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Forced Displacement and Youth Employment in the Aftermath of the Congo War: From Making a Living to Making a Life

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Forced Displacement and Youth Employment in the Aftermath of the Congo War: From making a living to making a life [1]

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Abstract: This paper tries to offer an indication of what it means to be young, displaced and looking for a job in a war-affected town of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Starting off as a sociological survey into the livelihoods of young displaced migrants in the city of Butembo, it subsequently integrates more critical views on the life making perspectives of these African youngsters, who appear to be affected as much by problems of daily survival as by a lack of access to decent jobs. The high entry gates these youngsters face in their quest for a decent living not only illustrates the explicitly political nature of Butembo's job market in the aftermath of war, but also supports the claim that stories of daily survival and political categorization/marginalization remain inherently connected. The fact that this connection is often explicitly made in these youngsters' imagination about a better life forces us to rethink critically the relationship between armed violence, livelihoods and economic markets in the aftermath of protracted conflicts.

Introduction

This working paper documents the life-making perspectives of displaced Congolese youngsters in the town of Butembo, close to the Ugandan border. Although it partly builds on long-term ethnographic research in the area during 2003-2008, the actual work for this paper originally involved a classic sociological survey analysing the access of these youngsters to so-called "informal" urban jobs. Although different definitions still prevail about such "informal" occupations (see amongst others Hart, 1973; MacGaffey, 1991), they make up an important part of the urban labour market during and in the aftermath of war. A more indepth study appeared relevant both for analytical and practical reasons. Fieldwork, which was carried out in September-October 2008, consisted of a survey of 348 interviews (190 male and 158 female IDPs) divided more or less equally between the city of Butembo and its urban periphery, as well as some focus group discussions[2]. Building on earlier work on economic markets in (post-) conflict regions, this study specifically concentrated on the capacities, attitudes and practices of what are commonly seen as passive victims of protracted armed conflict: unarmed displaced youngsters that had been escaping recurrent violence in their home regions. Besides wanting to avoid common stereotypes[3], the reason for this deliberate choice lays in the hypothesis that the potential violent "eruption" of unemployed youth in the aftermath of war should be situated at least in part in their condition of *hyper mobility* – i.e. the inability to forge stable attachments. In their leading study on the Mano River region in West Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast), Richards and Chauveau describe hyper mobility as "the inability to settle and forge stable attachments professionally and socially in either rural or urban settings." On the same page, they suggest that "hyper-mobile impoverished rural youth are not a sufficient cause of armed conflict, but their availability for

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[2] The interviewed youth were all between 15-36 years (although 85% of them fluctuated between the age of 18-26). Data for this survey was gathered in Butembo and Bunyuka (a rural periphery) following a focused sampling method – i.e. with questions focusing on main informal occupations and their representative associations in the commercial and transport sector, and processed through SPSS software methods. The participants for focus group discussions (four in total) were contacted both ad random and through diaspora associations indicated by the city's social council.

[3] The idea that unemployed youth – particularly young men – are inclined to join a rebel movement still sounds particularly attractive as a conflict indicator in African contexts, especially when attached to ruling notions of "social madness" in African cities (Shoumatoff, 1988). Protagonists of this analysis have been World Bank consultants Anke Hoeffler and Paul Collier (1999; 2001), who in their analysis of factors pertaining to civil war outbreaks in 1960-1999 used male secondary school endowment and income opportunities as a proxy of conflict risk (or rather, the opportunity for armed rebellion). In his paper 'Doing Well out of War', Collier (1999: 3) concludes that "if young men face only the option of poverty they might be more inclined to join a rebellion than if they have better opportunities."

recruitment when other employment opportunities fail is a major factor in fuelling insurgency in all three countries. Cutting off the supply of recruits to militia factions by providing more suitable employment opportunities attractive to these young people would contribute to peace and stability in West Africa." (Richards and Chauveau, 2007: 7) Besides the material benefits of employment, it is evident that this ability to construct stable attachments also heavily depends on the successful project of actively "making a life" (Åkesson, 2004: 22). As has been observed in other contexts, such projects are not only intimately connected to local perspectives on material opportunities and associations but are undoubtedly also inspired by more social and cultural aspirations to a better life away from harm and causes of impoverishment. Given the current urge with which the global aid community addresses the issue of youth and conflict risk in post-conflict settings, it is surprising how little is known about the exact conditions youth face in post-war labour markets. A recent report by the World Bank on youth and employment in Africa, for example, observes that:

> "Post-conflict settings pose specific challenges for the youth (e.g., recently disarmed idle men and displaced young men) as these settings have prominently young populations, many of whom have been deprived of education, have grown up in violent societies, and often have been combatants themselves. Employment and the creation of jobs for young people should therefore form a key component of any peace building processes." (World Bank, 2009)

Besides a few occasional studies in non-war contexts (De Waal and Argenti, 2002; Simone and Abouhani, 2005; Poluha, 2007, Bequele et al., 2008), the answer to such basic questions like what happens to youth after war[4]; what is the (potential) impact of youth employment on conflict risk; and how these factors interrelate with urbanization are currently missing from the debate (Sommers, 2003, 2006).

The city of Butembo appeared a particularly fruitful case for this analysis for several reasons. During the war, it served as a safe haven for displaced people coming both from the north (e.g. Ituri) and south (e.g. Lubero) without being as severely affected by the ongoing armed conflicts in these territories. While the level of registered IDP's is relatively low (15.215, compared to 452.678 in Lubero and 26.925 in Beni at the time of the fieldwork), the town offered the opportunity to study displacement and forced migration outside the minority setting of displaced camp life (cf. infra). Displaced youth stands out as a particularly

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[4] For two excellent literature assessments, see Peters, Richards, and Vlassenroot (2003) and Sommers (2006).

problematic category within this mobile population for the reasons outlined above. A second reason constitutes the organization of the urban labour market, which could be described as a commercial oligopoly. The town's import and export trade is channelled through a closed network of about 8 to ten family businesses locally referred to as the *G8* (Raeymaekers, 2010). Whereas some of these businesses have a vested interest in the war economy (i.e. export of minerals and gold, and occasionally arms imports), their particular organization around family and kin makes it difficult for outsiders to obtain secure labour. In addition, the almost complete lack of industrialization has forced most inhabitants to seek for employment in so-called informal jobs in order to sustain their livelihoods (see also Raeymaekers, 2007; Mirembe, 2002).

During fieldwork, some important limits were discovered to the livelihood analysis of these displaced youngsters. Particular problems arose in disentangling the inherently *political* nature of Butembo's labour market and its impact on the access of young displaced people to informal jobs. More specifically, the analysis was confronted with a need to develop more adequate instruments to answer why and how urban informal jobs did not present themselves as they theoretically should in this post-conflict environment, as social and economic safety nets for the poor (Cooper, 2002; Goodhand, 2004). The lack of access of these young IDPs to sustainable livelihoods, which clearly showed in individual interviews and during focus group discussions, seemed neither to be determined by commonly evoked deficiencies in individual 'social capital', but on the contrary by a particular model of local market organization. Instead of opening a multitude of "spaces of opportunity" in the aftermath of war (Simone and Abouhani, 2005: 24), youngsters often faced incredible difficulties to gain access to decent jobs and as a consequence continue to live a life in marginality and despair. This paper tries to answer why this is the case.

In order to document the relationships of immigrant youngsters with the local labour market, this working paper will take the following steps. First, a short introduction will be provided to the recent history of the Democratic Republic of Congo and its experience of war-to-peace "transition". After having laid out the general conditions displaced people (and youth in particular) face in the eastern parts of the country in these current times of crisis, it will say a few words about the organization of Butembo's labour market, where the focus of the present research is situated. The final part of this paper contains two biographical case studies of a combatant and non-combatant youngster in Butembo's urban labour market which try to

illustrate the observed relationships between livelihood chances, economic markets and local violence from an emic, ethnographic viewpoint.

The Democratic Republic of Congo from war to peace - and back again

The town of Butembo is situated in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a country in Central Africa that has experienced over a decade of armed conflict. Its 6 to 700.000 inhabitants are almost exclusively from Nande origin, a population that lives predominantly in the area stretching from the Lubero forest up to the Uganda border, which is locally referred to as Bunande. The area includes the territories of Beni and Lubero, situated in the northern part of North Kivu. Over the last twenty years, the area has been repeatedly plagued by armed conflict, starting with the first Congo war (1996-1997) that brought Laurent-Désiré Kabila to power in the capital of the DRC Kinshasa, to the more recent gulf of targeted assassinations and army abuse commented in local media[5].

Specialist scholars maintain that the heart of the ongoing political crisis is a merger of local, national and regional dynamics of conflict (Vlassenroot, 2002; Reyntjens and Marysse, 2005). Particularly from the early 1990s, the progressive atrophy of Zaire's neo-patrimonial rule and of its dictatorial leader Joseph-Désiré Mobutu provoked an intensive national political competition, which instigated a local struggle for land and political representation. In the province of North Kivu, this growing competition soon acquired an ethnic character as "autochthonous" chiefs from Hunde and Nyanga decent increasingly incited their subject communities to enact a violent expulsion of their "immigrant" Rwandan-speaking neighbours, some of whom had lived there for over a hundred years. This conflict between Rwandan-speaking immigrants (Banyarwanda) from Hutu and Tutsi origin, Hunde, and to a lesser extent also Nande populations already led to violent outbursts in Masisi in 1993, killing several thousand people. Over the next years, this local conflict would soon acquire a regional character as in 1994, over a million Rwandan Hutu refugees settled in eastern Zaire as a consequence of the Rwandan genocide. From the refugee camps in Goma and Bukavu (the capitals of North and South Kivu), Hutu extremist militia known as Interahamwe organized repeated incursions into Rwandan territory. It now appears from UN documents that Rwandan

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[5] Civil society organizations have reported the death of more than 30 people in September 2010 in Beni territory alone. These killings are widely commented in the local press (see for example www.benilubero.com/).

soldiers organized military campaigns deep into Congolese territory to take revenge against the local Hutu population. The strongest reaction from Rwanda at the time came nonetheless in the creation of a new "liberation" force which united neighbouring countries like Uganda and Burundi and disgruntled Congolese rebels in a joint struggle against Mobutu's dying regime. Headed by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) reached Kinshasa in May 1997 followed by a flock of 'kadogo' (child soldiers) from Kivu and other adjacent regions. Whereas Kabila was heralded both nationally and internationally as the prophet of a democracy – he immediately renamed the name of the country to DRC – his authoritarian threads and pursuit of an increasingly "autochthonous" Congolese agenda soon made him follow the footsteps of his predecessors Mobutu and other African dictators. Only one year after his arrival in Kinshasa, a growing disagreement with his foreign supporters (Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda) instigated the formation of a new rebel movement sustained by the same powers that had originally supported Kabila's alliance. The Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), which was founded in Goma in August 1998 by collection of frustrated intellectuals and political leaders a – including former Kabila and Mobutu cronies, set in motion a full-fledged regional conflict that would only be marginally affected by several peace agreements from 1999 onwards. Despite the imposition of a (albeit initially modest) UN peacekeeping mission[6], the armed struggle between the RCD, the national government and a series of state and non-state armed parties would lead to a steady fragmentation of the country's national territory in various rebel strongholds linked to different foreign markets and supporters.

It was not until July 2003 when an all-inclusive agreement would be signed between Congolese belligerents (excluding foreign supporters), that it became possible to envisage something similar to a "post" - conflict. But even then, it remained difficult to catchphrase the evolution of the DRC's as being different from outright regional war. What one observes since the late 1990s in the Africa's vast Great Lakes region is instead a rapid regionalization of local conflict agendas with important transnational and even global connections (Callaghy, Kassimir and Latham, 2001). This has made it increasingly necessary to analyze and document not only the role of regional and transnational forces shaping current conflicts, but also to address the question of how orders and authorities shaping social existence at a local

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[6] The UN Mission in Congo, known under its acronym MONUC, steadily grew from less than 6.000 to close to 20.000 military troops, excluding observers, police and civilian components.

level form and operate at specific sites and across multiple territories. According to Chris Cramer: "there is an argument that contemporary wars are the product of a shift in the world economy in recent decades: where once the world economy was expansive and inclusionary, it has contracted and become exclusionary." But, as he says, something the opposite is true: "the integration of developing countries into the world economy is central to an understanding of violence and war; and (…) development transition (…), which is itself conflictual and typically violent, often takes on a particular intensity by dint of this integration." (Cramer, 2006: 238) This is at least part of the reason why it remains useful in the DRC to talk about a network war (Duffield, 2001), because it continues to produce its violent outcomes in terms of changing sovereignties, extraversion of internal political agendas and a continuous re-territorialisation of political claims along regional complexes of power and authority (for detailed examples, see Raeymaekers, 2002: Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers, 2004; Veit, 2010).

Keeping in mind this persistent fragmentation and re-territorialisation of the Congolese conflict, it has not been easy for external stabilisation forces to accompany the country's post-war "transition". Particularly since 2003, the UN peace mission in the DRC, MONUC, found itself trapped in an awkward position, where it was supposed to "stabilize" insecurity and integrate warring parties into a new security framework. In practice, however, it often found itself operating side by side to an abusive security apparatus that used this external cover to support claims of territorial sovereignty and sustain violent modes of predation. In the meantime, challenges have come from a national level, too. More recently, Congolese President Kabila and his government actively pressurized the UN Mission in Congo to trim down operational capacities and plan an exit strategy "as soon as possible", saying the army is perfectly suitable to monitor the security situation alone. These growing pressures are a reflection of a changing government policy in DRC after the 2006-2007 elections, in which an increasingly confident Kabila (who won with 58 percent in the second round and has a comfortable majority in parliament) is accusing the international community of intermingling in national affairs. Partly in response this government critique, in June 2010, the UN Security Council decided to change strategy and transform MONUC into a stabilization force with up to 19,815 military personnel, 760 military observers, 391 police personnel and 1,050 members of formed police units. In theory, the arrival of MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) could constitute an opportunity to change the situation for the better as its main priority is the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of

physical violence. In practice, however, the UN and Congolese stakeholders have quietly been looking for an exit strategy prior to the 2011 regional elections[7]. This tendency has already produced an evident result in the planned withdrawal of up to 2,000 United Nations military personnel by 30 June 2010, which directly corresponds to Kabila's demands. MONUSCO will theoretically be deployed until 30 June 2011, authorizing it to concentrate its military forces in the eastern DR Congo while keeping a reserve force capable of redeploying rapidly elsewhere (Security Council, 28 May 2010).

The continuous "networked" character of the Congolese conflict has ultimately made it difficult to envisage a peace process that does not constantly have to swim against the tide. Since the all-inclusive power sharing agreement of July 2003, international donors have set up an ambitious state reconstruction programme, which theoretically includes a process of democratisation and decentralisation, a transition from relief to development aid and a gradual reintegration of former combatants and war-affected households into post-war society. In practice, however, this ideal has been disrupted by several challenges. For example the entire east of the country (including the provinces of North and South Kivu, Ituri, Maniema, and bits of Kasai and Katanga) still faces war-like levels of violence and poverty. Besides the structural inequalities and slave-like conditions which characterize the lives of this region's mostly rural populations, this relentless violence also places serious doubts behind the current liberal peace paradigm, which ideologically defines peace as a necessary "public good", and war as a "public bad" (Richards, 2005). Whereas stabilisation and development programmes usually are confined to a few hotbeds and urban centres, rural communities in eastern DRC remain subjected to the government of highly intricate networks of state and non-state actors who regulate the access to local services and resources through violent negotiation (Garrett et al., 2009). In these areas, where central state administration is usually a far cry, the state remains nevertheless highly present in localized "languages of stateness" (Hansen and Stepputat, 2005) expressed in kilometres of red tape and official bureaucratic documentation as well as in the physical presence of the state's armed forces that add their fuel to the ongoing violence. Calling the army a peace spoiler in these rural and mining areas today is minimalistic if one considers the systematic extortion and rampant rape they continue to inflict on local populations. Recent studies into the challenges to the DRC's democratisation

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[7] In 2011, both the DR Congo and Uganda will have legislative and presidential elections. Both Rwanda and Burundi already had elections in 2010, which were respectively won by Paul Kagame and Pierre Nkurunziza.

process evoke a number of reasons for this persistent predatory rule, including a failed planning of civilian protection by the government and UN forces as well as a staggering army integration (Raeymaekers and Vlassenroot, 2009). The most crucial problem, however, seems to be the "entrenched impunity" in which security operations and reform currently take place in the DR Congo, which can at least partly be related to the government's failure to hold those responsible for war crimes and other violations responsible. Protagonists of previous war crimes, who until recently held elevated army positions, include amongst others Bosco Ntaganda, a war criminal on arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court, as well as other FARDC commanders. According to human rights watchdogs, there exists a direct connection between this entrenched impunity and the intensification of army abuse in the provinces of North and South Kivu, where the FARDC continues to lead operations against a number of non-state armed "spoilers"– most importantly Rwandan Hutu militias. Whereas the relationship between state and non-state human rights offenders in Kivu's vastly occupied hinterland is complex to say the least, it is evident that beneath these recurrent instances of acute violence lay a number of structural conditions of (un)governability that will not simply disappear with elections or even government decentralisation. It is against this background that the lives of forcefully displaced youngsters presented in this study should be interpreted and analyzed.

Youth and forced displacement

Against this background of continuing protracted armed conflict in eastern DRC, the condition of unemployed displaced youth stands out as particularly problematic. Their situation adds up to an already appalling humanitarian environment, which can be related to an almost complete lack of education and health infrastructure as well as extremely high mortality, morbidity and malnutrition rates. These rates are even higher in regions affected by recurrent violence, due to lack of assistance by weak service providers as well as downgraded infrastructure[8].

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[8] Estimates of war victims in DRC are problematic and have come under increasing critique for their shallow empirical underpinnings (amongst others due inaccessible sites and lack of systematic follow-up). UNFPA numbers, which appear more or less reliable, estimated maternal mortality ratio at 549 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2007, infant mortality rates at 115 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2005, and high childhood mortality at 204 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2005. According to FAO data of the year 2000, only about 12 percent of eastern Congolese households could permit themselves three meals a day, 60 percent has two meals and 27 percent has only one meal a day (Vlassenroot, Raeymaekers and Ntububa, 2005).

Two problems stand out as particularly crucial. The first regards the extreme mobility with which assistance providers are faced, not only of internally displaced people (IDP's) but of the rural population of eastern DRC in general. This makes it difficult to concentrate efforts in confined areas or camps. Of the 2.1 million IDP's in eastern DR Congo, for example, only 116,000 find refuge in UNHCR-run sites in the region, a total of 5 ½ percent (IRIN, 27 January 2010). The majority of displaced people continue to find shelter in so-called "spontaneous sites" and (mostly in) host families, whose recipient capacity has nonetheless shown to be very limited. Ad hoc settlements, which include dilapidated buildings and improvised dwellings in forests, have been on the increase since recent fighting in the Masisi area in 2008[9] – bringing the total of (regular and spontaneous) camp dwellers to some 30-35 percent of the total IDP population. Especially in urban areas, this excessive reliance on host families has created additional strains on already poverty-stricken households, whom now additionally have to engage in the assistance of vulnerable people like pregnant women and the elderly. It is not uncommon, therefore, to notice a certain level of discontent arising towards such "temporary guests", which eventually ends with the expulsion of the displaced. Despite these rising problems, aid agencies continue to concentrate their efforts on camps, where they provide emergency assistance, transport and return packages to households that have sometimes been on the run for years[10].

A related problem to such unregistered displacement is that in situations of protracted conflict, migration often becomes a cyclical phenomenon: each time a conflict settles down somewhere, a contamination effect ensues which forces people to flee in the opposite direction. As a result of this recurrent violence, many of eastern Congo's actually live a life "in the limbo" (BBC World Service, 30 October 2009), pending between targeted home areas and adjacent fields as well as frequent (and often individual) dispersions because of armed violence that can erupt at any given moment. More broadly, such dispersed migration patterns should force us to ask more fundamental questions about the prospects of rural households to develop sustainable livelihoods during protracted conflict situations like the eastern DRC, which at some point should also touch on conceptions of what it means to be part of a

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[9] In May 2008 for example, Oxfam reported that recent fighting in North Kivu had given birth to some 20 new spontaneous sites, hosting at least 857,000 IDPs (IRIN, 28 May 2008).

[10] UNDP has recently even increased its effort in this regard as it aims to reach a further 125,000 IDPs in South Kivu through the UN social and economic recovery programme (IDMC website).

household, gain access to assets, generate a stable income and constitute a steady "home". According to Anna Lindley, who has worked in a similar context of Somalia:

> "[T]o understand some violent conflict situations, and to design successful policies to prevent or respond, it is important to go beyond the macro-level, to explore the micro-foundations – the individual, household and group interactions leading to and resulting from conflicts (…). This is perhaps particularly important in the context of protracted crises, where there are often complex and rather localised conflict dynamics." (Lindley, 2009: 4)

Lindley's call for more oblique approaches to phenomena of forced (post-)war displacement stand out as particularly attractive as it tends to start from the everyday realities and trajectories of people rather than privileging status and categorizations of forced migrants as the primary explanatory factor (see also: Bakewell, 2008). Specifically with regard to youth, the pervasiveness of leading categories[11] forces us to reach beyond dominant notions of victimcy and agency in a post-war environment. It has been observed that humanitarian interventions are generally guided by a rather exclusive understanding of children as passive victims of warfare without a proper agency. Such understandings are not only gender-insensitive[12], they also risks reducing the study of youth distress to pure matters of victimcy according to distinct Western and Durkheimian perceptions (Eyber and Ager, 2004; Beneduce et al., 2006). This constitutes a major problem for understanding the life chances of displaced youngsters in post-war situations, as the main characteristic of youth in such "crisis" situations is indeed their straddling along different categories, often without belonging to either. In such situations, youth should indeed be understood above all as "a problematic, intermediary and ambivalent category, chiefly defined by what it is not: youths are not dependent children, but neither are they independent, socially responsible adults." (de Waal, 2002: 15; Sommers, 2006) This makes them particularly amenable to leading the life "in the limbo" that has by now become the dominant characteristic of rural populations in eastern DRC in general.

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[11] By way of example, UNICEF categorizes as "youth" people aged between 15 and 24; Safe the Children extends it to 13-25 – while the UN distinguishes between child (0-18), adolescent (10-19) and adult (18 and older): Sommers (2006).

[12] In some cultures, female adulthood can occur at an early age, for example, while the status of "youth" is also determined by other factors such as (lack of) access to land, labour and family life – which are usually very different for male and female youngsters (Sommers 2002).

In order to cut through this ongoing debate on youth and protracted conflict, a decision had to be taken as to which specific age group this study would focus on. As a guiding indication, it took the age of 12-36 years as the fork to define who categorized as "youth" – mostly because this emerged from preliminary focus group discussions as the minimum and maximum age in which Butembo adolescents usually get married. Locally, marriage acts a major marker of adulthood for both genders (although subtle differences apply). It must be added that most interlocutors (85%) encountered during the survey varied between 18 and 26 years. This already gives an indication of the urbanization of these youngsters' lifestyles, which continues to be laden with social and cultural meanings: contrary to their counterparts in more rural settings, young urban migrants seem to constitute a rather confined group of people that share a number of common (though fluid) traits. Before moving on to the ethnography of young lifestyles in Butembo, however, some indications will be given as to the migration motives and consequences young IDP's in Butembo face in material terms.

Cyclical mobility

A number of common characteristics can be observed between young displaced people in the city of Butembo and forced internal migrants in general. A general observation is that young IDP's live scattered over the urban landscape, mostly with host families and very few in camps. At the time of the research, no such IDP camps were actually operative in Butembo – contrary to Beni and Lubero which continued to host flocks of IDP's from Ituri and Walikale/West Lubero. It is clear that the large majority of these IDP's originally left their homestead because of direct combat and security threats. Only one of the youngsters encountered for this study came from a non-rural context (i.e. the city of Bukavu), which confirms generally observed migration patterns from the countryside to the city in Africa[13].

What makes youth different from other IDP's in Butembo, however, is their weak capacity to develop what Paul Richards and Jean-Pierre Chauveau have called "stable attachments" (cf. supra). This incapacity already starts with their arrival in Butembo, which for close to half of the encountered youth constitutes an alien place in which they have no direct acquaintances:

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[13] It has been estimated that 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities by 2030 and that as many as 60 percent of urban dwellers will be under the age of 18. Almost all of this growth will occur in developing world cities, especially in Africa.

while over half of (54 percent) initially directly went to look for family and kin, 43 percent came to Butembo "by accident", just to find temporary relief from insecurity. This data constitutes a major difference with the general information on IDP's in North Kivu, which reports a total of 80 percent of IDPs being hosted by family and friends (UNICEF/CARE, 2008: 7). While more profound research into this matter is surely warranted, this scattered arrival apparently confirms the unsettled status of Eastern Congo's displaced youngsters in this urban context, who remain squeezed between their original rural homestead to which they cannot or do not want to return, and a new urban environment of which they share no prior material and social knowledge. Particularly the non-hosted IDP's (which make up close to half of the total young IDP population) appear to be blocked in such unstable situations. According to one unemployed youngster interviewed during a group discussion:

> "Really, I live here by grace. It happens sometimes to meet with friends from back home. And then automatically, I ask [for money and food]. At that point, I survive." (Interview, 21 September 2008)

The statement by this young man from Mangina illustrates quite well how the lack of acquaintances of young migrants can easily translate in a lack of access to sustainable livelihood options in cases of unwarranted displacement. A notion of haphazardness introduces itself into the lives of these "unattached" youngsters, which can only partly be redeemed through occasional encounters with social peers (the young man was actually talking to members of a diaspora association of youth from Mangina that acts as a kind of self-help group). Still, the apparent "navigation" of these youngsters through accidental life opportunities in the social space of the city only constitutes a partial picture of young IDP livelihoods in the town of Butembo, as both hosted (i.e. those staying with host families) and non-hosted IDPs face enormous difficulties in making ends meet. Of the 54 percent of young displaced people that originally sought refuge with family and kin, just over one third exclusively receive accommodation (i.e. a bed for the night), while just about half of them also eats at their host's place – mostly in return for a contribution in the form of money or small household labour. Only a very small minority of these hosted youngsters also finds assistance from their host parents for school fees (9 percent), medical care (7 percent) and clothing (3 percent). As said, this tendency can be partly related to the limited capacities of urban host families, who are increasingly incapable of providing even a minimum of support to their unexpected guests (which has itself become a considerable

source of conflict). The material instability of internally displaced youngsters seems to express itself more accurately as a pending social situation characterized by a series of partial attachments to both the urban and rural environment, but none of which exactly figures as a stable "home". This situation is illustrated for example in the testimony of a young girl from Mangina (who was talking at the same meeting) who continues to travel back and forth between Butembo and her rural background in the forest of Biakato. She arrived in Butembo in 2002 together with her mother and father, around the time when the forces of Jean-Pierre Bemba swept across north central Congo with a killing campaign code-named "Effacer le Tableau" ('erasing the Board')[14]. From the moment they arrived in Butembo, however, her parents found it difficult to find a decent living so they left again for Biakato, leaving their daughter behind in her uncle's house. While the girl keeps living with her uncle in town, she occasionally sends some money home to her parents via a friend or family member. But she finds the transfer difficult because her friend sometimes consumes the money during the trip. In addition, her host family is also limited in its capacities: "What I see is that my uncle also has children, so I can not ask [for support] like them," she said during our encounter at the centre (interview, 21 September 2008). So she continues doing little works in the household along with her daily labour of towing products from the surrounding fields towards the centre of town.

The biographical examples from these two youngsters offer a first – albeit superficial – insight into the difficulties young displaced people face once they try to settle in an urban war-stricken environment. One of the first observations one can make on the basis of these testimonies regards the sheer inelasticity of the concept "host family", which in the given context even acquires a hint of naivety. The concept appears to insufficiently capture the dispersed nature of Congolese households and their young displaced guests, as well as the modes in which the latter try to secure food and accommodation. A few extreme circumstances aside in which insecurity totally impedes a return to home regions (like for example the most remote parts of Walikale, in North-western Kivu) a more frequent mobility

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[14] This military campaign acquired serious indignation for the sheer brutality in which the Mouvement du Liberation du Congo (MLC) and its associated forces skimmed over Kivu's countryside, leaving a trail of destruction and innocent victims in their tracks. In international media, '*Effacer le Tableau*' quickly became emblematic for the barbarity of Congo's war as it unfolded amongst others under allegations of cannibalism, for which the MLC leader Jean-Pierre Bemba eventually had to stand trial in the International Criminal Court. The brutality and almost carnavalesque manner in which this operation took shape – with commander nicknames such as '*Le Roi des Imbéciles*' – caused a flow of refugees and internationally displaced people, mostly from the territory of Beni where the focal point of this campaign was situated.

pattern among displaced youngsters actually consists of circular migration between their original homesteads and new urban environments, in which the latter remains the main but never the exclusive place of residence. Displaced school attending youngsters, for example, frequently combine a more or less permanent residence in town during teaching semesters (with either family or acquired acquaintances) with brief but regular stays at their parents' place during school holidays. Whereas their urban hosts usually ask for some kind of contribution to cover basic needs, school holidays serve as a period of saving and (occasionally) luxury spending – also to show off against fellow villagers that have not (yet) adopted their urban lifestyles. As one boy from Mangina explained, he uses his visits to the village to harvest and sell agricultural produce on the market, which enables him for example to buy a nice shirt with his savings (interview, 21 September 2008). The resulting solidarity pattern between these youngsters and their respective (host) parents can thus be described as a kind of give-and-take relationship in which support and food are shared sequentially (i.e. based on a particular time-space continuum) rather than being based on the immediate "despair" solidarity described by Trefon and others (Trefon, 2004, cf. infra). While this type of sequential solidarity requires some flexibility from the part of the youngsters' "*encadreurs*" – for example teachers, who might have to wait months to be paid their weekly "*minerval*" or school fee – it does open up a modest time frame for them to jumpstart livelihood options and calculate existing risks. In some cases, their activities in town even permit them to provide in the livelihoods of relatives and friends. As several youngsters testified during focus group discussions, their "*encadreurs*" are generally tolerant towards delays in payments until the support arrives in the form of a letter or a friend. Needless to say that such accumulation of debts at various ends of the counter also opens the door to considerable misuse. Frequent are the testimonies in Butembo and surroundings in which the support or money transferred through intermediaries eventually did not arrive…

Notwithstanding these numerous difficulties in maintaining a living between distant life worlds, most displaced youngsters interviewed for this study actually preferred to stay in Butembo and surroundings, mostly because they find the urban environment offering more opportunities in terms of jobs and the socio-economic environment. Whereas no unconditional questions were asked regarding an eventual return to the "home" region (also because this question can easily be misinterpreted especially if asked by a white foreign interviewer), the main motives for displaced youngsters to stay in Butembo were

the favourable social and economic environment of the city (69 percent), and access to work and resources (24 percent).

Finally, such cyclical migration patterns also translate into discussions about what exactly it means to have a home or to be *at* home for displaced urban youngsters. In Swahili, these are two different terms, which are respectively indicated with the word *nyumba* (house) and *kwango* (being home, or '*chez soi*' in French). Whereas large agreement appears to exist between young IDP's over the necessity to be able to cover one's needs and not depend on others ("*ne pas être sous tutelle*") – the most important asset for this being to have a stable job (*kazi*) – a gendered dimension adds itself to the discussion, with male youth emphasizing the need to buy a proper plot of land ('*une parcelle*') to build a house and raise a family[15] and girls emphasizing the need to find a good environment, where one could develop one's qualities and raise a family eventually. According to one female participant:

> "I think what is best, what is good, is to stay there where you can find a living, with little difference between remaining here at home, to go somewhere else, or to go back to your family to do nothing. It is good to stay here if you have something on your hands. (...): if you find a living, regardless the environment, this suits you better ("*cela arrange mieux*")."

Urban life worlds

The main focus of this study has been on professional occupations of displaced adolescents in the urban economy of Butembo though – which commonly is characterized as "informal" (Mirembe, 2002) and a potential safety net for the poor (Cooper, 2002; Goodhand, 2004). Notwithstanding the appeal of such urban occupations and their associated lifestyles, the survey among young adolescents occupied in the city's many informal jobs – which go from chart towers to gravel crushers to petty traders – nonetheless shows a complete different picture that appears to contradict these two starting positions. On the one hand, the classic understanding of this "informal" economy as a separate and small-scale alternative against predatory (state) intervention completely ignores the systematic connections that exist

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[15] According to one participant to a focus group discussion: "*Kwango*, there one directly makes an allusion to one's plot (...). You can have a wife or not, but you're always *kwango* (...) In the first place, one's first vision must be the plot [of land]." (Interview 21 September 2008)

between capitalist and non-capitalist as well as state and non-state registers and modes of market intervention in the given domain. On the other hand, it also denies the important power issues that are at stake in defining the access of these youngsters to decent jobs, which I will concentrate on in the following paragraphs. Following a brief discussion of the results of this survey, the paper will continue analyzing specifically this latter aspect of the urban labour market through a discussion of the notion of social capital in the given context and (in the following section) two biographical examples. A general conclusion will try to bring some of the emerging issues together.

The driving question behind the survey conducted for this paper was which occupations displaced youngsters in Butembo and Bunyuka (an adjacent rural periphery) were employed in, and what would be their desired job if for some reason these main occupations would become unavailable. These two settings were chosen partly for comparative reasons (foremost to note differences between urban and near-to-rural settings) and partly because of a broader interest in issues of embeddedness and security (for example to see if "stable" occupations in rural and urban settings resulted in less or more tolerance for violence). The survey gave a good outline of youngsters' preferences in terms of jobs and access problems, which could also be diversified gender-wise. Expectedly, the bulk of respondents told that they were employed in agriculture: 27.5 and 70 percent in Butembo and Bunyuka respectively, while about one third (29.7) of people doing two or more jobs found an income in this sector (with a small difference ratio between town and country of 0.9). The remaining part of displaced youngsters in and around Butembo were employed either in petty commerce (14 and 11 percent in Butembo and Bunyuka respectively), the transport sector (12 and 0.7 percent respectively), or as "teachers" (24 and 13 percent)[16]. In addition, about 2.9 to 9.6 percent of peri-urban and urban youngsters were engaged in '*bikakala*' or temporary jobs, while about 7 to 15 percent saw it as a potential job in case they lost their current occupation(s). This differentiation already gives and indication of these youngsters' professional adaptiveness, as most (52 percent) comes from a job in agriculture since their flight from their original rural homesteads (actually all but one come from a rural background).

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[16] This last category might be a misrepresentation, however, which can be due to the selection method of interviewees through diaspora and professional associations (which commonly host the more educated among the adolescents). Butembo does nonetheless offer a market for private education in the form of language and computer courses, which are much aspired to by youngsters trying to diversify their talents.

What arises from this modest survey is an ensemble of steady and less steady occupations that are considerably different between town and countryside as well as between gender roles. A general observation is that the countryside theoretically offers a more stable economic environment in terms of labour opportunities (with agriculture being the most important employer there), while urban youngsters find more difficulty in combining income from irregular occupations like petty commerce (e.g. selling small foodstuffs like bananas and fritters), towing around packages and driving taxis or offering services to the many commercial intermediaries that populate the urban "informal" economy. A considerable segment of displaced urban youth, for example, is forced to secure a daily income temporary jobs or what is locally called '*bikakala*' – which literally means "through offer and demand". In a way, this term represents the often harsh economic conditions people are faced with in the execution of these petty jobs, which can basically involve anything from digging toilets to crushing stones and carrying sand (usually done by men), to preparing fritters ('*beignets*'), selling bananas and '*aracque*' (an alcoholic maize drink) on the side of the road (mostly a women's job) or to load trucks as a '*bombeur*' and drive a '*chukudu*' through Butembo's dusty streets. Particularly this latter occupation seems to occupy young – especially male – immigrant labourers in the city. During our survey in Butembo and Bunyuka, around 7 percent of interviewed youngsters (of which only one in Bunyuka) declared to practice this job while 6.5 percent saw it as a potential job in case they lost their current occupations[17].

The hypothetical advantage of rural IDP's in terms of stable livelihood opportunities immediately drops though if one considers their lack of access from a larger perspective of *accessibility* to alternative occupations, which has more to do with individual capacities to diversify livelihoods (Alinovi et al., 2008). Apart from agriculture, adolescents in rural environments really don't have much possibility to engage in alternative employment: teaching disregarded, commerce and transport only account for about 12.5 percent of

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[17] A *chukudu* is an onomatopoeia for the wooden, non-motorized scooters which are used in eastern Congo for the transport of charcoal, jerry cans and wooden boxes, cabbages and other foodstuffs. Since transport infrastructure is so low, *chukudus* and bicycles have practically become the only affordable transport from Congo's eastern border to the densely forested areas of Kivu, Maniema and Oriental province. As a result, it has become an attractive occupation for young and exclusively male drivers, who are prepared to travel several weeks to export palm oil, coltan and other valuable goods from the forest areas in return for commercial goods imported from Uganda and East Africa for a few dollars wage. Some analysts have even described it as a relief for peasant mothers who traditionally carry the family's load on their bare heads (see *Washington Post*, 29 March 2009). In the town of Butembo, a *chukudu* driver can earn up to $10 a day carrying goods across town, so the profession is consequently much aspired to by displaced youngsters looking to earn a living in the urban second economy.

countryside jobs. This constitutes a major problem, because many of the young displaced people are forced to engage in numerous jobs in order to reach a sustainable income: actually close to one third of the interviewed youth said they engaged in supplementary labour. The problem for rural adolescents is that these alternative jobs are usually found outside the "traditional" sphere of agriculture, mainly in petty commerce and transport: while close to one half (41.6 percent) of displaced youngsters engaged in a second job found an income in petty trade, only one third (29.7 percent) did so in agriculture (with a town-country difference ratio of 0.7 and 0.85 respectively). These diversifications point at an interesting socio-cultural transformation in youth occupations in and around Butembo, which gradually but steadily integrates more urbanized and "modern" lifestyles. Moreover, this diversification appears to have an important impact on youth ambitions: whereas less and less displaced youngsters imagine a life in agriculture (44.6 and 55.4 percent in Butembo and Bunyuka respectively, compared to an almost 100 percent occupation in agriculture prior to forced displacement), an increasing segment of adolescents on the countryside (65.2 percent) imagine themselves performing a job in the commercial sector at some point in the future. While it is probably premature to talk about fundamental shifts here, these aspirations do nonetheless confirm tendencies in other post-conflict areas where "particularly (…) young people (…) consider themselves to be urbanized and have no real desire to return to their rural origins." (Jacobsen, Lautze and Osman, 2001: 84)

A final element in youth occupations that attracts attention is the role of gender. In a straightforward manner, more girls seem to be engaged in the commercial sector than men. The difference rate is about 2 to 1 (both as a second and an imagined future job), and on the countryside it is even higher. This is interesting in terms of IDP's backgrounds, as the majority of youngsters with a previous job in agriculture (55 percent), are girls. This demonstrates not only a greater adaptiveness of girls to the urban economy, but also their tendency to easily accept new and strident labour conditions. This tendency is also demonstrated in the differentiation of '*bikakala*' jobs, in which girls engage equally or even more than boys. During focus group discussions, female urban dwellers regularly told they were towing charts and dragging sand just like boys, in addition to the housekeeping and other obligations they had to do for their host families. This could suggest a gradual shift in gender patterns of (displaced) urban youth that would be interesting to explore in future studies.

The downside of social capital

An often disregarded dimension of displaced youth employment in post-conflict environments finally constitutes their usage of social (or political) capital. This notion, which has taken increasing prominence in livelihoods research (De Haan and Zoomers, 2005), builds on the classic deprivation argument that for development to take place, individual agents should employ the right dose of social networks in order to gain access to indispensable assets like jobs, land and so on. According Michael Woolcock (1998: 175):

> "[F]or development to proceed in poor communities, the initial benefits of intensive intra-community integration, such as they are, must give way over time to extensive extra-community linkages: too much or too little of either dimension at any given moment undermines economic advancement."

Woolcock uses the notion proposed some time ago by Mark Granovetter of coupling and decoupling. This notion uses the analysis of non-communal ties to explain the different ways in which communities and individuals organize for common goals. But instead of the classical reference to culture and personality (inspired by the modernization approach), Granovetter suggests a more structural analytical tool to explain why some networks of individuals are more likely to be successful in the mobilization of their social capital (coupling), and why others are not (Granovetter, 1973). He calls this the "strength of weak social ties", which basically means that the transitivity of knowledge and economic opportunities is dependent on the bridging ties one develops with people outside immediate social circles. In the words of one male youngster in one of Butembo's rural peripheries: "[h]ere to get a job, you must have acquaintances. As we do not have those, we do not find work." (Interview, 22 September 2008)

More than such bridging social ties, what seems to occupy Butembo's displaced youngsters in their quest for a sustainable living seems to be their lack of linkages to powerful economic operators in town, whom also happen to be the main providers of their most needed asset: labour. As was shortly explained in the introduction, Butembo's economy continues to be organized around a closed circle of traders and employers who effectuate a strong control over both transport networks and the commercial commodity chain, which impedes a flexible entry of workers. The fact that most of these businesses are organized on a family basis makes

it very difficult for outsiders to gain a job in this "second" economy – especially since the first one (administration and services) has collapsed time ago under a staggering Mobutu regime. A recurrent definition of this oligopolistic economic organisation by displaced youth, is that of '*tribalisme*' (tribalism). According to one male adolescent from Mangina interviewed during a group discussion:

> "What I have observed here is that there is a lot of tribalism, or in other words [the need for] acquaintances." (Interview, 21 September 2008)

Other displaced youngsters use the term stranger (Swahili: *wakujakuja)* to describe their social condition in Butembo (interviews 21-22 September 2008). This double notion of being a stranger in a "tribal" environment is interesting from a social ethnographic viewpoint, because it evokes the construction of a social urban space in which the entry of "marginal" subjects (i.e. those coming from outside and thus have no direct attachments to the city's political economy) is highly regulated and confined by a closed community of "autochthonous" Butembo citizens – who are by no means all important entrepreneurs. This increasing commoditization of social relations appears to have given rise to a new differentiation between *Bubolais* (the inhabitants of Butembo) and "strangers" that is not purely based on ethic terms but follows a more commercial logic[18]. In this sense, the current study connects with other observations made by a social anthropologist in the region who talks about a "caul" or membrane that captures would-be Butembo inhabitants in a discursive net. As she says, immigrants from other parts of the Congo (…) regularly complain they face problems integrating in Butembo's society. They also deplore that after having lived in the city for a while, "one becomes like them", which partly refers to the inhabitants' assumed lack of sociability. Being very much aware of the closed character of the city and of the particular atmosphere that lingers inside its limits, such observations force us to reflect more deeply about the (spatial, social) "rendition" of the city and its reproduction of social life (Geenen, 2010: 1-2). At the same time, it makes it interesting to untangle what Honwana and De Boeck call the "tactical agency" of African displaced youngsters in such closed social environments, which also forms an expression of their

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[18] One distinguishing linguistic marker to distinguish between *Bubolais* and other Nande for example is the particular Swahili vernacular people use in daily interaction, which is usually mixed with Lingala and Sudanic languages if they come from Beni and Ituri. This mixture can be related to the more "cosmopolitan" character of these northern territories, where the influence of administration and cross-border exchange has "polluted" the original Nande image (see also Geenen, 2010).

political consciousness as actors and participants in a constructed social space (Honwana and De Boeck, 2005). Building on Woolcock, there arises a need to expand the limited usage of the term "social capital" to explain why some people are able to construct a sustainable livelihood in a given time and space, and others are not. In order to overcome problems of vulnerability, people simultaneously need to assemble the range of contacts, capabilities and resources to take advantage of available opportunities[19]. As the two biographical examples in the following paragraphs indicate, quite different realities can emerge from this ensuing dialectic between livelihood options and social networks. I will specifically evoke the testimonies of a former militia commander and a pit delver in Butembo – in part also to connect the life worlds of two youngsters that theoretically represent each others opposites (i.e. as violent and non-violent youth). A short conclusion will bring these two experiences together from a larger, viewpoint of sustainable livelihoods analysis.

Rafale

The story of Rafale offers a good documentation of the "veil" that surrounds Butembo's labour market and which neatly divides insiders from outsiders by form of an inclusionary exclusion (Agamben, 1995). I originally met Rafale in Furu, a neighbourhood on the northern outskirts of Butembo that originally formed the labour settlement of the colonial mining company *Minière des Grand Lacs* (MGL), which in the 1920's to late 1950's practically "owned" one third of North Kivu's territory (Raeymaekers, 2007). The neighbourhood forms a vivid expression of the ambivalent relationship of Butembo with its immigrant reality, since it historically served as the home for the steady flow of workers and truck drivers that used to be employed in the mines as slaves. Since MGL closed its activities in the early 1960s, the neighbourhood gradually gathered a name as '*bidonville*' and a notorious nest of crime and disruption. At the same time, it also bursts with "parallel" authorities and forms of public protest that all seem to concentrate in the local '*Parlement*' – a semi-representative body that functions as a neighbourhood watchdog and

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[19] Some – Skandinavian – anthropologists have usefully tried to reintroduce this notion of capabilities using Ralf Dahrendorf's proposition of life *chances*, which consist of both options and nexuses (or ligatures); whereas options represent the variety of possibilities for an individual or household (similar to livelihood assets), nexuses are the social networks through which such options acquire meaning and realization (see for example Utas, 2003; Akesson, 2004; Vigh, 2006; Bjarnesen, 2009).

speakers' corner under the cover of a UNHCR sheeting. Furu thus appears as a rather typical example of the frontier status peripheral urban areas have acquired in African cities, and which are productive of a daily mixture of protest and negotiation, social banditry and "parallel" institutions that serve both as a buffer and an accommodation against dominant registers of rule (Wacquant, 1997). Interesting for the use of this paper is the ample use of the category "youth" in the given context, a reference that seems to be associated more with a particular social condition (particularly of being '*chomeurs*', or unemployed) than with a specific age group. The frequent participants in this local '*Parlement*' use the terminology of youth ("*jeunes du quartier*", "*jeunes du milieu*") to indicate their position marginal subjects and social outcasts.

After having frequented the Furu Parliamant for some time, its president introduced me to Rafale during a field trip in September 2008. We met in Rafale's home in Furu, a little shack where he sat together with a group of friends, all former Mayi Mayi fighters that had deserted from the bush. He immediately explained to me that he found life in Butembo "*un peu difficile*" with regard to the bush. The pressing problem that seemed to touch all his companions was that they could neither claim the benefits of either world: whereas his former Mayi Mayi companions in the bush now treated him as a traitor and were on the lookout for him, he also found it impossible to integrate in his new, urban environment. During the time of the interview he was 21 years old. The only chance for survival upon his arrival in Butembo was to work as an apprentice in a furniture shop where he used to come as a child. As he explains:

> "It is only now that I learn how to work, because I went to the bush as a child and was only trained to kill the enemy. But once I returned now that's how I have to adapt to life."

Rafale's tenuous social condition became rapidly clear once he discovered that he had to pay his employer in order to become his apprentice. Besides this expensive entry ticket, the financial gains of his new job also proved insufficient as his boss was paying him badly. For a small chair of 100 CFR, he had to pay his boss 50 CFR back for the use of material and working space. But what drove him increasingly mad was the continuous climate of distrust, innuendo and suspicion with which his boss and fellow companions bestowed him on a daily basis. Every time he lent some money to fellow apprentices, or asked his boss for an advance

payment, his personal history as a Mayi Mayi fighter descended upon him like an ugly phantom which denied him his claim to a righteous share of Butembo's wealth. This basically reduced Rafale to a life in the shadows, as every intimacy, every reference to his personal experience could potentially be used against him – notwithstanding the contribution he and his fellow brothers-in-arms made to the "liberation" of the city from external enemies[20]. On a larger scale, therefore, the condition of Rafale illustrates quite sharply the association of "displaced" migrant youth with the *political* economy of urban markets, which also serves as a channel to legitimate certain modes of capital accumulation and distribution of resources to the included/excluded. More specifically, it illustrates the progressive commoditisation of social relations according to a closed and inward-looking logic which Theodore Trefon referred to earlier as "despair solidarity". According to Trefon, this consists of a pragmatic system of economic exchange based on a tit-for-tat, give and take normativity:

> "The collective social values and practices characteristic of rural life in Congo have given way to the demands and contradictions of a market economy in which the individual is central. Attitudes and behaviours have evolved due to the degree of crisis and specifically the difficulties in finding cash-earning employment. Always looking for new ways to cope, poverty is psychologically transformed into 'despair solidarity'. While the Congolese are able to willing to extend psychological support, financial and material constraints limit this solidarity to a pragmatic system of exchange." (Trefon, 2004)

Mumbere

From a broader viewpoint, these transformations of social solidarity patterns in a post-war Congolese city force us to actively re-think the nature of market conditions in the aftermath of war – also because the everyday experience of so-called violent and non-violent youth does not seem all that different. Rather, it dresses a picture of post-war society in which the claim of exclusive citizenship – formerly expressed in terms of ethnicity, tribe or even race – has gradually made place for an economic governmentality in which exclusion is enforced through the agency of the market. This tendency becomes evident in the testimony of

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[20] A detailed analysis of these Mayi Mayi militias and their relation to town goes beyond the scope of this paper. For more details, see Jourdan (2010).

Mumbere, a Munande from the territory of Beni who arrived in Butembo around October 2002 as a result of the operation '*Effacer le Tableau*' (cf. supra). Mumbere remembers loosing his brothers, sisters and parents on the way to Butembo, where he stayed for several months trying to find a safe place to live. Initially, he stayed in a temporary settlement close to the airport at Rwenda, but when Bemba's troops clashed there with local Mayi Mayi militias, he had to escape again. He remembers a long period wandering around town without having a proper residence. At a certain point, '*un bon Samaritain*' offered him a place to sleep, but after three weeks he was kicked out again. That was the beginning of a very difficult period for Mumbere: as he was a visitor ('*un visiteur*') and nobody knew who he was or where he came from, he was forced to rent a bed for the night, a little shack that cost him $3 a month:

"There at least I knew they couldn't chase me, there I could each time go to sleep."

The next problem for Mumbere was now to earn his $3 to pay for his room. So he started looking around and found a job as a toilet digger:

"It was a very hard job, but I continued since it helped me anyway to pay my rent. I found that I tired too much; it was as if I had fire in my body. I thought I could even die before reaching my age. But here in Butembo, since there is all this tribalism I have failed to find another job (…). With the fear of dying, I thus continue digging these pits."

Conclusions

This study has tried to give a modest indication of what it means to be young, displaced and looking for a job in a war-affected town of the Democratic Republic of Congo. As a tentative conclusion, I have distilled two distinct trends from this brief encounter with Butembo's immigrant youth. The first of these is that displaced youngsters in Butembo seem to follow the general trend of other African countries emerging from protracted conflict, which involves a steady urbanization as well as a youth's refusal of "traditional" agricultural lifestyles. The combined consequences of war, rural underdevelopment and global marginalization appear to be rapidly fostering a societal shift in the given context towards urban and more "modern" lifestyles. Indicatively, this observation suggests that Richards and Chauveau are only partly

right when they state that the establishment of stable rural attachments provides a *sine-qua non* for conflict-affected youth to resolve their enforced status of hyper mobility and social exclusion. Besides the many problems that have arisen – and continue to arise – with regard to access to land and political participation of rural youth in eastern Congo (and which are amply discussed elsewhere), the brief encounter I had with displaced youngsters in the Butembo area suggests their determination to definitively leave their original rural backgrounds and construct a life that sits between agricultural and urban sources of income. When looking at their ambitions, however, the tendency is definitely towards urban professions and lifestyles: a large majority of interviewed youth (85 percent) don't want to maintain agriculture as a primary occupation but instead envisages a future in the city in for example commerce and services (about 40 percent), intellectual labour (17 percent), artisan occupations (10 percent), or administrative jobs (10 percent). Any social programme that envisages helping displaced youth to develop their capacities should involve awareness about this quest for a socio-economic climate attached to the imagery of city life.

The second conclusion of this study is that youth access to decent jobs is severely blocked, not so much by their social capital and lack of stable attachments but rather by a murderous market equilibrium. As was explained in the beginning of this study, northeast Congo's regional market continues to be manipulated by a closed circle of oligopolist traders, some of whom have a vested interest in conflict economies, and this obviously has a pernicious effect on migrating youth. With some care, one could maintain that Butembo's configuration of interests and rule is in no way different to the autochthonous-immigrant divides that have been noticed in other 'post'-conflict settings such as the more southern parts of North Kivu or even Ivory Coast, where access to land and other important livelihoods assets are encapsulated by a closed group of gatekeepers. In this sense, the present study connects with more critical voices that have been raised recently in livelihoods research and which ask for greater attention to dialectics of power (for example De Haan en Zoomers, 2005; Prowse, 2008). A more sociological perspective can help illuminate how such power dynamics are not only informed by the immediacy of economic opportunity but also by imageries tied to people's ambitions in the social world. On the one hand, this illustrates how youth displacement continues to be informed by many "detours", unwilling dispositions and trajectories (Vigh, 2006: 14). On the other hand, it shows that the ways in which such social navigation is being directed is also highly informed by explicitly *political* notions of legitimate social action which connects socio-economic access/distress to local constructions

of autochthony and social inclusion/exclusion. This is probably why it remains important evoking the potentiality of young – and especially displaced young – people to carve out a sustainable livelihood in a war-affected environment not as conflict risks and social outcasts but as integrated members who contribute to the rebuilding of society in a constructive manner.

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