



# Rebels and the City

## *Urban dimensions of armed mobilization in the eastern Congo*

BY JUDITH VERWEIJEN, CHRISTOPH VOGEL AND JOSAPHAT MUSAMBA

### Key points

- Despite focusing the bulk of their operations on rural areas, armed groups in the eastern Congo have long-standing connections with urban centres.
- Technological progress, such as mobile communication, and enhanced movement, especially through motorcycle taxis, have intensified these connections.
- These relations rely on mutual advantages: Urban-based supporters can bolster their political leverage and business activities, while rural-based groups benefit from communication channels and supply networks.
- While vital to the survival of armed groups, initiatives to address armed group mobilization largely ignore these rural-urban connections. This limits their effectiveness.
- Efforts should be stepped up to document the complex rural-urban connections within militarized networks, including money flows, by creating a mixed Congolese-international 'Group of Experts' on armed mobilization.

### Introduction

Armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are generally seen as being a rural phenomenon, operating mostly in remote forest or mountain settings. There is some truth to this characterization. Despite occasional attacks on cities and operations in urban peripheries, most armed group activity takes place in rural zones.<sup>1</sup> However, this does not mean armed groups in the eastern Congo are an exclusively rural phenomenon. In fact, many of these groups have

intimate and long-standing connections with urban areas.

Before and during the Congo Wars (1996–2003), some armed mobilization in the region was rooted in the grievances of rural populations, particularly socio-economic marginalization and conflicts around land and local authority. The conflicts generally had a pronounced identity dimension and were intimately bound up with political contestation evident at provincial, national and regional levels.<sup>2</sup> Rural grievances continue to shape armed mobilization today, yet the beliefs, grievances and interests of the urban backers of armed groups have come to play an increasingly important role.

This briefing argues that armed groups should be seen as part of broader militarized networks that span rural and urban areas and may also have significant extensions abroad. These networks channel flows of ideas, money, people, arms and armed practices and are crucial for the mobilization of combatants, support and supplies. They bridge an ostensible rural-urban divide that has been tightened by improved means of transport and communication, in particular mobile internet and the spread of motorcycle taxis to transport people and goods.

Understanding and discouraging armed mobilization requires addressing such networks—across cities, secondary towns, rural areas and in the diaspora—as a whole. To this end, it is necessary to hold urban-based political actors with ties to armed groups to account, and tackle their involvement in recruitment, propaganda and revenue generation.

### History

Historically, rural populations have played a key role in initiating and sustaining rebellion in the eastern Congo.<sup>3</sup> The colonial era saw numerous



Mai Mai mural in Baraka, South Kivu © Christoph Vogel

protests and revolts in rural areas. For example, in 1944, a revolt rocked the rural territories of Masisi and Lubutu. It was initiated by a religious movement, the Kitawalists, who sought to end oppressive and extractive colonial practices.<sup>4</sup>

In the post-independence period, after 1960, rural protests in the southern part of Kivu Central province sparked broader mobilization that morphed into the Simba Rebellion.<sup>5</sup> However, the leadership of the rebellion, which received extensive support from revolutionary elites across the continent, was primarily composed of politicians based in the national and provincial capitals, as well as in cities in neighbouring countries. As the rebellion evolved beyond southern Kivu, urban populations, in particular youth, came to play an important role.<sup>6</sup> While poor urban youth made up most of the rank-and-file, its political and military leadership featured more educated urbanites. Foreshadowing future armed mobilization, the Simba Rebellion brought together rural and urban recruits, supporters, ideas

and interests, while its support networks extended far beyond the Congo's borders.<sup>7</sup>

During the second half of Mobutu Sese Seko's rule (1965–1997), economic decline and bad governance fuelled the pauperization of rural areas. As infrastructure crumbled, rural hinterlands became disconnected from cities, including urban markets. Rural populations also suffered from predatory public servants and customary chiefs, who imposed arbitrary taxation and forced labour.<sup>8</sup> Land conflicts intensified and became enmeshed with long-running disputes around (customary) local authority and identity.<sup>9</sup> Young men who were unable to obtain land of their own, or find other employment, and thus could not start their own families, became stuck in a liminal societal space between adolescence and adulthood. When rural militias emerged in the early 1990s, these disenfranchised rural youth—motivated to defend their communities and achieve political and economic transformation—filled their ranks.<sup>10</sup>

---

Another wave of mobilization struck rural areas when the insurgency 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 other African countries—occupied large parts of the east in 1996. Distrusting the rebellion’s foreign backers, people fought, albeit unsuccessfully, to resist its advance towards the capital, Kinshasa, which the rebels took after only seven months. Others joined the insurgency after receiving accelerated military training.

An even bigger mobilization occurred between 1998 and 2003 during the rebellion of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD, Congolese Rally for Democracy), again backed by Rwanda and other neighbouring countries. While the RCD controlled the main cities as well as most medium-size towns, self-defence groups known as *Mai-Mai* waged a guerrilla war across the countryside. Although many combatants and commanders hailed from rural areas, *Mai-Mai* groups drew support from urban opponents of the RCD.

As a peace process emerged to end the war through a series of power-sharing deals, certain urban-based politicians reinvented themselves as political representatives of *Mai-Mai* and other armed groups. They thus hoped to tap into the political and administrative job opportunities opening up during the transitional government.<sup>11</sup> Many representatives, however, turned out to be opportunistic, with few connections to the armed groups they claimed to represent.<sup>12</sup>

The RCD, meanwhile, had recruited a large political and administrative force to govern the areas it occupied, building on existing structures. Similar to its military officers, the RCD’s political leaders collaborated closely with businesspeople. Profiting from the war, these elites obtained plots and properties in the big cities. Examples are numerous in Goma and Bukavu where they built houses and hotels. Due to their political and economic weight, political-military elites also exercised significant influence on urban governance.<sup>13</sup>

These developments gave the different armed mobilizations a strong urban component, even if much of the fighting remained concentrated in rural areas. Other war-era urban transformations

resulted from the many people seeking refuge in cities and towns, contributing to high urban growth rates. This trend has continued after the end of the Second Congo War in 2003, particularly as violence in many rural areas never stopped

Some of the fighters who demobilized after the war moved to cities and towns, whereas others sought work in mining zones, which contributed to the intensification of urbanization in these areas (for example, Rubaya and Nyabibwe in North and South Kivu respectively).<sup>14</sup> Urbanization also occurred in densely populated areas around (former) camps for internally displaced persons and refugees, such as Kitchanga in North Kivu.<sup>15</sup>

These rural-urban transformations helped further urbanize the networks of the many armed groups that continue to be active today. The latter differ in size, structure, objectives, motivations, repertoires of mobilization and legitimation. A similar variation characterizes the intensity of their connections to urban discourses, dynamics and elites.<sup>16</sup>

### Political mobilization and support

One way in which armed group networks extend into cities is via political supporters and big man figures of various types.<sup>17</sup> Urban-based provincial and national politicians and entrepreneurs often support armed groups both materially and rhetorically. In material terms, they sometimes provide covert financial donations or organize military supplies.<sup>18</sup> Rhetorically, they may publicly assert that armed groups defend particular communities or, more generally, the country’s sovereignty, thereby legitimizing them.<sup>19</sup> Influential politicians and officials may also act as cover (known as *parapluie politique*, political umbrella) to armed group networks, preventing their activities from being disrupted and their members from being apprehended.

A telling example of an armed group leader with a powerful umbrella is Sheka Ntabo Ntaberi, leader of Nduma Defence of Congo (NDC). He faced an arrest warrant for war crimes and crimes against humanity since January 2011, but still managed to stand as candidate in the parliamentary elections that same year. He remained at large another six years, handing himself in—rather than being arrested—in July 2017.<sup>20</sup>

---

There are various reasons why politicians, entrepreneurs and officials support armed groups. Some are put under pressure by these groups, and pay them to avoid harm to themselves, their family or property. But many provide support on a voluntary basis. One reason is that they agree ideologically with these groups' cause. Another is that it allows them to use armed groups for their own agenda. Armed groups may, for instance, help entrepreneurs secure their business operations in rural areas. Furthermore, where they or their *protégés* in rural areas, such as local authorities, are in conflict, armed group backing can reinforce their position.<sup>21</sup>

Supporting armed groups can also earn political actors popular support and votes, especially where the groups are seen as useful or necessary, for instance as they defend certain communities against foreign rebels.<sup>22</sup> Armed groups may also be used to actively interfere in the electoral process. During the 2018 elections, a splinter group of the *Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain* (APCLS, Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo) under Mapenzi, whose troops had occupied polling stations in the Masisi area, forced citizens to vote for specific candidates.<sup>23</sup> Some of these candidates had been instrumental in helping Mapenzi to split from the core APCLS and start a collaboration with the NDC-Rénové (a splinter from the NDC under Sheka) earlier in 2018.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, when electoral commission staffers toured rural areas to verify, reshape or consolidate electoral districts, they were occasionally met with armed resistance.<sup>25</sup>

More broadly, political-administrative processes often trigger converging interests between armed groups and urban-based elites. An example of this is the recent elevation of Minembwe in South Kivu to a *commune rurale* (rural commune)—a different administrative status. The creation of the commune feeds into long-running contestations over local authority and territory between the Banyamulenge and other groups, who claim that the commune is located on and therefore amputates their ancestral grounds.<sup>26</sup> In conjunction with foreign rebel activity, Minembwe's administrative transformation has sparked increased armed mobilization in the area, with the encouragement of urban-based political actors either opposing or defending this development.<sup>27</sup>

But armed groups do not only support political actors. In the run-up to the 2018 elections, two factions of the Nyatura militia in northeast Masisi turned against a former governor. Despite long-standing rumours about the governor being a main supporter of these groups, they ambushed him and fellow candidates during the electoral campaign in December 2018. The delegation narrowly escaped being killed. Combatants of these groups justified the attack by saying that they suspected the governor was collaborating with Rwanda.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that rather than being mere puppets of politicians, armed groups often exercise high levels of autonomy.

While it may sometimes be tenuous, politicians' influence over armed groups generally increases their status in the national political landscape. It shows the government that it needs them to have a measure of control over their constituencies. To demonstrate their power over armed groups, powerful political actors sometimes also encourage armed groups to demobilize, and subsequently capitalize on their status as peacemakers.<sup>29</sup>

Another category of urban-based armed group supporters is intellectuals who are part of, and sometimes lead, their political branches. The character of these political wings differs across groups. Some are loosely organized, consisting of individuals acting as political representatives on an ad hoc basis, without being guided by a formal organization, but maintaining direct links with armed group leaders. This is the case for certain Raia Mutomboki factions in South Kivu. Others are highly structured and regulated. An example of this latter category is the Mai-Mai Yakutumba which has a fully developed political organization, the *Parti pour l'action et la reconstruction du Congo* (PARC), with statutes and a political programme that sets out its ideology and vision in respect of the political, economic, social and administrative organization of society.<sup>30</sup>

Urban rallying and lobbying on behalf of armed groups is sometimes also done among university students and by *mutualités* or ethnic self-help associations that provide forms of insurance and solidarity to their members, but that have also started to act as interest groups.<sup>31</sup> These different political representatives shape the demands of armed groups, as articulated in press releases

and communiqués, which are increasingly distributed via social media channels. This political communication provides updates on battlefield activities or political commentary on current events such as elections. Recent examples include press releases of the *Collectif de mouvements pour le changement* (CMC, Collective of Movements for Change), as well as those of the NDC–Rénové (a splinter of Sheka’s NDC).

REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU  
CONGO

Collectif de Mouvements pour le Changement/ Forces de  
Défense du Peuple  
CMC/FDP

Contacts: [cmcrdcjules@gmail.com](mailto:cmcrdcjules@gmail.com)  
Tel: 00243 813895699

Communiqué de presse num 08/CMC/FDP/CIP/2019

Bilan hebdomadaire des affrontements entre le CMC/FDP et la  
coalition NDCR-FARDC-M23, FARDC-RDF.

Les affrontements se sont poursuivis entre les éléments du  
CMC/FDP et les coalitions susmentionnées.  
En date 09/05/2019, les affrontements rudes ont eu lieu dans le  
territoire de Masisi , groupement OSSO BANYUNGU, village de  
Shoa; village de Mukohwa dans le groupement de Bapfuna;  
villages de Loashi, Ngesha, Muhondo dans le groupement de  
BIIRI. Les éléments de la coalition NDCR-FARDC-M23 ont été

RÉPUBLIQUE DÉMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO  
MOUVEMENT POLITICO-MILITAIRE  
NDC RÉNOVÉ  
BUREAU POLITIQUE  
Contact : +243824792701  
[ndcr.rdc@gmail.com](mailto:ndcr.rdc@gmail.com)

COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE N°06/NDCR/BP/2019

Après avoir annoncé mercredi 08 Mai soir sur les Médias nos  
opérations des grandes envergures contre les FDLR et alliés dans  
le Rutshuru ;  
Voici déjà le Bilan de 48h00 d’Ops.  
Les villages de MUMO et CHAALA dans la localité de KATWE en  
groupement de BAHIRA où étaient concentrés les FDLR déjà  
dans les mains de vaillants du NDC Rénové.  
5 Armes AK47 et plusieurs autres effets Militaires récupérés côté  
ennemi.  
Du côté de MASISI, nous faisons face à la coalition FDLR-APCLS,

Contrasting press releases on the same clashes circulated by CMC and  
NDC-R in May 2019<sup>32</sup>

Other examples are the Facebook and Youtube campaigns of the *Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo* (CNPSC, National Popular Coalition for the Sovereignty of the Congo), which appear to have been supported by diaspora

groups,<sup>33</sup> Mai-Mai Kilalo statements on the illegality of President Kabila remaining in power beyond 2016, or the Mai-Mai Kifufua denouncing ‘illegal’ defections from their group.<sup>34</sup>

Armed groups also frequently issue lists of conditions for them to lay down their arms. These lists, known as *cahiers des charges* (demand booklets), are usually composed of a mixture of high-level political or army positions, demands for development projects, and eclectic, often identity-focused political claims. These demands generally reflect how, despite obvious urban influences, armed groups remain firmly rooted in rural environments.

Common demands among groups operating in isolated areas, such as the former Mai-Mai Kapopo in Mwenga and the Mai-Mai Kifufua and Kirikicho on the highlands linking Walikale and Kalehe, include improving the road network, building schools and hospitals, and promoting the development of mining areas.<sup>35</sup> Thus, urban-based political actors continue to strive to improve their rural areas of origin.

## Recruitment and demobilization

Beyond political support, urban environments allow for recruitment networks to thrive, targeting urban youth and former combatants. To attract recruits, most armed groups use narratives of ethnicity or indigeneity. These may refer to the protection of their community (although the rank-and-file often come from various ethnic groups), or stoking resentment against another one (often referred to as ‘foreigners’). Recruitment therefore often targets youth from specific groups that tend to be concentrated in particular neighbourhoods of cities and towns.<sup>36</sup> However, testimonies of (former) combatants illustrate that recruitment rhetoric also draws on other themes, including political change, good governance and prospects for social mobility. As such, it speaks to universal hopes and aspirations.<sup>37</sup>

The urban youth that join armed groups come from different categories. One group is well-educated youngsters, many of whom initially grew up in rural areas. When they return to their home turf as combatants, they are likely to acquire leadership positions. This is illustrated by the example of the

---

Nyatara–John Love group, whose recent command includes several university graduates from Goma.<sup>38</sup>

Another category of urban youth alleged to join armed groups are those who want to escape personal problems. For instance, they may have built up huge debts, are wanted by the police, or have obtained a bad reputation as repeat criminal offenders, and are therefore at risk of falling victim to mob justice.<sup>39</sup>

It remains unclear what percentage of recruits come from urban settings, and this is also likely to vary between armed groups. However, the majority appears to be rural youth and those from areas with emerging urbanization, such as around mining sites and expanding secondary towns. The presence of these youths reinforces rural-urban links within militarized networks.

Armed groups' rural-urban connections do not only foster mobilization but also demobilization. Urban-based relatives, members of *mutualités* and political actors may encourage combatants to lay down their arms. These efforts can foster movement in the opposite direction, from rural to urban areas.

Defecting and demobilized combatants, including child soldiers, often end up in cities or smaller towns, in particular those close to mining areas. One reason for this is the shortcomings of demobilization programmes, leaving ex-combatants stranded in cities such as Goma and Bukavu without funds to reach their places of origin.<sup>40</sup>

Another reason why former combatants move to cities is the fear of reprisals by their former commanders for having defected. Others are afraid of becoming stigmatized or no longer accepted in their home areas, for instance where the armed group in which they served has committed atrocities, and families of victims remain with vengeful feelings.<sup>41</sup>

Yet other former combatants simply prefer to go to larger cities, assuming there are more opportunities to make a living. This choice is sometimes also informed by the bad organization of the reintegration phase of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programmes, the funds for which often get embezzled.<sup>42</sup> Some former combatants who demobilized under the third national DDR

programme (PNDDR3) explained how they chose hairdressing as a profession for their life after armed group membership, but only received broken clippers and other useless utensils. Others received wide-meshed fishing nets used for catching tilapia, which are unsuitable to fish for the much smaller *sambaza* fishes that their home areas are known for.<sup>43</sup>

As a result of these difficulties, many who passed DDR, as well as those who self-demobilized—implying they did not participate in any DDR programmes—prefer to move to bigger cities, especially if they have family networks there. This does not necessarily cut them off entirely from armed group networks. Urban representatives and supporters of armed groups tend to be aware of the presence of other members from their community and region of origin in towns and cities. Moreover, urban dwellers find support and solidarity among extended families, or as members of *mutualités*, and are thus not likely to remain anonymous.

## Repertoires of violence

While many demobilized find new ways to make a living in the non-violent urban economy, some, including former child soldiers, become involved in crime.<sup>44</sup> The violent activities of armed groups are not limited to clashes with the army or other armed forces. These groups engage in a broad repertoire of armed revenue-generating activities such as ambushes, attacks on houses and shops, robberies and kidnappings. Thus, when former combatants move to cities and join the urban violent labour force, there is a diffusion of particular armed practices. The same applies when those engaging in urban crime join armed groups in rural areas. This diffusion may partly explain why urban and rural patterns of violence have increasingly come to resemble each other.<sup>45</sup>

A good example is kidnapping for ransom. First becoming prevalent in the Binza *groupement* (administrative entity) of Rutshuru territory in 2010,<sup>46</sup> this practice extended across Rutshuru as an ex-Nyatara leader known as Biriko Manoti set up more sophisticated networks.<sup>47</sup> It also emerged in other rural areas, such as the Ruzizi Plain around 2014, spearheaded by the armed group leader, Bede Rusagara.<sup>48</sup> Around 2015, kidnappings also started to occur in Goma, and have taken root there since, increasingly targeting children.<sup>49</sup>

---

## Economic activities

Armed group networks spanning the rural-urban divide also have economic dimensions. For instance, armed groups control the production of certain commodities, whose supply chain extends into urban areas; *makala* (charcoal) produced in Virunga National Park and cannabis are well-known examples. In some cases, they do not only control production, but also other stages of the commodity chain, and use violence to maintain that control. This ties them firmly to the urban context. For instance, parts of the *makala* trade in Goma are controlled by the rebel group *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR, Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda). This is cited as a reason for violence being carried out against those who work with their money, but remain with debts or do not respect the terms of the agreement.<sup>50</sup>

Another way in which militarized economic activities link rural and urban areas is that money earned by armed group commanders and allied entrepreneurs is often invested in cities—mostly in real estate. As documented by reports of the UN Group of Experts, there are numerous entrepreneurs who enriched themselves by doing business with armed groups.<sup>51</sup> A recent inquiry shows that two of these entrepreneurs—cited for buying gold from the FDLR in South Kivu—have constructed numerous houses in Bukavu. These are rented out to UN personnel and international non-governmental organizations, which tend to pay thousands of dollars a month in rent.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, commanders of the Congolese army, who often make money by collaborating with armed groups (for instance in the *makala* trade), have built or bought numerous houses in Goma that are often rented out to aid workers and UN staffers.<sup>53</sup>

Money earned through violent accumulation in rural areas also enters the urban economy as it is used to buy supplies for armed groups. The groups need to purchase arms, ammunition, uniforms, boots and means of communication to maintain operational capacity. Arms and ammunition are often sold from army depots based in cities, such as Bukavu.<sup>54</sup> Some groups, such as the Burundian *Forces républicaines du Burundi* (FOREBU, Republican Forces of Burundi), also buy food supplies in cities, in this case Uvira, in addition to rural areas.<sup>55</sup>

Urban brokers are instrumental in managing the opaque supply chains that get merchandise from city to forest. While some have no particular political attachments, others are urban elites supporting the armed struggle in their places of origin. A Goma-based individual providing radios to an armed group explained that doing business with people originating from the same area is more secure given that the complexity of supply operations, and the risks involved, require an enormous amount of trust.<sup>56</sup>

## Policy considerations

Multiple connections link rural to urban environments within contemporary armed mobilization in the eastern Congo. These connections highlight the need to analyse and address armed groups as a networked phenomenon that extends across different geographical scales, economic sectors and social contexts. Many of those involved in these networks are not bush-based fighters clad in fatigues but rather tie-wearing politicians and entrepreneurs living in cities, or ‘rebels in suits’.<sup>57</sup>

For a long time, diplomats and peace-builders have neglected the networked nature of armed mobilization. They condemn the brutality of rebels in the forest while working with rebels in suits—whether by renting their properties, co-opting them in stabilization initiatives or dealing with them to obtain licences to operate. A key obstacle to disengaging from such interactions is that hard evidence of these individuals’ involvement in armed group networks is often lacking. For example, there are limited consolidated findings on real estate investment based on income earned through armed activity—yet when walking through Goma or Bukavu, many inhabitants can show you with precision the houses concerned.

This lack of evidence points to the need to better investigate and document armed group networks. While the UN Group of Experts conducts research into these issues, their human and financial resources are limited, and they face severe restrictions on their movement, which hampers their work. More importantly, there are numerous Congolese organizations and researchers that have crucial knowledge of armed group networks. Unfortunately, there is little funding available to support their work. Developing a mixed

---

Congolese and international Group of Experts with a guaranteed budget would be a welcome step to address some of the knowledge deficits surrounding broader armed group networks.

Another question is how to address ‘rebels in suits’. Should they be placed on international sanctions lists; prosecuted; named and shamed; or engaged in constructive dialogue? Many of these options have drawbacks, and ostracizing people can push them more firmly towards armed group

networks for income and influence. Moreover, adequate solutions may differ from case to case.

Regardless of which paths of action are taken, it is vital that the civilian and urban components of armed group networks be addressed. Violence in the eastern Congo has been ongoing for well over two decades and shows little sign of abating. A more holistic approach to understanding and reducing armed mobilization is long overdue.

## Notes

1 Examples include recent attacks in Butembo, in the context of the ongoing Ebola outbreak; the massacre in the Rwangoma neighbourhood of Beni in August 2016; and the attack on Uvira by a coalition of Mai-Mai groups in late 2017.

2 Bosco Muchukiwa, *Territoires ethniques et territoires étatique: Pouvoirs locaux et conflits interethniques au Sud Kivu (R.D.Congo)*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006; Stanislas Mararo Bucyalimwe, ‘Land, power and ethnic conflict in Masisi (Congo-Kinshasa), 1940s–1994’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30/3 (1997): 503–538.

3 Jean Luc Vellut, ‘Résistances et espaces de liberté dans l’histoire coloniale du Zaïre: Avant la marche à l’Indépendance (ca. 1876–1945)’, in *Rébellions-Révolution au Zaïre (1963–1965): Tome 2*, eds. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Alain Forest and Herbert Weiss, Paris: L’Harmattan, 1987.

4 Nicole Eggers, ‘Mukombozi and the *Monganga*: the violence of healing in the 1944 Kitawalist uprising’, *Africa* 85/3 (2015): 417–436.

5 Benoît Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo: Tome 1*, Brussels and Leopoldville: CRISP, IRES and INEP, 1966.

6 Benoît Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo: Tome 2*, Brussels and Leopoldville: CRISP, IRES and INEP, 1966.

7 Benoît Verhaegen, ‘Conditions politiques et participation sociale la rébellion dans l’est du Zaïre’, in *Les rébellions dans l’est du Zaïre (1964-1967)*, eds. Herbert Weiss and Benoît Verhaegen, n.p.: CEDAF/ASDOC, 1986.

8 Catherine Newbury, ‘Survival strategies in rural Zaire: Realities of coping with crisis’, in *The Crisis in Zaire: Myths and Realities*, ed. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, Africa World Press: Trenton, NJ, 1986.

9 Paul Mathieu and Mafikiri Tsongo, ‘Enjeux fonciers, déplacement de population et escalades conflictuelles (1930-1995)’, in *Conflicts et guerres au Kivu et dans la région des Grands Lacs. Entre tensions locales et escalade régionale*, eds. Paul Mathieu and Jean-Claude Willame, Tervuren and Paris: Institut Africain-CEDAF and L’Harmattan, 1999.

10 Koen Vlassenroot and Frank van Acker, ‘War as exit from exclusion?: The formation of Mai-Mai militias in eastern Congo’, *Afrika Focus* 17/1–2 (2001): 51–77.

11 Judith Verweijen, ‘Inclusion amid fragmentation: Mai-Mai proliferation in the DRC’, in *Navigating Inclusion in Peace Processes*, Conciliation Resources, 2019.

12 Christoph Vogel and Josaphat Musamba, ‘Recycling Rebels? Demobilization in the Congo’, PSRP Briefing Paper 11, London: Rift Valley Institute, March 2016.

13 They also built houses in Gisenyi, Goma’s cross-border twin town in Rwanda, one of whose boroughs is known as *Quartier RCD*. Karen Büscher, ‘Conflict, State Failure and Urban Transformation in the Eastern Congolese Periphery: The Case of Goma’, PhD dissertation, Ghent University, Ghent, 2011.

14 Karen Büscher, ‘Urbanisation and the political geographies of violent struggle for power and control: mining boomtowns in eastern Congo’, *International Development Policy Review* 10/10 (2018): 302–324.

15 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.

16 Christoph Vogel and Jason Stearns, ‘Kivu’s intractable security conundrum, revisited’, *African Affairs* 117/469 (2018): 695–707.

17 Judith Verweijen, *Stable Instability: Political Settlements and Armed Groups in the Congo*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2016.

18 While it is difficult to gather evidence for such cases, examples of support by urban political elites to armed groups can be found in reports of the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, including UN S/2012/843, paragraphs 65–66, UN S/2012/348, paragraphs 55–58, UN S/2009/603, paragraphs 26–28 and UN S/2008/773, paragraphs 48–56 and 78–101.

19 For a flagrant recent case, see UN S/2016/466, paragraph 218 and annex 59.

20 For Sheka’s reaction to his arrest warrant during his electoral campaign, see this Al Jazeera news item of 25 November 2011: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvdB-EiVWko>.

21 Verweijen, *Stable Instability*.

22 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.

23 ‘Elections en RDC, des cas de votes forces rapports par des témoins’, *Radio France Internationale*, 31 December 2018. Accessed 19 July 2019, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20181231-rdc-vote-force-election-nord-kivu>.

24 Usalama Project interviews, Goma, 21 June 2019 and 23 June 2019.

25 Authors’ observations during fieldwork in South Kivu in 2015.

26 Judith Verweijen and Koen Vlassenroot, ‘Armed mobilisation and the nexus of territory, identity, and authority: the Banyamulenge’s contested territorial aspirations in eastern DR Congo’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 33/2 (2015): 191–212.



