminals and police
<i>débrouillez-vous</i>	(<i>French</i>) fend for yourself
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
<i>justice populaire</i>	(<i>French</i>) popular justice
<i>kabanga</i>	from the Mashi word ‘ <i>mubanga</i> ’; a heavy-duty cord; refers to a criminal practice in which a cord is used to strangle victims to death
<i>maibobo</i>	(<i>Swahili</i>) street children
<i>maison de tolérance</i>	(<i>French</i>) house of tolerance; commonly refers to a brothel
<i>nganda</i>	(<i>Swahili</i>) bar or pub
<i>nyumba kumi</i>	(<i>Swahili</i>) ten houses
PNC	<i>Police Nationale Congolaise</i> (Congolesse National Police)
<i>quartier</i>	urban administrative entity below the commune level and above cellule and avenue levels

RCD	<i>Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie</i> (Congolesse Rally for Democracy)
<i>rapportage</i>	(<i>French</i>) reporting; refers to a practice within the police (but also other state institutions) whereby officers are obligated to generate revenue for their hierarchies; can lead to the widespread harassment of civilians
SAJECEK	<i>Synergie des Associations des Jeunes pour l'Education Civique, Electorale et la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme au Sud-Kivu/Forces Vives</i> (Synergy of Youth Associations for Civic and Electoral Education and the Promotion of Human Rights in South Kivu); Essence-based community development organization, with a youth security branch
<i>salongo</i>	(<i>Swahili</i>) providing free labour once a week on a voluntary basis for community development projects
<i>snith</i>	(<i>Swahili</i>) an opioid
SSAPR	Security Sector Accountability and Police Reform
<i>Tujikinga</i>	(<i>Swahili</i>) let's defend ourselves
<i>vols à mains armées</i>	(<i>French</i>) thefts with an armed hand; refers to armed robberies

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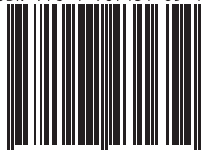
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A SYSTEM OF INSECURITY: UNDERSTANDING URBAN VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN BUKAVU EXAMINES THE ROLE OF STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS IN THE PROVISION OF SECURITY, AND CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS OF, EXPERIENCES WITH AND RESPONSES TO INSECURITY IN BUKAVU, THE CAPITAL OF SOUTH KIVU PROVINCE IN THE EASTERN CONGO. FACING GROWING URBAN INSECURITY, THE RESIDENTS OF BUKAVU HAVE TAKEN MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS. IMPROVISING, FENDING FOR YOURSELF (DEBROUILLEZ-VOUS) AND TAKING CARE OF ONESELF (AUTO-PRISE EN CHARGE) HAVE BECOME LOGICS OF PERSONAL ACTION. THIS HAS PRODUCED AN AMBIGUOUS ORDER IN WHICH A PLURALITY OF ACTORS COMPETE TO ACHIEVE THE NEAR IMPOSSIBLE: TO SURVIVE, THRIVE AND PROVIDE SECURITY ALL AT ONCE.



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