Figurations of displacement in the DRC: empirical findings and reflections on protracted displacement and translocal connections of Congolese IDPs

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TRAF°G

Transnational Figurations of Displacement

Figurations of Displacement in the DRC

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SUMMARY

This *working paper* is based on empirical research on translocal figurations of displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It contains methodological reflections, central findings, and reflections on these findings. Drawing on the conceptual framework that was developed in *TRAFIG working paper 1*, this *paper* explores TRAFIG's central question: "How are protractedness, dependency and vulnerability related to the factors of local and translocal connectivity and mobility, and, in turn, how can connectivity and mobility be utilised to enhance the self-reliance and strengthen the resilience of displaced people?" The *paper* presents findings from the east of the DRC, where many internally displaced persons (IDPs) seek refuge in host communities.

Findings show that prior connections with members in the host communities are usually within the domestic sphere and are important drivers for people's decision to flee to a specific place. In rebuilding their lives in displacement—and hence in their efforts to move out of protracted displacement and to become integrated— these contacts are often key to set in motion a 'chain of connectivity' that opens up new opportunities: One contact helps them to get in touch with the next contact. For IDPS, it is not so much the number of their connections that are important but the quality of these connections. A small number of vertical connections with socio-economically more powerful and/or better-integrated contacts can sometimes be more helpful than a large number of horizontal connections with people that are in equally vulnerable positions.

When IDPs use mobility as an asset to become integrated, this mobility is mostly used to free resources in the community of origin and to capitalise on these resources in the new environment. In this way, rural resources become part of people's urban livelihood strategies. By introducing these resources in the city and thereby drawing on their translocal connections, IDPs enrich the local economy and at the same time become more accepted and better integrated.

KEYWORDS

Protracted displacement, IDPs, legal framework, urban displacement, IDP–host relations, connectivity, mobility, agency, durable solutions, local integration, Democratic Republic of the Congo

CONTENTS

Introduction

"I still have my fields in [...]. I go there to get my part of the harvest, but I cannot stay too long because of the conflict" (SSI-ULEI-JR-001-COD).

This *working paper* describes and analyses empirical data that have been collected in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as part of the project "Transnational Figurations of Displacement" (TRAFIG), funded by the European Union and coordinated by BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion). The overall objective of TRAFIG is "to contribute to the development of alternative solutions to protracted displacement that are better tailored to the needs and capacities of persons affected by displacement" (Etzold et al., 2019). The main question that our research aims to answer is: How are protractedness, dependency and vulnerability related to the factors of local and translocal connectivity and mobility, and, in turn, how can connectivity and mobility be utilised to enhance the self-reliance and strengthen the resilience of displaced people?

Theoretically, the research is grounded in figurational sociology (Elias, 1978), which means that we look at the networks and interdependencies of displaced people. Through a process-oriented approach, we analyse these networks in time and space. By analysing people's connections and their mobility, we aim to gain a better understanding of how translocal figurations of displacement help people in their everyday lives. Within TRAFIG, we use the concept of 'translocal figurations' as set out in *TRAFIG working paper 1* (Etzold et al., 2019). The concept serves as a heuristic tool to understand social relations as well as the dynamics that shape these relations. It allows us to pay attention to the agency of the individual, to power relations and the structural forces that impact upon the individual. The notion of translocality enables us to look beyond a particular space and time and pay attention to connections that might not be visible at first sight (Etzold et al., 2019).

TRAFIG looks into various groups of displaced people, Congolese, Eritreans, Afghans, Syrians, in various countries. We hence follow some of the main mobility patterns of these groups of displaced, and the project team members have thus far conducted research in the DRC, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Greece, Italy and Germany.

This *working paper* focuses on findings from the DRC. The majority of Congolese people who flee from conflict and insecurity do not cross international borders but remain within their own country as internally displaced persons (IDPs). The country is home to more than five million IDPs (UNOCHA, 2019). Globally, about one out of ten IDPs is Congolese (IDMC, 2020). In contrast to displaced persons crossing international borders, IDPs ultimately rely on the protection of their own state. Special state obligations follow from specific international instruments, such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention. These should provide further protection to IDPs in addition to the rights they already have as citizens of their country. In practice, however, IDPs often have to fend for themselves without significant support by humanitarian state and non-state actors, especially when they flee to urban settings where they are largely 'off the radar'. We aim to contribute to more and better insights on this group of urban displaced people.

The quote with which we start this paper is illustrative of the core of our research. The words come from Ntama, a 54-year old widow who fled to the eastern Congolese city of Bukavu in 2003. Although she earned some income in the city, she still kept her fields in her community of origin to be able to feed her family. She had arranged with members of a local church that even though they cultivated the field, she was still entitled to receive part of the harvest. Like many IDPs we met, she stays connected with her place of origin. To make a living in displacement in the city, she partly relies on these connections to tap into resources from her home community. Ntama's situation represents an instance of what we in TRAFIG theorise as translocal figurations of displacement, namely a specific set of translocal relations that shape the everyday lives of people in protracted displacement.

In the following section, we first provide more detail on the empirical design of the study, its limitations and some background on how the data collection processes unfolded in practice, including the challenges we encountered. Chapter 2 provides a sketch of the figuration of displacement in the DRC and how this has developed over time. Chapter 3 consists of the main body of our paper and presents and analyses the empirical data in reference to the five main themes of TRAFIG. Thus, section 3.1. looks into the governance regimes of aid and asylum as they apply in the DRC, and how displaced people navigate these regimes, both to seek safety and protection, as well as for their daily survival. Section 3.2 revolves around the theme 'Living in limbo' and analyses how internally displaced people sustain their lives and livelihoods but also to what extent they are able to escape from uncertainty. In contrast to refugees, IDPs are not in legal limbo, but their 'limbo' is related to spatial, relational and economic uncertainty. Section 3.3. follows their networks

and looks into how people's connections help them to be mobile; to move to the city; to move on to elsewhere, or to move back to their community of origin. Section 3.4 investigates how people in displacement build alliances and become locally integrated. Because local integration is highly relational, we look into the relations between displaced people and members of the host community under this theme. Section 3.5 briefly looks at how IDPs seize opportunities and explores the economic impact of IDPs on the host community. We argue that it is not necessarily about seizing existing opportunities, but also about actively 'creating opportunities'. Finally, Chapter 4 provides a discussion of some cross-cutting findings and other emerging themes that resulted from our research. Amongst others, we pay attention to gendered protractedness, witchcraft and issues of trust, the general culture of self-reliance in the Congo and ethnicity. In the concluding section, we provide a short summary of our main findings related to the notion of translocal figurations of displacement and how connectivity and mobility could be means to help IDPs to find a durable solution out of protracted displacement.

This *working paper* draws partly from an internal report that was written at the end of the qualitative field research. Adjusted and more elaborate versions of the thematic sections (3.1–3.5) will be published in French in the special issue of the Bukavu-based journal *Cahier du CERPRU,* the journal of the Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural de Bukavu (ISDR). The analysis and writing of this *paper* draws from the articles that have been prepared for this special issue.

1. Empirical design and limitations of the study

This *working paper* is based on empirical findings for which data were collected in the city of Bukavu, in the east of the DRC. In the following, we provide more detail on the research team, the choice of research sites, sampling, planning, our approach to data analysis and the challenges we faced during the study. For an overview of the different methods used, see the figure on page. 7. The report relies mostly on qualitative data collected.

1.1 Research team and location

The Congo research team consists of three principal researchers: Stanislas Lubala Kubiha, Innocent Assumani and Joachim Ruhamya, three research assistants: Rachel Sifa Katembera, Innocent Basubi and David Nganirwa and two coordinators: Patrick Milabyo Kyamusugulwa and Carolien Jacobs. The coordinators and main researchers have been working together as a team on various projects since 2014. The two coordinators have collaborated since 2012. Previous projects also had a particular focus on IDPs and used a mixed-methods approach to data collection. We were, therefore, able to build on existing contacts, knowledge and experience when we were preparing our field research. The previous experience also fed into our analysis. The research assistants were added to the team to support the survey. Rachel Katembera continued to work with the team for further analysis and writing.

Since most displaced people in the DRC are self-settled IDPs who live in host communities, we decided to focus primarily on them, as it will provide the most representative picture of the DRC's displaced people. We chose Bukavu as the main research site. The Congolese researchers are all based in Bukavu and hence have a wealth of useful contacts and entry points for getting access to data. To include people with different origins, each of the three principal researchers was responsible for one of the communes of Bukavu. That way, we were able to diversify our sample despite being in one main research site. Due to security concerns, we did not conduct research outside of the city of Bukavu.[1]

1.2 Sampling and data collection

To identify and approach respondents, we used various sampling techniques. First of all, the three main researchers met with the *bourgemestres* of the respective *communes* in which they were planning to collect data. These administrative authorities decide on whether to permit research in their areas or not. Letters signed by these authorities ensure access to lower-level administrative authorities. These lower-level authorities are the first entry points for data collection. The country enjoys a fine-grained public administration structure that runs deep into the veins of society. Below the level of the commune are the neighbourhoods (*quartier*), the cell (*cellule*), the street (*avenue*), and finally the 'ten houses'(*nyumbakumi*). Each of these structures has its own chief (mostly not remunerated) who knows the people who are living in the area under their jurisdiction well. Sometimes, chiefs would indicate specific respondents (and introduce us to them); in other cases, they would indicate specific parts of the neighbourhood known to host high numbers of IDPs. We also used snowball sampling by asking respondents to introduce us to other respondents. Another means of collecting data was by simply walking around in areas and asking around. To triangulate our findings, and to be able to assess to what extent IDPs' lives in displacement differ from that of other migrants and non-displaced people, we also included some respondents from these groups. This also helped us to understand the relations between IDPs and hosts better. Furthermore, we chose different time slots during the day, including early mornings and evenings, to ensure that we would also encounter people who are at work during the day.

Before we started collecting the data, our team held a methodology workshop in Bukavu in August 2019. During this workshop, we drew from the TRAFIG proposal and the internal methods handbook to discuss the research methods and questions. We operationalised the interview questions for use on-site and carried out pilot interviews based on our semi-structured interview guide.

The first phase of fieldwork took place from September to December 2019. This was the qualitative phase in which we did semi-structured interviews, expert interviews, life histories, and participant observation. The researchers digitalised the data and shared and discussed them with the coordinators. Sometimes, this gave rise to follow-up questions. In February 2020, the research team had another internal workshop during which we discussed the findings thus far and prepared for the second phase of data collection. We practised using tablets and the Kobo Toolbox to enter the survey data, piloted the survey and formulated topics that each focus group discussion would

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1   Between 1 June 2017 and 26 June 2019, the Kivu Security Tracker documented 3,015 incidents of fighting and abuses with 6,555 victims, of whom 1,897 were killed. Significantly, 45 per cent of the killings took place within one kilometre of a major road (Congo Research Group, 2019). Travel regulations of Leiden University do not allow team member Carolien Jacobs to travel outside of Bukavu. For ethical reasons, this is therefore also not demanded from the Congolese researchers. This is a very practical additional reason why our empirical research is limited to Bukavu.

cover. After having completed the survey and focus group discussions in February and March, we concluded data collection on 9 April 2020 with a Multi-Stakeholder Community Consultation in which we brought together a wide range of stakeholders (Kyamusugulwa et al., 2020).[2]

We used the software programme ATLAS.ti 8 to analyse our qualitative data. We started deductively with a coding scheme based on the main themes and research questions of TRAFIG and added codes inductively as they emerged from the data.

1.3 Fieldwork challenges

In terms of planning, we were largely able to adhere to the foreseen timeframe. However, this certainly does not mean that we did not come across any challenges. The main challenge relates to the context in which our research takes place. Due to the long-term conflicts in the region, there is also a long-term presence of humanitarian aid agencies—at least in the rural areas of the province. Many of these actors conduct short surveys to carry out needs assessments or note down names of people for aid purposes. As a result of this, asking vulnerable people questions almost inevitably leads to expectations about the provision of aid and possible distortion of answers. This is exacerbated when written consent forms are used. This is why we are sceptical about their usage and mostly resorted to oral consent and usually did not record interviews. Instead, the research team took elaborate notes on paper during the interviews and digitalised and elaborated on these notes shortly after the interview took place. This way, we were able to reconstruct the narratives of IDPs as closely as possible.[3]

Another drawback of the context of insecurity and humanitarianism is that people are generally quite suspicious and also expect that unknown visitors that come to ask questions will bring certain material or financial benefits. The research team, therefore, tried to keep a low profile, but even then, in follow-up contacts, interviewees often indicated that they were approached by others around them who would inquire about the benefits received from the visitor and sometimes put pressure on the interviewee to share these benefits. Such expectations made us decide to only employ research methods that allowed for a certain anonymity.

In selecting our respondents, we faced the challenge of definition. Whereas 'refugee' is not only a legal and policy term, it is also a normal word that people colloquially use. 'IDP' is very much a policy concept and less used in day-to-day speak. This means that people usually will not refer to themselves or others as IDPs. Therefore, we had to establish empirically whether somebody could be classified as an IDP or not. But even then, we find that the concept is fluid: The line between being an IDP and being a migrant is fluid, and so is the line between being an IDP and a 'normal' resident of the city (Jacobs & Paviotti, 2017b). We therefore decided to take a rather open approach in which we included respondents coming from insecure areas of the province, regardless of the specific reason they would give for moving to the city. There are often several reasons to move, and these reasons are impossible to disentangle. What to think for instance of the elderly woman whom we met: She explained that she came to the city because she needed medical care, but also told us that her health condition no longer permits her to flee to the forest whenever the village is too insecure. Or where to place the farmer who can no longer cultivate his crops, let alone transport them over an insecure road to sell in the market. If he comes to the city in search of employment, would he qualify as a migrant, or as an IDP? If he were able to farm and sell his crops, he would probably stay in the village, but many of the longer-term residents in the city would argue that he only comes to the city in search of employment.
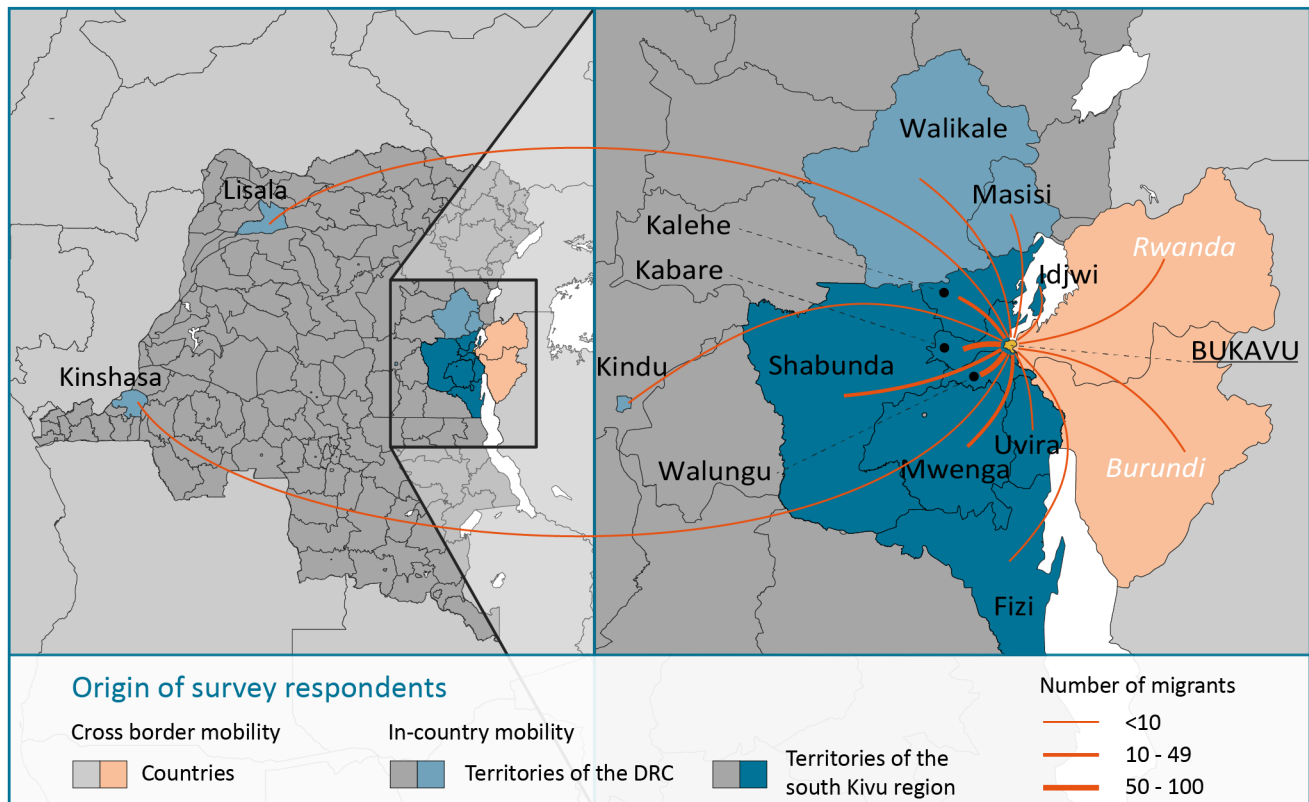
Another reason why we took an open approach to sample respondents is that we wanted to avoid gathering data only among the most vulnerable group of displaced people. Obviously, when looking for IDPs, this vulnerable group is easily identified. Yet, we wanted to avoid bias towards those who suffer and missing those who actually overcome protractedness and understanding how they have succeeded. We, therefore, included respondents who had lived in Bukavu for many years and who would no longer consider themselves being IDPs.

In contrast to most of the TRAFIG country teams, our fieldwork was not heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. When the government started to impose hygiene measures, we had finalised most of the data collection, with the exception of the multi-stakeholder community consultation. The period of joint analysis and writing was more challenging, as meeting possibilities were limited. We dealt with this by frequently meeting online.

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2   In this meeting, we brought together a mixed group of respondents (displaced, hosts, authorities, civil society) for an interactive dialogue in which we collected additional insights, validated findings and jointly discussed possible solutions for the challenges that participants identified in the relation between displaced and hosts.

3   It is important to emphasise here that the quotes we present in the *paper* are based on the extensive interview protocols written by the research team during and after the interview, but not on verbatim transcripts. We have done our best to provide an adequate reflection of the meaning that our respondents aimed to convey and have stayed as closely as possible to the original phrasing.

TRAF°G research: The DR Congo

Origin of survey respondents

Cross border mobility

Countries

In-country mobility

Territories of the DRC

Territories of the south Kivu region

Number of migrants

<10

10 - 49

50 - 100

Time of empirical research:
08/2019 - 04/2020

Number of participants per method

Expert interviews
Biographic interviews
Semi-structured interviews
Survey
Focus group discussions
Multi-stakeholder community consultations

0   100   200   300

Method took place in ... setting

Urban

Peri urban
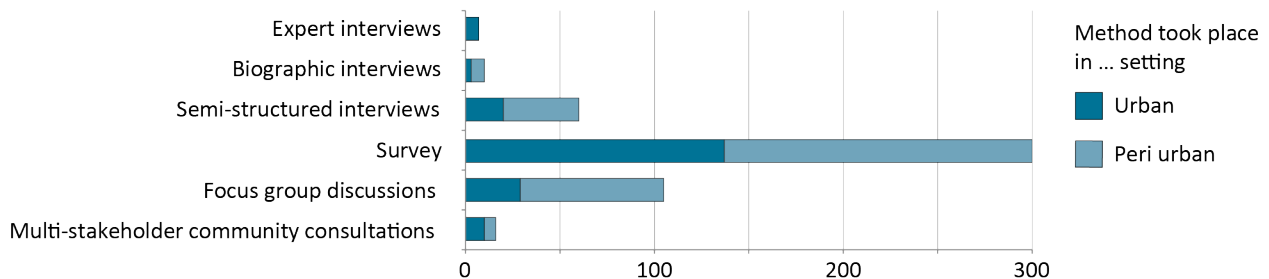
Share of respondents living inside/outside camps

100%
Outside camp

Type of respondent

7 Key informant/stakeholder
5 Other respondent(s)

Member of receiving community

34

452
IDPs or other migrants

Sex of respondent

225
Female

273
Male
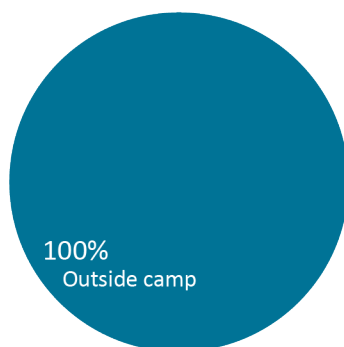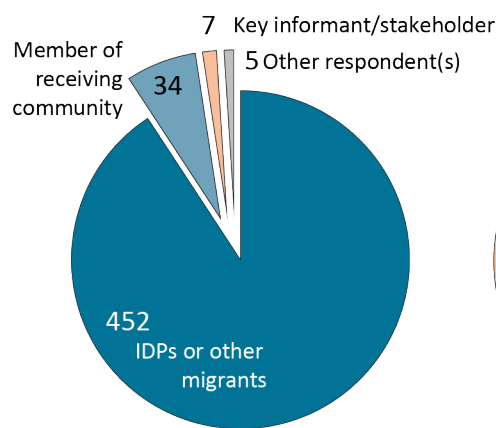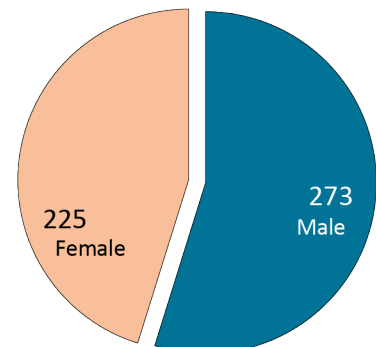
Source: OpenStreetMap 2020, Natural Earth 2020, BICC 2020; Layout: Vincent Glasow, BICC, November 2020
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by BICC.

2. Protracted displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The DRC has known large-scale displacement of people since its political instability in the early 1990s. The situation got worse at the start of the First Congo War in 1996, when the Alliance for Democratic Forces for Liberation (AFDL)[4] took armed action to overthrow the Mobutu regime which had held on to power for a long time. When the conflict ended in 1997 with Laurent Desiré Kabila taking over power, it did not take long until the Second Congo War started, as Kabila quickly got alienated from his former—foreign—allies. The Second Congo War lasted from 1998 to 2003, but for people in the east of the DRC, the end of this war did not mean a return to peace and stability. In the northeast of the country, the Lord's Resistance Army and conflicts in Ituri continued to cause insecurity and violence; in the Kivu provinces, the main conflict initially was between the Congolese Army and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), but over time, sources of conflicts have multiplied as have pockets of violence and insecurity. Indicatively, the Congo Research Group mapped 70 armed groups in North and South Kivu provinces in 2015, 120 armed groups in 2017 and over 130 armed groups in 2019 (Congo Research Group, 2019). The numbers underline the complexity of conflict in the east of the DRC and the lack of control by the Congolese state in parts of its territory. 'The conflict' in the DRC cannot be reduced to a single-cause conflict that can be explained in a few sentences. Some of the armed groups started as self-defence groups of communities that felt threatened by invaders, other conflicts revolve around competition between agriculturalists and pastoralists, about succession of customary leadership, about access to mineral resources or to road infrastructure.[5] The new government, led by Felix Tshisekedi since January 2019, has not yet managed to gain more control over the country, and in some regions outside the Kivus, violence is in fact flaring up, especially in the Kasai and Ituri regions.

2.1 Dispacement in the DRC and beyond

All of these different sources of conflict and insecurity have led to many different waves of displacement. In 2019, of an estimated total of 84 million inhabitants, 1.67 million people were newly displaced in the country, contributing to a total of 5.512 million IDPs.[6] With the total number of IDPs worldwide at 50.8 million, this means that roughly 1 out of 10 IDPs worldwide is Congolese (IDMC, 2020). Because stability in the region is very time- and space bound, people often find themselves in cycles of displacement, and many of them have been displaced repeatedly (Rudolf et al., 2014). It is unlikely that protracted displacement will soon be over. Humanitarian assistance will continue to be needed as high levels of vulnerability are coupled to insecurity and displacement. In June 2020, UNOCHA estimated that more than 25 million people were in need of assistance compared to 9.2 million people who were actually receiving assistance.[7] Yet, IDPs are not the only ones who suffer from insecurity; others are affected indirectly: Hosts share scarce resources with their guests, local economies suffer, basic services such as health care and education are difficult to access (Aembe, 2017; Ferf et al., 2016), many roads are in poor condition (Ferf et al., 2014) and their use heavily taxed (Schouten et al., 2017).

Most Congolese IDPs seek refuge in host communities rather than in camps or camp-like settings. In North Kivu province, there are still some camps north of Goma (which the government has repeatedly tried to close) and in the upper north of the province, in South Kivu, there are some spontaneous sites with limited support. The more recent displacement crisis in Kasaï and Ituri has led to the creation of new, often spontaneous, IDP camps. This is the case around Bunia in Ituri province as well. The number of Congolese who seek refuge across the border is remarkably low, in comparison to the total number of IDPs in the country, as Table 1 shows, and there is not a major diasporic movement, such as is the case for most other TRAFIG groups of study (Eritreans, Afghans and Syrians). Congolese refugees who have fled the country mostly seek refuge in neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda, but also elsewhere in southern Africa and beyond (UNHCR, 2019). A large part of the Congolese refugees who flee to Uganda originate from the north-eastern parts of the country.

Besides IDPs, the DRC hosts more than half a million refugees coming from instable regions in neighbouring countries, such as the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Burundi. Only 1.1 per cent of the non-Congolese displaced in the DRC have requested asylum. Around 25 per cent of the refugees live in refugee camps and settlements (UNHCR, 2019).

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4   Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération
5   It is not within the scope of this paper to explain this complexity, but the interested reader may refer for instance to Hoffmann (2019), Stearns et al. (2013), Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers (2009) and Vogel & Stearns (2018) for more background on the Kivu conflicts, or to Reybrouck (2010) or Stearns (2011) for a more general background on the DRC.
6   For IDP figures, see https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo. For total population figures, see http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/COD (last viewed on 27 October 2020).

7   https://reliefweb.int/country/cod?figures=all#key-figures, viewed on 11 September 2020.

Table 1: DRC Refugees and asylum seekers by country of asylum

Country of refuge	Number of Congolese refugees
Uganda	415,472
Burundi	77,575
Tanzania	77,051
Rwanda	77,017
South Africa	59,675
Zambia	52,773
Kenya	44,628
Malawi	28,644
Angola	23,258
Republic of the Congo	20,687
South Sudan	15,789
Zimbabwe	10,776
Other African countries	18,748

Source: **UNHCR**, 2020

Table 2: Population of concern in the DRC, according to country of origin, 2020

Country of origin	Number of people
Rwanda	214,475
Central African Republic	172,160
South Sudan	89,284
Burundi	48,586
Internally displaced	5,500,000

Note: The number of IDPs in the DRC is an estimation as no systematic registration takes place of this group.
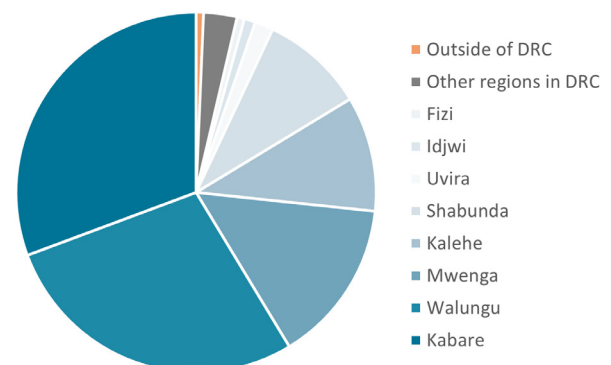Source: https://reliefweb.int/country/cod?figures=all#key-figures, viewed on 9 September 2020

2.2 Displacement to Bukavu

Our research focuses on IDPs in Bukavu; the capital of South Kivu province. As a provincial capital, Bukavu hosts displaced people-and other migrants from all territories of the province, as well as from the southern territories of North Kivu. Together with Goma, Bukavu is a major hub for the international humanitarian community and for UN agencies, but interventions almost uniquely take place outside of the city. As a reason for this, state and non-state actors argue that they want to avoid a further rural exodus and overpopulation of the city that is located in an area prone to landslides and erosion. The rapid growth of the city (from around 200,000 in the mid-1990s to more than one million in 2016)[8] testifies not only of conflict-induced displacement, but also of a rapid process of urbanisation

and rural–urban migration. In the city, it leads to competition between newcomers and longer-term residents over obtaining access to resources, basic services and employment.

The group of IDPs in Bukavu is as diverse as the reasons for displacement, with many survey respondents indicating several reasons for their displacement: 61 per cent of our survey respondents mentioned insecurity, war and violence as a reason for their displacement, 34 per cent economic reasons, 21 per cent family reasons (a dispute at home, or the desire to unite with relatives in the city). Health care, education, fear of witchcraft or witchcraft accusations, and land disputes were other reasons for people to move to the city. The empirical data that we present in the next chapters provide some more detail on this.[9] IDPs come from almost all territories in South Kivu province (but especially from Walungu, Shabunda, Mwenga, Kabare and Kalehe) and sometimes from the southern parts of North Kivu province, such as Walikale and Masisi, as Figures 1 and 2 show. There is a tendency among IDPs to settle in relative proximity to the main roads that lead to their community of origin. This makes it easier for them to hear about the latest news from their community that newly arriving people bring with them. This makes the group of displaced in the city heterogeneous: People have different origins, different ethnic backgrounds and have arrived at different moments in time. Figure 2 shows the time span during which IDPs arrived. It shows more arrivals in recent years. This can be explained by generally rising numbers of IDPs in the Congo in recent years, but also by the observation that the longer people reside in the city, the less they identify as IDPs, and the less likely they are traced by a team of researchers looking for IDP respondents. The figure is therefore skewed and is not necessarily a reflection of general displacement patterns over the course of time.

Figure 1: Regions of origin of IDPs and other migrants living in Bukavu (TRAFIG Survey, n=300)

Legend:
- Outside of DRC
- Other regions in DRC
- Fizi
- Idjwi
- Uvira
- Shabunda
- Kalehe
- Mwenga
- Walungu
- Kabare

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8   Based on population data provided at the mayor's office in Bukavu.

9   Note that we did not ask for detailed accounts on the reasons for displacement, unless people started to talk about this themselves. We are aware that the reasons of displacement are often connected to traumatic events and do not find it ethically right to ask questions that could trigger people's memories on this.

With all people that have moved to Bukavu in the last century, Bukavu has become an ethnically mixed city, but the Shi remain the major group, and its members occupy many of the key positions in the city. In a society in which informal connections are often mobilised to obtain access to employment, housing or other services, IDPs who have a similar ethnic background (which is often the case for IDPs from Kabare and Kalehe) might find it easier to obtain access to patronage networks.

In the absence of institutionalised aid provision, vulnerable people in the city largely depend on the solidarity of their social surrounding. From earlier research, we know that many of the longer-term residents explain the solidarity they offer by referring to the time in which they had to flee themselves because of insecurity in the city and depended on the hospitality of people in the rural areas. This happened especially in 1998 and 2004 when there was intense fighting in the city. They feel that they should accommodate current IDPs in return. To some extent, this is also a guarantee for the future: Should armed conflicts reach Bukavu again in the future, they might also have to flee to the rural areas.

This hospitality underlines two things: First, that many people have experienced violence and insecurity in recent decades due to the ever-shifting frontlines in the province. This shared experience leads to shared understanding of the needs of IDPs. Second, it shows that even people in a city which has been relatively stable for many years now, still reckon with the possibility that fighting might return and feel they cannot fully rely on the state as a security provider.

Figure 2: IDPs and other migrants' year of arrival in Bukavu
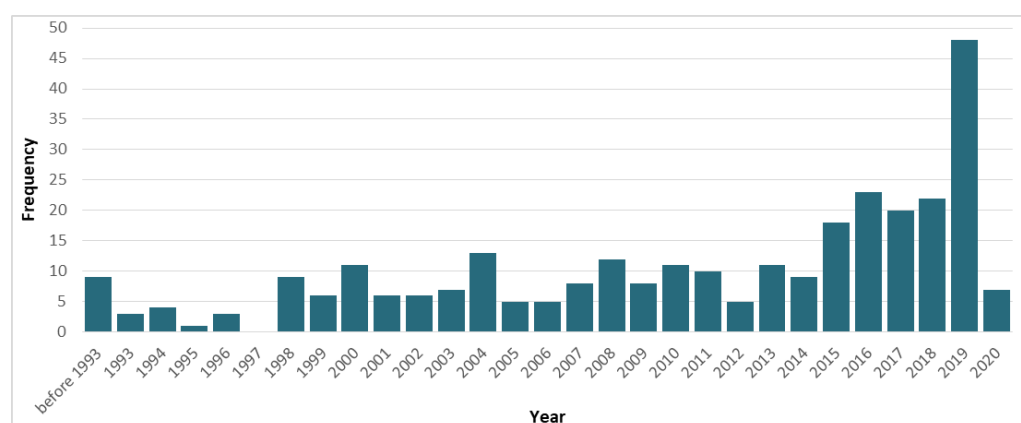
Note: TRAFIG Survey, n=300

3. Key dimensions of figurations of displacement in the DRC

This chapter addresses the main questions of TRAFIG by dissecting it into five main themes.

3.1 Navigating through governance regimes of aid

This section looks into Theme 1 of TRAFIG: 'Navigating through governance regimes of aid'.[10] The main question this section aims to address is: How do displaced people gain access to, make use of and are governed by policies and programmes in humanitarian aid, development and protection? We first present the relevant normative frameworks on IDPs' national level, drawing from TRAFIG working paper no.3 (Ferreira et al., 2019) and an internal report on national protection arrangements.[11] From there, we move to the local level to shed light on policy and practice of state and non-state aid regimes, the extent to which this reflects these normative frameworks, and the extent to which this resonates with IDPs' concrete needs and experiences. The first part of this section is largely based on a desk study. The second part is based on our empirical findings.[12]

Frameworks of IDP protection and Congo's future IDP legislation

What is the state of affairs concerning IDP protection in the DRC? As a member state of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the DRC takes part in the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, and has signed the 2006 Great Lakes Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons.[13] The Protocol is legally binding and is supposed to lead to national legislation that should be developed together with IDPs themselves (articles 2.3 and 6.5). According to the Protocol, it is the prime responsibility of nation-states to ensure stability and protection, but it also explicitly mentions that in case governments 'lack the capacity to protect and assist internally displaced persons, such Governments shall accept and respect the obligation of the organs of the international community to provide protection and assistance to internally displaced persons' (article 3.10).

In 2010, the DRC signed the 2009 Kampala Convention on the Protection and Assistance for Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. In 2014, the DRC National Assembly and Senate adopted Law 14/025 authorising the ratification of the Kampala Convention.[14] The status list available on the website of the African Union (AU) and last updated on 15 June 2017 shows that the DRC has not yet submitted all the paperwork needed to ratify the Convention with the AU, whereas this was expected to take place soon thereafter (Wissing, 2014).[15] The reason for this discrepancy is unclear. The Kampala Convention requires member states to respect the competence and mandate of regional institutions. It furthermore obliges the AU to collaborate and cooperate with international organisations and humanitarian agencies, civil society organisations and African states to support measures taken by State Parties to protect and assist IDPs (article 8.3c).

Despite the DRC's engagement with the Great Lakes Protocol and the Kampala Convention, and despite the high numbers of IDPs in the country, particular national legislation has not yet been adopted even though a Draft Law on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons has been in existence since 2014 (see below). IDPs are—unlike refugees—citizens of their country and protected by national legislation. Article 30 of the 2006 Constitution states that: "Everyone on the national territory has the right to move about freely, to reside in it, to leave it and to return to it, under the conditions laid down by law. No Congolese may be expelled from the territory, forced into exile, or forced to live outside their habitual residence." But in some regards, IDPs need particular protection that regular citizens do not need. Some pieces of legislation refer to IDPs and/or refugees as groups that need particular attention. First, the 2006 Congolese Constitution states that the Congolese state is in charge of any legislation on refugees, expelled and displaced people (article 202.n). Next, the 2009 Child Protection Code contains a provision on displaced children and refugee children, stating that they have the right to protection, accompaniment and humanitarian assistance and that the state should monitor this (article 41).[16]

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10 Please note that TRAFIG Theme 1 also covers governance regimes of *asylum*. Because our focus of research in the Congo is on IDPs, we merely focus on IDP protection.

11 For an analysis of the international and regional (African) level, see Ferreira et al. (2019).

12 Obviously, there is more to say about the governance of refugees in the DRC, but refugees were not the focus of our empirical research and are therefore also not the focus of our governance analysis here.

13 http://www.icglr.org/index.php/en/the-pact, viewed on 25 July 2016.

14 Loi 14/025 du 2014 autorisant la ratification par la RDC de la Convention de Kampala sur la Protection et l'Assistance aux Personnes Déplacées en Afrique https://www.refworld.org/topic,50ffbce526e,50ffbce5274,54f718cb4,0,,LEGISLATION,.html, viewed on 24 May 2019.

15 https://au.int/en/treaties/african-union-convention-protection-and-assistance-internally-displaced-persons-africa, viewed on 24 May 2019.

16 http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/JO/2009/L.09.001.10.01.09.htm, viewed on 23 April 2019.

In September 2014, the Congolese state published a Draft Law on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons. Sources from 2014 report that adoption of the law was expected in mid-2015 (White, 2014; Wissing, 2014). Until today, this has not yet happened. It remains to be seen whether President Tshishekedi is going to take it up in the course of his term. Although the law has not (yet) been adopted, it nevertheless makes sense to look at the content of the proposed law to assess the direction discussions are taking. Which traces of other legislation are reflected in this Draft: the Great Lakes Protocol, the Kampala Convention, the Refugee Law?

A first remarkable point to note is that the Draft Law starts with a foreword which states that the Congo has signed *and* ratified both the Great Lakes Protocol and the Kampala Convention and is held to adhere to the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. It underlines the intention of the state to take the final steps towards ratification, although this ratification has not yet taken place. In line with the regional instruments, the Draft Law stipulates the role not only of the state, but also of international organisations, economic actors and civil society in meeting the needs of displaced people. A National Commission is supposed to manage and coordinate IDPs. Such a Commission could be comparable to the National Refugee Commission (CNR) that was mandated in the Congolese refugee law of 2002.

Just like the 2002 Refugee Law created a National Refugee Commission, the Draft Law also foresees a state structure in dealing with displaced people. The full name of the future commission will be the National Commission Charged with the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (CNPA-PDI). Its workings are set out in title 4 of the Draft Law. The legislation places a lot of emphasis on the collaboration with humanitarian actors that are supposed to provide support. It underlines a strong orientation towards the international community for the protection and assistance of IDPs. In the absence of a National IDP Commission, the CNR shows some awareness of the need to protect IDPs. A provincial officer of the CNR in South Kivu stated to us in the framework of earlier research:

> *Our mandate is to protect and secure refugees [...]. It would also be part of our mandate to work with IDPs but we don't get any means for this from the international community so we cannot do anything (CNR officer, Bukavu, 2 June 2016).*

Strictly speaking it is not part of the CNR's mandate to protect and secure IDPs, but his words at least show an awareness that this is a group of people that could benefit from particular protection. Strikingly, his words also show the international orientation of street-level officers in providing policy advice and in carrying out their work. The DRC was one of the countries in which the so-called cluster approach was first rolled out

(Stoddard et al., 2007). This approach was an outcome of the 2005 Humanitarian Reform Agenda, geared towards greater collaboration in the humanitarian landscape to provide more efficient and effective assistance and to increase accountability. Basically, this approach entails a clustering of humanitarian organisations, both UN and non-UN in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action in case of an emergency or chronic humanitarian crisis. There are eleven different clusters and four areas of responsibility. Not all clusters are necessarily active for each and every emergency/country.[17] Since the UN-bodies involved are usually among the biggest players in each of these clusters, the role of coordination naturally is often attributed to them. Although the cluster approach has been assessed as contributing to some systemic improvement in coordinated humanitarian response (Stoddard et al., 2007), more critical voices can be heard as well (White, 2014). These voices originate especially from state- and NGO actors in the field of development assistance. A common criticism that is raised by local development actors in the DRC is that they have hardly any access to the different clusters and to information shared within it, let alone possibilities to partner with them, or get access to some of the funding.

Under the radar, unregistered and ignored

Despite several pieces of legislation and guiding principles, self-settled urban IDPs in the DRC are largely ignored by policymakers and humanitarian practitioners alike. Since IDPs are regular citizens, individual IDPs are not formally registered, not by state authorities nor by humanitarian actors. Some local state authorities at the level of the commune or neighbourhood register the people who live within their constituency and actively approach newcomers upon arrival, sometimes in a way that is considered intrusive, as explained to us by Furaha, a 40-year old woman who fled to Bukavu in 2011:

> *The evening we arrived, the chief of the street already came to ask us for our identity card with brutal manners, and without imagining that we were tired as we were coming from far away. I felt bad about it and regretted having left my village where everyone is well-known by their lineage and family reputation. Since I was born, I had never met a guy as insolent in language as this chief and nobody had ever asked me for an identity document whether it was in my own village or in the village of my in-laws. Eventually, he softened his tone when my brother-in-law arrived (SSI-ULEI-SL-020-COD).*

Other chiefs take a less pro-active stance and are aware of newcomers only if they come and identify themselves actively. Registration is hence rather ad hoc. 19 per cent of our survey

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17 https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/, viewed on 14 September 2020.

respondents (n=300) indicated not having registered with any of the authorities upon arrival. Those who did register usually did so only at the request—and often in the company—of their landlords. One of the reasons why people do not identify as newcomers with the local authorities is the fear of being intimidated and to be asked some 'payment', such as soft drinks, for this registration. Without any benefits to expect from registration, many IDPs refrain from doing so. This leads us to the observation that IDPs are little known and their presence remains under the radar, which already makes it difficult to assess their needs and to target them in aid interventions. Furaha's words show that people arriving from rural areas might also not be prepared to register because there is no formal culture in their communities and there is usually no reason to register yourself formally. Indicatively, 37 per cent of our survey respondents admitted that not all of their children were formally registered.

But the lack of registration is only one side to the story: We have come across a remarkable denial of the presence of IDPs in the city among state officials and representatives of humanitarian organisations in Bukavu that often seems to be triggered by a fear of a further rural exodus. A representative of one of the major international organisations in this field told us:

> *We are not interested in the town [of Bukavu] because of the rural exodus. There is a risk of creating needs, but we are not here to solve the problems of everybody, like migrants. Otherwise, everybody will come to town. We only look at displacement. That is not in the city. Here, people just arrive in small families. Displacement means 'il faut avoir une ampleur' [you need to have a scale]. It is when villages are completely emptied. That is the humanitarian crisis [we work on] (EInt-ULEI-CJ-001-COD).*

The words of this respondent resonated with the words of a government official. This person admitted having IDPs in Bukavu but argued that this was a very temporal stage only for people to be in: "People live with host families temporarily, but after three to six months, they find their own house to rent or to buy. They organise their own plot in the periphery of town. At the level of the commune it is difficult for us to keep track of who is displaced because two months after they have arrived, they are already an inhabitant" (EInt-ULEI-CJ-002-COD). Without any formal and systematic registration of urban IDPs, policymakers and practitioners can continue to play ostrich politics and deny the presence of IDPs.

Trying to turn the rural exodus around?

The fear of overpopulation and overstretching the absorptive capacity of Bukavu is real. The city, located in the hills surrounding the Kivu Lake has been expanding rapidly. Erosion and deforestation of these hills frequently lead to landslides with fatal results in the overpopulated neighbourhoods. Each time, such fatalities lead to heated discussion in town

with local civil society organisations blaming the municipal authorities for not having any municipal planning, and with municipal authorities blaming the population for their 'anarchic constructions'. But the people ending up living at such inhabitable sites are often the most vulnerable ones, whereas local authorities or residents sometimes make profits with selling such plots to people that are unaware of prohibitions to construct. As long as population pressure remains high, the problem will likely continue to exist. Several respondents that we met had bought such plots in the informal market and felt at present threatened by an announcement of the mayor that their houses would be demolished. One of our respondents who was living in a site classified as inappropriate for habitation, had bought this plot through the intervention of the chief of the street, but she does not have any formal documents to show proof her ownership. Meanwhile her house has been destroyed twice by the urban police, and when we talked to her, she feared a third demolition after another order by the Mayor. This order had come after the death of eight persons in a landslide (SSI-ULEI-IA-013-COD). Although this 56-year old widow had obtained her plot with the intervention of a local level authority, she hardly feels protected, but also does not know where she could move to as she cannot afford living elsewhere.

One representative of the high-ranking provincial authorities that we asked about this subject argued that the city is home to 20 times as many people as its capacity, putting pressure on the electricity and water providers and causing conflicts and insecurity. He, therefore, argued that the government would have to develop mechanisms that will turn the rural exodus into an 'urban exodus' (EInt-ULEI-CJ-006-COD). This would need interventions that make the rural areas more attractive, which would mean both security and development.

Experiencing aid

The east of the DRC is a region with a widespread presence of international humanitarian aid organisations and development organisations. It is easy to spot the white 4x4 vehicles with aid logos driving through the city of Bukavu, and certain neighbourhoods are dotted with aid offices. But whereas operations are carried out from the offices in Bukavu, hardly any of our respondents had received any international assistance while in displacement in Bukavu, and most organisations emphasise that they do not intervene in the city.

An exception was a local NGO representative who admitted dealing with IDPs in town. He added:

> *There are a few others who carry out interventions in town, but without making noise about it. When we intervened, for instance, we said that we were targeting 200 vulnerable women, whereas we targeted them because of their displacement (EInt-ULEI-CJ-005-COD).*

Another strategy of his organisation, which fell within the 'do-no-harm approach', was to include IDPs and hosts in the interventions. In a recent intervention for instance, they had helped 400 households that were victims of a fire and provided cash transfers. For this organisation, not distinguishing between IDPs and hosts worked well in practice, but he also admitted that this worked less in reporting to donors, as the latter expected clear impact indicators.

When respondents received aid in the city, it was usually either through churches or individual benefactors. Most, however, would tell us something along the lines of Mazuri, a 37-year old man:

> *Since we arrived in Bukavu, we have never received any help from either the state or an organisation. We haven't even been a member of a single association so far because we didn't have enough money to contribute. [...] I have only received support from a provincial deputy when I campaigned for him before the elections. I campaigned in my village last December. To my big surprise, he gave me a 100 [US] dollar note! (SSI-ULEI-SL-006-COD.)*

Respondents who benefitted from aid regimes usually did so in rural areas, before or during earlier displacement. In some of the cases, IDPs received very concrete material benefits: Food and non-food items that were provided as aid relief. Others, who had been in more stable situations before also testified about their experiences with credit and savings associations such as Mutual Solidarity Funds (Mutuelle de Solidarite, MUSO). In many cases, such associations were set up with the help of national NGOs, but insecurity often interrupted their activities, as Nyota, a 70-year old widow explained:

> *I was a member of an association of women farmers in M.; we worked together in communal fields and kept the harvest in stock in a warehouse. [...] This association helped me to overcome the financial difficulties I was facing but with the presence of different rebels of any kind, this was disrupted, and the members of the association got scattered in different villages and some in the city (SSI-ULEI-SL-002-COD).*

Several respondents were also interested in participating in such an association or saving group in town. Mazuri, for instance, had been living in Bukavu for 15 months when we interviewed him. He had already made some friends in the neighbourhood and was now considering to propose to them the creation of a mutual solidarity fund, as he had positive experiences with such a fund in his community of origin:

> *I hope to revive the experience that I had with the motor-cyclists' association [of which he was part in his community of origin] as this helped me to save the financial means to settle in Bukavu (SSI-ULEI-SL-006-COD).*

South Kivu is known for having a strong tradition of "associational life" (Hilhorst & Bashwira, 2015, p. 17). Most of these activities take place in the rural areas of the province, but initiatives such as saving groups and solidarity groups have gradually become part of urban life, too, through initiatives such as the one suggested by Mazuri. When we cross-checked this finding, several of these solidarity groups indeed indicated to have started at the initiative of newcomers in the city (from personal communication by SL and RK).

But there is another side to this rosy coin of associational life—the side of other IDPs who had bad experiences with other group members not paying and with losing money. As a result, they had become more reluctant to engage in such initiatives and felt it would be better not to depend on others. In the urban setting of Bukavu, where they know each other less, it is more difficult to establish relations of trust that make such solidarity groups and saving groups function well.

Concluding remarks

In contrast to refugees, IDPs are less protected by specific protection frameworks. The laws, policies and institutions presented in this section are largely based on protection 'in the books', and do not necessarily reflect protection in practice. In fact, the protection of IDPs is largely lacking, despite nice words and good intentions put on paper, and despite the power of international organisations, humanitarian actors or donors to intervene (Verdirame & Harrell-Bond, 2005). The draft IDP law in the DRC is an example of this. The IDPs who our research team has spoken to have usually received very limited support or protection from state and non-state actors since their displacement. The legal and policy frameworks can nevertheless provide a basis from which to address gaps in their everyday implementation. Hopefully, law and policy will eventually prove to be tools to achieve societal change and to improve the position of IDPs in practice. As long as this is not the case, IDPs fend for themselves, with the help of relatives, friends, and sometimes of the churches, as we will show in the next sections. Informal relations are all the more important with state and humanitarian actors largely absent in their social figurations. Structural macro forces beyond the control of IDPs themselves determine to a large extent the limited attention to their fate.

Key findings
- *IDP protection regimes exist or should exist on paper at the regional and national level but are hardly applied in lived reality at the local level in urban Congo, and national legislation is still lacking.*
- *Urban IDPs in the Congo have to fend largely for themselves and remain under the radar of the ostrich politics of most policymakers and aid practitioners.*
- *Experiences with development aid (especially solidarity and saving groups) are sometimes imported from rural to urban areas by migrants and replicated in displacement.*

3.2 Living in limbo—Livelihoods, (in)security and precarity in local settings

This section looks into Theme 2 of TRAFIG: 'Living in limbo: Livelihoods, (in)security and precarity in local settings'. The main question this section aims to address is: 'Why and how do displaced people live in situations of 'limbo', and how do they sustain their livelihoods in urban settlements?'

In contrast to refugees, IDPs do not find themselves in legal limbo: They do not have to await refugee status determination, they are not prohibited to seek employment and are free to move around in their country—as far as security conditions allow free movement. Despite this, protracted displacement means existential insecurity for many IDPs. Protracted displacement is a state of being in which people feel betwixt and between (Brun & Fábos, 2015). They are no longer residents of their communities of origin, but also do not feel fully accepted by the inhabitants of the new location. Physically, they have moved, but their minds might still be elsewhere. Most IDPs who we have come across do not flee to Bukavu right away but have been in displacement at different sites before arriving in the city. Many of them have been without a stable basis for years on end, moving to different places, returning to their home community at certain points in time when the security situation is improving, and moving on again when there is a need to do so.

This section aims to present the human face of protracted displacement. We present the case of Kazi[18], a 40-year old man, who first fled to Bukavu in 2014. His story shows the spatial, socio-economic and relational limbo which IDPs like him find themselves in. These limbos are interconnected but also evolve as dynamic social figurations that are constantly transformed.[19] We argue that the potential for transformation means that the limbos in which people find themselves can sometimes be taken as an opportunity to bring about change and to reconfigure people's lives. This is when limbo turns into a productive 'agency-in-waiting' (Brun, 2015) in which previously held norms, roles and relations can be transformed into new ones that enable people to make a fresh start. It underlines that protracted displacement is not static and that people are not just waiting for things to change; they are active agents who—within their possibilities—try to change their situation for the better.

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18 Please note that some details have been omitted to ensure anonymity.
19 In line with the figurational sociology of Norbert Elias (1978). See (Etzold et al., 2019) for a more elaborate conceptual explanation on our use of 'translocal figurations of displacement'.

Box 1: The case of Kazi

The first time I came to live in Bukavu was in 2014. A relative took my wife and two daughters and myself in. We had fled the atrocities in [name of village.] where the FDLR rebels and the Raia Mutomboki* were striking terror into the hearts of the population, because of their lootings and repeated killings of people. In the village, I shared a plot with my parents. They had decided to remain to secure our house and because older people were usually not targeted by either of these armed groups [...] My 'older brothers' had already fled to Bukavu in 2012, on the run from the regular clashes and the looting, which prevented them from making their commercial activities prosper.

Five months later, the Congolese Army had regained control in many of the villages after clashes with the Raia Mutomboki, despite suspicions that the FDLR and the Raia Mutomboki had allied their forces. So, I returned with my family. Our activities had been paralysed and we absolutely wanted to start them again. We did not receive any assistance from other family members to reinstall ourselves and to find socio-economic stability again. We only received assistance from the WFP (World Food Programme), the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) for our survival in the first two weeks: Some food and non-food items such as blankets, pots and plates.

In 2015. our village was again invaded by rebels of the Raia Mutomboki who came to loot and to take away the crops from our fields, the goats, the rabbits, chickens, ducks, money and the music device. Together with some others, I was forced by the rebels to transport the looted goods and thus became a slave in the bush for six months. [...] Then, one day I went to fetch water at the well/spring with two other captives but the water was no good and the chief who was leading us permitted us to go and fetch water at another well/spring at a larger distance of our base. My two friends and I decided to take the risk and escape instead of returning. It was around noon, and we ran through the forest until about 4.30 in the afternoon when we got to a settlement inhabited by pygmies whom we asked for protection and security, after having explained our situation and the misery that we had gone through to them. The chief of the village interrogated us in his court, and they believed us. They told us that they had indeed heard about people being taken into the bush by the rebels. The next morning, the chief told some of his people to guide us and to cross the dangerous areas. Four hours later, we arrived in the next village. Our guides passed us on to others in this village, and they themselves

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* The Raia Mutomboki is an armed group which operates in both North and South Kivu provinces. It started as a local self-defence group but has grown into one of the largest armed groups, consisting of several factions and sowing terror in large parts of the provinces. A lot of our respondents indicated to either FDLR or the Raia Mutomboki as the main reason for their displacement.

returned. We were taken to a logging site in the forest [...]. In the distance we could already see [village B.], but because it was already getting late, we spent the night in this place. The next day, we walked all day until we reached [village B], where we spent the night in the visitors' hut of the village chief. After a day of rest there, each of us—me and my former co-captives—had to draw up our own plan and continue our journey as we were no longer in the forest. I decided to go to a maternal aunt who lives close to the airport. She was fully surprised to see me and praised the Eternal God for having protected me and for my safe and sound return, as some of my relatives assumed that I was either dead or had become a rebel myself. That night, she rang my entire family and told them about my return from captivity. My father told me that my wife had decided to get a life without me as she did not know whether I would be coming back. So, after consultation with my aunt and my parents, I decided not to return to [my village] but instead to join my elder brother in Bukavu and await peace there. I have to admit that the physical exercise and the abuses that I suffered in the forest helped me to endure my escape through the forest to the villages.

The next morning, I took the bus to Bukavu to the neighbourhood where my brother had a restaurant and where I could immediately start working as a night guard and as a waiter during the day. But one year ago, my brother got a job [elsewhere] and decided to close the restaurant and get installed there. I didn't have any capital to take over his restaurant but at least before he left, while he was selling his restaurant's belongings, he introduced me to a friend in [another neighbourhood] where I could go and stay. I lived there for three years, but then, unfortunately, he [the friend] passed away in 2019. I had lived in peace with him and his wife. In his absence, he would give me errands to do, and I would guard the house. I am now preparing myself to find a house for rent, because otherwise I will run the risk that people believe that I am cohabitating with his widowed wife (SSInt-ULEI-SLK-005-COD).

Living in a spatial limbo

Kazi's story is an example of the different limbos or uncertainties people in protracted displacement find themselves in. First of all, Kazi lived in a spatial uncertainty for many years: He had fled to Bukavu, moved back to his village, was captured by an armed group, lived in the 'bush' for some time, managed to flee, got back to Bukavu again, lived with his brother for some years, moved on to live in the house of a befriended couple and was now preparing to find himself a place to rent. Throughout the years, he did not have a stable residency. Changing circumstances that were beyond his own control forced him to always be on the move. For people like Kazi, being in a situation of protracted displacement means having to be on the move

without a stable place to return to. The circumstances that trigger these moves can be related to security conditions but can also be related to changing personal conditions that impact on the housing arrangements that are made. Kazi first had to move out of the house that he shared with his brother because the latter was moving, and at present he considers moving because his host passed away. It underlines the vulnerable position in which IDPs find themselves when they depend on others for their housing arrangements, especially since housing conditions of many of these hosts are not very stable either.

In the context of the eastern DRC, where camps are uncommon (Haver, 2008), many people on the move have difficulties in finding stable, long-term housing but instead keep on moving, having to arrange their own accommodation. We have described elsewhere (Jacobs et al., 2019) that upon arrival in a host community, many IDPs find shelter for a couple of weeks or months with close relatives or with acquaintances. Indicatively, displaced respondents in our survey (n=300) shared a house with eight people on average—most of which were not particularly spacious. Apart from one's nuclear family and his/her brothers and sisters, 48 per cent of our respondents shared a house with other relatives such as cousins, uncles/aunts or grandparents.

In many instances, today's hosts were IDPs themselves in the past and understand the needs of the new arrivals. The possibility to be reunited with family members is an important reason for 34 per cent of our survey respondents to opt for Bukavu as a place of refuge. But these relatives often neither lead very stable lives nor have spacious housing. After a while, most IDPs rent houses or rooms themselves. Many consider becoming an owner of a plot as an ultimate marker of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008) showing that they are no longer an IDP but have become a resident (see Jacobs et al. 2019 for a more elaborate analysis on this). If IDPs used policy vocabulary on this, they would probably argue that they had found a durable solution for their displacement. The majority of IDPs, however, remain in spatial uncertainty and remain on the move while finding themselves in temporary hosting or rental arrangements.

Despite the hardships many of our respondents in the city have to bear, they would not easily consider returning to their home communities. In many cases, this is because they feel that the security situation is not stable enough. Others felt uncomfortable about returning, expecting conflicts with family members who have taken over land or houses since, they fear the disdain of those who stayed behind and who went through even more hardship and who consider those who had left as opportunistic. Those who resisted and stayed behind are seen to become the legitimate owners of the properties that those who fled left behind. 'Return is a chosen risk', as some people would argue (SSI-ULEI-IA-002-COD). It is one of the reasons why people opt to remain in the spatial limbo in the city where they do not feel fully at home.

Living in a socio-economic limbo

Socio-economic uncertainty is related to the spatial uncertainty in which IDPs often find themselves for a number of years. Just like Kazi, many of the displaced testified of losing a large part of their capital to plundering armed actors. Some lost livestock, others lost their harvest or found their houses burnt to the ground, forcing them to re-build their lives from scratch. While people are on the move as a result of insecurity, it is obvious that it is difficult to carve out a living. But many of the respondents we talked to in Bukavu were still insecure in socio-economic terms, not yet able to earn enough money to rent a house without the support from others nor able to provide for their family without such support. Of our survey respondents, 47 per cent found their economic situation better than before, whereas 43 per cent felt their economic situation was worse than before. They nevertheless opted to remain in the city.

Jobs that are more easily accessible in Bukavu are tough jobs with a low status such as carrying luggage in the port, crushing stones for the construction industry or doing the laundry for private families. Many IDPs aspire to engage in petty commerce, but only those who can set aside some small amount of seed capital (sometimes as little as US $10) manage to realise this ambition. Without the help of seed capital from the home community, the right education, powerful contacts or a strong entrepreneurial spirit, many IDPs barely survive and struggle on a daily basis to make ends meet and to get food on the table. Only seven per cent of our respondents were formally employed, whereas 40 per cent were self-employed and 17 per cent worked as day labourers. Self-employment often entails some type of petty trade, whereas day labourers are mostly active in the harbour as porters or in the construction sector.

Living in a relational limbo

The first time Kazi fled to Bukavu, he fled together with his wife and two daughters. But then he got abducted into the forest. Upon his return, he found that his wife had left him as she did not expect him to return.[20] We encountered several respondents who—like Kazi—told us how they were forcibly recruited into an armed group. Upon return to the 'normal' society, they are often stigmatised, and people suspect them of having committed atrocities themselves. Because of this, they might hide this past from others and sometimes even break with relatives who could possibly testify about their past to others. A similar observation can be made in the case of women that have been victims of sexual violence by armed actors. If the abuse they experienced is known to others, they might be stigmatised by their environment or be repudiated by their husbands. Younger

women, who were not in a relationship at the time of the abuse, might refrain from having a relationship after this experience or may hide their past from their prospective husbands out of fear of being repudiated (Bint-ULEI-SL-001-COD).

When in displacement, a lack of socio-economic conditions prevents young IDPs from getting settled, as they feel themselves they are not able to provide for a family, or because they are looked down upon by prospective marriage partners as being vulnerable (see also Jacobs & Paviotti, 2017). Other families split up, with husbands leaving to one of the mining areas in the east of the Congo in the hope of finding better opportunities. Indeed, among the displaced respondents in Bukavu, our team came across many de facto female-headed households. While some women indicated that they suspected their husbands of having remarried in the mining area, others were still hopeful about their husband's return in the future. However, in most cases, their husbands do not contribute to the household expenses through cash transfer, and many women have not heard any news from their husbands for years on end. Many IDPs in Bukavu have in common that their personal relations are in a sort of limbo; their conditions do not allow them to start a durable relationship or to unite with the other members of their nuclear family. Kazi was keen on having his daughters to come and live with him in Bukavu, but he felt he would first need to have more stability in his life.

Generally, people whose housing conditions are not stable are frequently on the move, even within their site of displacement. At each new site, they have to start anew, developing social relations with people in their immediate surrounding. Yet, to protect themselves, they do not always find it easy to open up to others. This applies to the men and women who spent time 'in the bush' with armed groups (either as rebels or as captives of rebels), or who were victims of sexual violence. It also applies to some respondents who were accused of sorcery in the past. They will often refrain from establishing close contacts with people for fear of being accused again. In a context of impunity and distrust, such accusations risk to end in fatal witch hunts. In fact, this group of people can be seen as living in a relational limbo; not able or willing to establish relations of trust with others out of fear.

Experiencing spatial, socio-economic and relational limbo

Living in a situation of protracted displacement means that one's life is on hold; an unstable security situation in the community of origin makes the option of return little attractive, but full integration in the place of refuge is also not self-evident: It requires IDPs to achieve a level of physical, socio-economic and relational stability to feel 'at home'. In this section ,we have

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20 Kazi indicated that already before his time in the forest, there had been misunderstandings in his marriage, which he alleges were due to cultural differences. Both came from different ethnic backgrounds.

shown what it means for IDPs to live in a spatial limbo: not being able to return to their community of origin, but also not managing to secure stable housing in the place of refuge and therefore moving from one temporary housing arrangement to another. Instability in one domain also impacts on the instability in other domains: Without stable housing and work, Kazi does not feel well equipped to take care of his children.

IDPs often depend on other actors and factors to find housing or work, but themselves do not have control over these actors and factors within their social figurations, and despite their efforts do not always manage to change the course of their lives. Kazi was able to make a living through work that was offered to him by his brother and later by his landlord, but the very moment their lives changed his did, too. Obviously, this goes for many non-IDPs as well, but our findings show us that many IDPs have limited social contacts in their direct surrounding that they can mobilise in such changing circumstances. When Kazi's brother left, he still depended on a contact made by that same brother to move on.

Being on the move—even if it is within the same city—means that people also have to build up their social network in the neighbourhood time and again. It is not self-evident for IDPs to be accepted within the urban setting of Bukavu, as longer-term residents have rather mixed feelings about the presence of IDPs in their neighbourhood. This became especially clear during our Multi Stakeholder Community Consultation (Kyamusugulwa et al., 2020). Kazi himself avoided intimate connections with people in his surrounding as he felt uncomfortable about disclosing his history of 'being in the forest'. It also prevents him from seeking close connections with people from his community of origin. Stigmatising views by 'others' prevent many IDPs from building and maintaining strong social relations that can be beneficial to escaping their life in limbo.

Concluding remarks

Taking the three limbos together and looking at the social figurations which IDPs find themselves in, we can see that the three limbos (spatial, socio-economic and relational) strongly influence one another but that many of the decisive structural and incidental factors and actors that make life in displacement instable are out of the control of IDPs themselves. To define ways forward towards local integration and out of protracted displacement, it is important for policymakers and practitioners to pay attention to the interconnections between the different limbos. IDPs who have a stronger social network might find it easier to get help when they are in need of housing or of a job. People who have a stable income might be more easily respected by their neighbourhoods and feel better integrated, etc. To overcome protracted displacement, IDPs need to gradually overcome all of these limbos and find more stability in their

lives. There is no blueprint on how this can best be achieved, but will depend on the opportunities that are provided by the social figurations in which IDPs find themselves. IDPs might be able to take matters in their own hand to some extent, but a lot of the determining forces are beyond their own control.

Despite of all this, is there hope for IDPs that they can overcome their situation of protracted displacement and can integrate in the city? Based on our findings, we believe there is. Although this section has shown a number of interconnected limbos that IDPs might face in displacement, it also shows that these limbos are not static but that there are temporal and spatial dynamics that are constantly subject to change. This gives hope for the future, as such changing dynamics can always open up windows of opportunity. Life in the city is dynamic and can provide opportunities to break out of previously existing social patterns, norms, behaviour, and modes of livelihoods. Kazi's story provides a glimpse into this. He might not have found full stability in his life yet, but the anonymity of the city at least enables him to leave behind his history of 'having been in the forest', which he would not have been able to do in his community of origin. It shows that limbos can be overcome and that protractedness can be reduced or ended, especially when people use their own 'agency-in waiting'. The next sections provide further evidence of this.

Key findings

- *In contrast to refugees, IDPs do not find themselves in legal limbo. IDPs find themselves in spatial, socio-economic and relational limbos that are interconnected.*
- *Changing the social figurations of protractedness is not fully within the control of IDPs themselves, which makes them vulnerable to external shocks.*
- *Limbos can also create the opportunity to break out of established social patterns, norms, behaviour and modes of livelihoods when instability is used as an opportunity to change*

3.3 Following the networks—Connectivity and mobility in the context of protracted displacement

This section looks into Theme 3 of TRAFIG: 'Connectivity and mobility in the context of protracted displacement. The main question this section aims to address is: 'How do translocal and transnational networks shape refugees' mobility aspirations, experiences and trajectories, and how do specific legal frameworks and policies enable or inhibit this mobility?' In the following, we will look at the connections that people mobilise in their place of refuge and the benefits they draw from these connections first. In the course of this, we will also discuss why people sometimes avoid existing connections. Second, we will discuss the connections that people maintain with their communities of origin. Third, we will look into the mobility of people and how this mobility, in relation to people's connectivity, contributes to the chances IDPs have to move out of protractedness.

Mobilising connections in Bukavu to move out of protractedness

Most people on the move actively seek connections with close relatives, friends, business contacts or other acquaintances.

Earlier, we introduced Kazi and discussed the limbos in which he found himself. The first time Kazi fled to Bukavu, he could stay with a close relative. After having fled from his captors, he decided to first go to an aunt to find safety and to recover from his ordeal. He then decided to move to Bukavu to live with his elder brother. When his brother moved out of Bukavu, he acquainted Kazi with a friend of his who offered Kazi to stay with him. Network mobilisation is common among our respondents and is already well known from previous research, both in the Congo and in other settings (Nguya, 2019).

IDPs often assume that existing connections in displacement are helpful in finding housing, employment, and in becoming integrated in the new environment. The first and most important connection that IDPs mobilise upon arrival are familial ties. It is from here, that they start a 'chain of connectivity' that helps them on the road towards local integration and out of protractedness (Assumani Muganza, forthcoming). The following accounts, taken from a focus group discussion (FGD-ULEI-IA-001-COD) on the topic of 'connections and networking' are illustrative of how such connections develop:

Box 2: Connections and networking

"When I arrived in Bukavu, a cousin welcomed me to her house. She introduced me to her [Catholic] parish so that I could go there myself as well and perhaps benefit from it later* , even though I am a Protestant myself. [...] A sister from this parish, who is a neighbour in the street where I was hosted, offered me to cross with her into the neighbouring country of Rwanda to buy fresh food for resale in the Congo. This is what I do until today".

"I didn't know Bukavu. My older brother who lived in Bukavu asked me to join him with my family. When I came, I had a bit of money. After having lived together for a month [with my brother], he introduced me to the chief of the street because I needed to buy a plot of land for myself. The chief gave me directions to get a plot. I got one in the same street in [...]. Now, I have a home. I have built up relationships with friends I met on the spot, neighbours. One of them helped me to join a group of workers (mason's helpers) on construction sites. And I make a living from this work. I am not satisfied with it, but I will continue doing this until a good opportunity comes up".

"I came to Bukavu in a group of five families. We followed our sister-in-law who had her family in Bukavu. We arrived there and afterwards, each household had to find somewhere to stay. The sister-in-law's family was very helpful to us: Thanks to her children, a commission agent next door to her found houses to rent for our four (other) households after only two weeks together. We kept in contact with this family: I'd say we have become one big family. Through this family, we (five displaced women) were introduced to the AVEC** , with the help of which each household can survive and connect with other groups. We each deposit our weekly share there, from which we withdraw money that allows us to join other groups. Personally, I'm in another group of cross-border small businesswomen as well, but this group is less structured and still informal".

"I left Shabunda with my husband and two children in 2001, in the midst of insecurity. My brother-in-law welcomed us to his his home in the commune of Kadutu in Bukavu. After three years of living together, he gave us money to live elsewhere. He led us to a friend of his who has a house here in [name street]. He allowed us to live in his house free of charge for the first year. Then we started to pay him 10 US dollars a month. A neighbour who used to hang out with us suggested that my husband go and take over his teaching job at a secondary school on the nearby avenue [...]. By grace, he was matriculated a year later as a [...] status teacher and now receives a regular salary equivalent to 195 US dollars. As a result of his expertise, somebody [...] took him on as headmaster of his school (he then combined the two functions) where he earns 240 US dollars. All in all, he earns 435 US dollars each month! We are delighted about this. But as long as we don't have a house of our own, we won't be respected as residents".

*Caritas is the Catholic relief, development and social service organisation with branches across the world. It operates through the church parishes in providing assistance.

** Association villageoise d'épargne et des crédits ; Village Association for Savings and Loans

All the examples have in common that they show that contacts upon arrival are very limited for many IDPs. Often, a close relative is the first entry point, and they then provide access to a next contact that can be of help. For instance, 34 percent of our survey respondents indicated that they moved to Bukavu because they had a relative who lived there. This is how the chain of connectivity starts, getting more dense and powerful in helping to integrate locally. What counts here is not only the quantity of connections but also the quality of a connection: How well-positioned is the contact him/herself to provide new opportunities or to open up other network contacts? And will the connection prove to be sustainable over a longer time or get easily disrupted? Several IDPs testified to us how they were initially taken in by a relative, but they also reported how tensions soon arose because of the burden they placed on their hosts. In many cases, hosts show a willingness to provide support, but many of them have limited capacity to do so, due to their own personal circumstances. Expectations about solidarity and hospitality nevertheless oblige them to provide as much support as possible. One host explained to us:

> *My widowed mother-in-law came to my house—which has only one bedroom—with six children. The seven of them spent the night on a mat on the floor. They muttered every night. We also had difficulty stepping over them at night to go to the toilet outside. It was hard for them, as it was for us. I was forced to go into debt with several people to pay the costs of 100 US dollars for their transport back to Shabunda, when it was reported that the situation had calmed down (FGD-ULEI-IA-002-COD).*

Avoiding connections for better integration

Whereas most IDPs consider the mobilisation of contacts with close relatives in displacement to be instrumental to their local integration, there is a small group of IDPs who very consciously avoid the mobilisation of networks, out of fear of stigmatisation, for instance. This is the case for former rebels who prefer to hide their history in the forest, but also for people—usually women—who have been victims of sexual violence or for people who have fled because of sorcery accusations, as we explained above. An example of the latter is the case of a widowed woman who we met in a previous project.[21] Two children of her neighbours had died. A spirit medium told the children's parents that the only widow they knew in their environment was the one responsible for their deaths. When she received a warning by elders from the community that they could not guarantee her safety in case of reprisals, she decided to flee to relatives in another community. In this place, she made a living by selling bananas and honey in the market. Seven months later, however, she was discovered by some women from her village

who threatened her that they would tell others that she was a witch. Although she denies being a witch and having anything to do with the death of the children, she is also aware that it is neigh on impossible to refute the accusations of the—highly reputed—spirit medium. She then decided to move to Bukavu with her four children. To avoid being too visible and being identified, she is no longer selling products in the market, but is selling the honey in front of her house. She is still buying the honey herself from the same suppliers as before: Since these suppliers live in a more remote place, they are not aware of the accusations against her (SSI-ULEI-SL, 22.06.2017).

Connections in communities of origin

Whereas connections at the site of displacement are important for people in rebuilding their lives and in finding a durable solution out of displacement, they do not provide the full picture of how people manage to survive. To get a more complete picture, we therefore explicitly asked people about their connections to their home communities, not only to gather information about the security situation or whether one's house has not yet been demolished or occupied, but also because we assumed that these connections might enable people to mobilise resources that could be beneficial to building up their lives in displacement.[22] Sometimes, such benefits are directly visible in the urban markets, as certain products are seen to be connected to a certain origin (palm oil or charcoal from Bunyakiri or wood from Kalonge, for instance). Obviously, some of these products are sold by traders who get the products from these places, but we also heard from several respondents that they would travel back and forth to harvest products from their own fields; both to sell in Bukavu and for their own consumption. In our survey, products from communities of origin were the 3rd most importance source of livelihood for people, mentioned by 17 percent of respondents. Such resources might not be directly visible nor taken into consideration when assessing livelihood strategies of people in urban settings, and people might not be inclined to talk about it without being prompted.[23]

In most cases, fields or plantations that are left behind in the community of origin are cultivated or monitored by other family members. Some of these fields are part of the family heritage, and the absent family members do not really benefit from its products, as they are also not the ones who put any effort into

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22 In fact, we have come across aid actors that expressed their amazement that some IDPs are still surviving in the city, despite their lack of resources on several occasions. We argue that this is because their assessments do not take into account the assets that people can mobilise in their home communities, either through others who have stayed behind or by moving back and forth between places themselves.

23 It is known from other research that given the long-term presence of humanitarian actors in the east of the DRC, many people tend to underreport their sources of income/assets/wealth when they are questioned about it in the hope that aid actors will provide more aid to them (Ferf et al., 2016).

cultivation. There is usually a common understanding that they will have access to their fields upon return.[24] In other cases, land is owned by the displaced family, and a close relative or community member cultivates it. In exchange, the harvest is shared between the owner and the one who farms the land. But there are other, more exceptional arrangements. Let's look more closely at this story: Ntama, a 54-year old woman came to Bukavu with her husband and children in 2003. We quoted her in the introduction to this working paper. When Ntama's husband passed away in 2005, her life became more difficult. She told us about how she is still benefiting from some of her resources in the home community:

> *I still have my fields in [...]. At one point, I thought of selling them, but then a neighbour here in Bukavu advised me to ask a local church to take care of them. Until then, my fields were abandoned. Other family members who could have helped all fled, or already had their own fields. So I asked the local church of CEBCA.[25] The church started farming my fields in 2012. There is really no formal agreement, but the church will use it as long as it wants to. Thus, the church cultivates a large part of my land for their own benefit. By way of payment, they cultivate the other part for me. I only provide the seeds. I go to [...] regularly, I would say at least once every month. I bring the seeds myself. When the harvest is done, I organise myself to transport everything and sell part of the harvest [here in Bukavu]. The other part is for my own consumption in the house and to share with my children who are already married.[26] I go there [...] to get my part of the harvest, but I cannot stay too long because at the moment there is a conflict between two traditional chiefs who contest their power and who each have their own supporters. Anyway... There are also times that the Raia Mutomboki are ravaging the fields. Last year for instance, we had nothing to harvest because of them (SSI-ULEI-JR-001-COD).*

Ntama does not have relatives who could take care of her fields but asked the church to do so. It is clear that such arrangements demand high levels of trust. Such trust is more likely to exist between relatives than between strangers. The church, however, with all it stands for, seems to be an acceptable alternative.

What Ntama has in common with a number of other respondents is that she can mobilise resources in her home community. Her words are representative of a large group of IDPs who return to their community of origin for short visits to supervise their fields or to withdraw resources. In many cases, they have

made agreements with remaining relatives or others about the cultivation of the field. Usually it means that the harvest has to be shared between the owner of the field—the IDP—and the person who is cultivating it. This form of sharecropping has a longer history in the DRC where landless dwellers would make arrangements with large landholders to cultivate their fields in exchange of part of the harvest.[27] Nowadays, IDPs in Bukavu benefit from such arrangements that enable them to sustain their livelihoods in the city. It puts displaced in this regard at an advantage in comparison to 'regular' vulnerable people in Bukavu. But the advantage only works as long as there are still fields to cultivate, and as long as people are able to generate revenues from these fields from a distance. Obviously, not all can stay connected due to security, logistical or other practical limitations. Other respondents told us that they sold their belongings in the home community before moving to Bukavu and used the revenues from this sale to get settled in the city and to survive their first months after arrival. For them, benefits are less sustainable.

The extraction of resources from the community of origin depends not only on the resources that IDP used to have at their disposal, but also depends on the strength of the connections they have in the home community, as they will usually depend on these connections to monitor their resources and to prevent others from taking them over. Such connections need to be well maintained, even when no return is envisaged. Options used are keeping in touch by mobile phone, physical visits of the IDP to the village or visits of the relatives to the city.

Mobility to move out of protractedness?

The decision to move is usually a joint decision by members of a household, and the majority of our respondents left their homes in the company of others, usually close family members (three out of four survey respondents, n=300). More than two-thirds (68 per cent) of our survey respondents did not get any support to move to their current place of living. Those who did (32 per cent), were most often (72 per cent) supported by relatives in their community of origin, and in 24 per cent of the cases by family members and/or friends living in Bukavu. Although security and economic conditions were main drivers for the move to Bukavu, 34 per cent of respondents also indicated that they chose Bukavu to reunite with relatives who were already living in the city.

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24 Note that there is also conflict potential here. If periods of absence are too long, the new land occupants might start feeling entitled to the land themselves.

25 Communauté des Eglises Baptistes au Centre de l'Afrique

26 She has seven children: Six daughters and one son. The three youngest daughters are still living with her.

27 The sharecropping practice is thus not necessarily connected to the absenteeism of the landowner.

Returning

IDPs in the east of the DRC, especially those who come from territories that are relatively close and are situated along main roads that can be travelled with ease, can often still return to their community of origin on a regular basis. Since their initial displacement, 60 per cent of our respondents had returned home at least once, but most had returned more frequently. Indicatively, when we carried out our survey between 17 February and 2 March 2020, 26 per cent of our respondents had already returned home in 2020 while another 24 per cent had last returned home in 2019. At the same time, most people (65 per cent) do not intend to return to their former of place of living on a permanent basis in the coming two years, 11 per cent intend to return temporarily, and 24 per cent intend to return permanently. Reasons respondents gave for their return related to livelihoods and the need to secure assets, as the example of Ntama shows.

Or not returning?

Maintaining good connections and access to resources in the community of origin is not self-evident. The example of Bwato is a case in point. Bwato is a 53-year old, divorced man who fled to Bukavu in 2017, fed up with the recurrent attacks by the Raia Mutomboki militia that stole local produce to stock up their supplies. When they raped his daughter and burnt down his house, he decided to flee to his elder brother in Bukavu. Initially, he fled alone. His two youngest children followed later. The four others are staying in another village. Since his escape, Bwato has never returned to his village, but he receives news via relatives or former neighbours who engage in trading and who come to the city to get new stocks. Bwato still owns three fields and three fish ponds in his village, which he had bought himself. This had helped him to generate some capital, but he also assumes that it made him the target of the armed bandits who wanted to either kill him or force him to leave the village. Bwato knows from contacts with relatives and traders from his village that his younger brother is now tending his fields and ponds, although he has not given his brother permission to do so. According to custom, his brother has two good reasons to make use of Bwato's resources: First, according to local customs, as his brother, he has the right to his property in his absence. Second, three of Bwato's children live with a paternal uncle and benefit indirectly from the exploitation. Bwato has put pressure on his brother to also send some of the produce to him, but his brother refuses. Meanwhile they are no longer on talking terms. He only receives greetings from his brother every now and then through others. The troubled relation with his brother over his resources is also a factor that impedes Bwato from considering a return to his village. In his village, it is commonly accepted that people who endure the hardships in the village are allowed to benefit from the assets of a person who has left. The latter is often frowned upon when he returns in better times: He is considered opportunistic and having chosen the easy way out. This also makes it difficult to reclaim ownership of one's assets upon return.

Onward and outward mobility

Only a small number of our respondents have close ties with people abroad. In contrast to the other TRAFIG groups of study, there is no major diasporic community of Congolese abroad. Significantly, only two of our survey respondents ever applied for asylum abroad; one in Belgium, the other in Tanzania, and only two indicated that they would want to move abroad (UK, Italy). In our qualitative interviews, we came across a couple of respondents who referred to relatives living abroad. Mazuri for instance—introduced earlier—had in-laws in a refugee camp 'in Kampala' who want to move to the United States at some point to unite with a brother-in-law who had left three years ago.[28] Mazuri had considered joining his family-in-law in the camp as well. But not all IDPs shared such ambitions of going abroad. Illustratively for instance are the following words of a 30-year-old woman who worked in the construction sector as a porter—and who did not have an easy life in Bukavu. She told us:

> *Some of my family members are abroad, in camps in Uganda and Tanzania. They want to go to Europe. I think they make a huge mistake, since they have been stuck in these refugee camps for many years already and sometimes ask for money from relatives [in the DRC], even though we have all become very poor because of all these displacements. My cousins are in Kisangani and Kinshasa but they don't help anyone in terms of survival. Even their phone calls have become rare (SSI-ULEI-SL-014-COD).*

Due to its location at the Rwanda–Congolese border however, it is not uncommon for all inhabitants of Bukavu, including IDPs, to regularly cross the border into Rwanda and to benefit from the products that are sold in the market there, to use the health care facilities or to set off for international travels. Despite the often tense geopolitical relations between the two countries, Rwanda is an important point of connection to the world at large.

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28 The refugee camp is actually not situated in Kampala but elsewhere in the country (Mbarara), but people colloquially refer to 'Kampala' in this regard.

Concluding remarks

The mobilisation of contacts with close relatives is a first step that most IDPs take when they arrive in the city. Through these close relatives other contacts as well as opportunities in terms of employment or housing come into being. These first contacts with close relatives are often the reason why people moved to Bukavu, and they can help to start a chain of connectivity that gradually expands and that helps people to become locally integrated. Connections in the community of origin are mobilised especially for the surveillance of assets that are left behind and lead to frequent return visits. Rural assets often continue to play a critical role in the livelihood strategies of people in displacement, but are a more temporary strategy than a permanent solution: People who aspire to return need to ensure that they can claim these resources upon return while people who intend to stay in the city for good usually seek ways to gain a stable income in the city.

Key findings
- *Contacts with close relatives are often the first to be mobilised by IDPs upon arrival. These close contacts mobilise a chain of connectivity that gradually expands.*
- *Return visits are instrumental in the mobilisation of resources in the community of origin that contribute to everyday survival in the place of refuge.*
- *Mobility of IDPs is mostly oriented backwards, towards the community of origin and much less outwards.*

3.4 Building alliances—Displaced people's integration and intergroup relations with 'hosts'

This section looks into Theme 4 of TRAFIG: 'Building alliances: Displaced people's integration and intergroup relations with 'hosts''. The main question this section aims to address is: Which processes structure inter-group relations between refugees and hosts and displaced people's pathways of local integration? Whereas the previous section mostly zoomed in on how people mobilise existing network contacts in Bukavu and their home community, this section looks more into the new contacts that people build in displacement. Sometimes, these new networks are developed through the 'chain of connectivity' that we set out in the previous section, but displaced people also build new connections that open up new networks as well as opportunities for local integration. In the following, we first look at the IDP–host relations from the perspective of IDPs. Then, we look at these relations from the perspective of the hosts. Here, we distinguish between hosts who are former IDPs themselves, and 'regular' long-term residents of the city. Finally, we discuss the extent at which inter- and intra-group relations contribute to the local integration of IDPs in social and economic terms. We illustrate these relations by looking at examples such as labour associations and saving groups.

Intergroup relations from the perspective of IDPs

IDPs often settle initially with close relatives and, to build up their lives in displacement, they rely on relatives and friends. However, they also invest in strengthening contacts with 'weak ties' in their network as a strategy to expand their possibilities—in line with Granovetter's argument on the strength of weak ties (1973). Such a contact can, for instance, be a client of somebody's business who becomes a temporary host and then helps them further to find proper accommodation. But we also came across a number of examples of IDPs who testified being supported by (almost) complete strangers to get work, free education or housing. This could be interpreted as an example not of strengthening weak ties, but of building new ties, and shows the dynamics inherent in the building of alliances. An example of different alliances can be found in the story of 45-year old Ntakwindja, a woman who had fled to Bukavu in 1998:

Upon arrival, we were first hosted by relatives of our neighbours from the village for a month. While staying there, a lady from our village who also lived in Bukavu recognised me. Realizing the suffering we had experienced with our family, the lady offered us a small house [the house was her property]. She housed us for 11 years, and we did not have to pay any rent. While there, a man of good will, whom I did not know before, took charge of the education of my eldest child for five years, then

another benefactor took charge of the studies of another child. When my eldest child obtained his secondary state diploma, he was admitted to the Higher Pedagogical Institute (ISP) of Bukavu where the General Director noted his inability to pay the academic fee and then paid for my child for three years. This GD was of the Lega tribe but was forced to resign by demonstrating Shi students. This conflict took on a tribal connotation and led to the resignation of the GD of the ISP. This is how the benefactor of my eldest was lost (SSI-ULEI-IA-001-COD).

Ntakwindja's benefactors were neither members of her close network of family and friends, nor did she know them before she arrived in Bukavu. She assumed that it was due to her 'gift of prayer' that had cured some people of diseases or solved other concerns that one of the benefactors of this gift had decided to help her. Out of gratitude she was then offered the payment of tuition for the schooling of her children. In this case, the support can be understood as a reciprocal exchange of services and therefore is like an economic transaction.

But close attention to her words shows that there are some existing ties: The woman who offered housing to Ntakwindja came from the same village, and the school director had a shared ethnic background. In other cases that we found, origin-based connections also impacted on the support that IDPs were able to mobilise. In Chapter 2, we explained that many IDPs prefer to settle in relative proximity to the main roads that lead to their community of origin because it is easier to receive news and stay connected. Automatically, this also leads to a concentration of people with a shared origin in specific neighbourhoods of the city. Even without knowing each other beforehand, such a shared origin (geographically or ethnically) can assist in creating new ties and in strengthening the chain of connectivity.

New ties of solidarity are also created on the way. Ntama, the widow we introduced at the beginning of the paper, had embarked on the three-day journey to Bukavu with a group of about 20 households. She told us:

We were divided into two groups so as not to burden the host families in [...] and in Bukavu. During the journey, all one needed to say that you had an acquaintance somewhere, and four to five households would join you [to stay with this acquaintance]. All these 20 families, divided into two groups of displaced people, were then crammed together in the home of my elder brother [already living in Bukavu] for one month (SSI-ULEI-JR-001-COD).

Ntama's words show that tapping into the networks of others can be a useful strategy to survive as it opens up possibilities that otherwise would not be available.

In other situations, benefactors seemed to be more random passers-by who took pity on families that were expelled from their house by landlords as they were not able to pay the rent:

> We were outside in the street and did not know where we could go, when a lady of good will offered us to stay in a room of her house. We stayed with her for four months, but then she told us that she had given us enough time to organise ourselves and that we did not think enough about the future (SSI-ULEI-IA-005-COD).

Other IDPs testified, for instance, how clients of their small businesses offered them new job opportunities, housing or other services. This is usually considered very positively by IDPs, although some also indicated feeling exploited. This was also the case for Ntama. When she arrived in the city, she met a group of displaced women—from another area—that introduced her to the sale of palm oil. She would buy in bulk and re-sell in smaller bottles. One of her clients heard her complaining about the difficulty she had in making enough profit. This client informed her about an association in another neighbourhood that was helping displaced women. Through this association, she was trained in sewing and the painting of cloths, but when the coordinator of the association passed away, the programme ended. One of the clients of the association, however, was a student at one of the main universities of the city. This student told her about the possibility of doing the laundry for students. This was in 2005, and Ntama has been doing this work ever since (SSI-ULEI-JR-001-COD). Ntama's example shows that close contacts are not necessarily needed to build effective alliances that lead to economic integration and subsequently the feeling of being at home in the city.

The flipside of relying on relatively distant others to rebuild your life is that such solidarity can easily evaporate: As soon as a benefactor him/herself is affected by adverse circumstances or even death, solidarity will quickly be limited to the close network of that benefactor, and the more loosely connected IDP will lose out. We have come across several cases in which IDPs found accommodation or employment through a 'person of good faith', but where the assistance abruptly ended or was withdrawn at the moment this person got into a difficult situation her/himself, or when other conditions changed. It underlines the vulnerability of IDPs who depend on such connections but also shows the limits of 'weak ties' and informal arrangements. Kazi's brother arranged housing for him with a friend and his wife. But in August 2019, this friend passed away and Kazi, feeling that out of respect for the widowed wife he should now find his own house to rent, loses his place to stay.

Intergroup relations from the perspective of hosts

How do longer-term residents of Bukavu perceive IDPs, and to what extent are they willing to welcome newcomers in the city? In explaining their motivations for providing support, people in Bukavu (both IDPs and long-term residents) often refer to the moral obligation that is deeply rooted in 'African solidarity'. Why would such solidarity extend beyond one's close relatives, friends or ethnic group? The answer depends on a number of characteristics of the 'hosts'. First of all, there is the group of former IDPs: People who had fled to Bukavu previously and who have found some stability in their lives. Based on their own experience, they feel obliged to welcome newcomers. In many cases, these newcomers decide to move to Bukavu exactly because of the known presence of others who have preceded them. Second, there are long-term residents of Bukavu who had been displaced to the territories when fighting took place in the city and who now feel that they have to reciprocate the hospitality received by them. A participant in one of our focus group meetings pointed out:

> I cannot refuse hospitality to a displaced person because you never know. Today it's them, but tomorrow it might be me. In late October 1996, I fled with empty pockets and no precise destination. I had about ten dependents. A stranger picked me up in a banana plantation one evening in [...]. This good-faith man kept me in his house and fed me and my family for three weeks (FGD-ULEI-JR-002-COD).

Third, some residents refer to the moral obligation to welcome strangers and to extend their solidarity to others. Some say that this obligation is based on cultural norms, others stress Christian norms. During a focus group meeting with hosts, one of the participants said:

> We welcome them 'pro deo'. As a Christian, you have to be sensitive to other people's problems. I gave free accommodation to a displaced family for two years. I had met them in the public square, and I initiated the man of the family to the petty trade at the market of Kadutu [one of the main markets of the city]. Eventually, one of his clients ended up giving him a job with the SNEL [the National Electricity Company] (FGD-ULEI-JR-002-COD).

Generally, long-term residents are open to receive 'real displaced', i.e. people who have been forced to flee because of violence and insecurity, but who might return again once their place of origin is safe again. This stands in stark contrast to how many residents talk about regular migrants that come to the city in search of greener pastures. For example, one resident explained:

The real displaced are families who come in masses or as autonomous families. They are people forced into displacement by disasters, attacks by armed groups, rape and violence perpetrated by uncivilised people. They are courteous, integrate into the 'Shirika (the grassroots groups of the Catholic Church), present themselves at the local authorities, the pastors, etc. The churches and grassroots leaders appeal to our compassion, and we assist the displaced with clothing, money, housing and introduce them to the job market. Generally, they are willing to do anything as long as they have enough to feed their families. They are cheap labour.

Yet, another resident commented:

When the displaced come to us, they try to integrate themselves, not knowing that urban life has its demands. Those who have had the blessing of drawing a few grammes of gold or a few kilogrammes of Coltan or Cassiterite from the shafts of the artisanal mines try to make us see that they are more urban than we are, and we don't tolerate that" (FGD-ULEI-JR-002-COD).

The words cited here illustrate the divided opinion that long-term residents have of displaced people moving to the city: For them, 'real IDPs' have the right to the city—albeit temporary. They deserve support but can actually also be beneficial as they provide cheap labour, whereas the better-off migrants, regardless of their reason of displacement, are received with more hostility and as competitors in the urban space who are not entitled to live in the city. Such hostile ideas are even stronger in relation to the migrants who display their wealth too openly.

Building alliances for social and economic integration?

Ntakwindja and others built connections with individual bene-factors who supported them in finding their way around the city and in rebuilding their lives. Offering services that others are not able or willing to do is another way to gain a reputable status, which can lead to a more stable economic and social position. Kazi for instance—the man we introduced as 'living in limbo'—is gaining a reputation by carrying out the hard, dirty and unpopular work of digging latrines. He got into this work by connecting himself to the chief in his neighbourhood. He has also become a trusted source for this chief, telling him about any illegal constructions being built in the neighbourhood.[29]

Kazi pointed out:

All this work has made me popular in the neighbourhood and even all the young people and children know me as such. [...] It has also made me the person best placed to inform and point out where repairs are needed and even mobilise the neighbours to fix them. I also convey the messages of the local chiefs to the population and distribute invitations and other mail (SSI-ULEI-SLK-005-COD).

Meanwhile, demand for Kazi's work has increased, and he is in a position where he is even recruiting others when the manual labour jobs he is asked to do are getting too demanding for him. Although he is not yet able to take fully care of his children, he does manage to send money via MPesa (the mobile money system) to pay for their school fees and school uniforms.

Kazi's case shows how building new alliances—in this case with a notable in the neighbourhood—can be an effective way to become better integrated in social and economic terms. Other IDPs also testified that they went to the local authorities to present themselves as newcomers to become accepted and to feel more secure. Mafuta for instance, is a 27-year old woman who left her village in 2014 in the company of her husband, children and several in-laws. They have recently moved to a new neighbourhood in Bukavu. Mafuta comments on this move:

To guarantee our safety in this new neighbourhood, my husband and I went to the chief of the street and the chief of the neighbourhood to show them our courtesy. We wanted to let them know about our presence in their area so that we could live in peace and quiet, protected from any harassment that is often organised towards newcomers here. We brought them [the chiefs] 10 dollars and a small 30-kg bag of manioc flour as my husband had just come from our village to monitor the harvest in our fields (SSI-ULEI-SLK-008-COD).

Whether or not IDPs inform the relevant local authorities about their presence varies quite a bit and also depends on how local chiefs deal with their position of power. Some make regular rounds through the neighbourhood to identify newcomers themselves and to find out whether they have particular needs, others are less proactive. In many cases, IDPs were motivated to register themselves as new inhabitants of the neighbourhood with the authorities upon request of their landlords. Generally, IDPs who are registered seemed to feel a bit more secure and accepted in their neighbourhoods. It should be noted, however, that an important reason why a number of IDPs refrain from registering themselves, is that they fear that they have to pay a—sometimes steep—fee to the chiefs.

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29 Bukavu is located in the hills and landslides—sometimes fatal—are common due to deforestation and constructions at inappropriate sites. Kazi keeps an eye on potential risks.

Whereas IDPs like Kazi and Ntakwindja build alliances with individuals to become better positioned, others opt for more collectively oriented alliances. In the labour market of Bukavu, it is a strategy that we came across in several instances: People who work in a certain sector unite in associations to offer services collectively to be able to bargain a better price and to attract larger jobs. Examples are an association of women carrying sand [for the construction sector in the city], women offering their cargo services in the port; a group of transborder vegetable traders, etc. Being part of such an association makes it easier for people to obtain clients, can be a relatively smooth way to access the labour market and to find support in navigating the formal and informal rules of the game. This helps IDPs to be less vulnerable and to become better integrated in social and economic life in the city. We conducted a focus group meeting with one such association. The group consists of 106 women who all engage in the cross-border trade with Rwanda where they buy fresh fruits and vegetables to resell in Bukavu. 38 members are displaced, others have a longer history in Bukavu. One of the focus group participants explained:

> *Our group is not formally structured, but members all know each other by name, so it is not possible for a stranger to infiltrate our group. We don't have a mutual aid fund, but our role is to help each other in case of threats to common or individual interests, such as police harassment, fictitious taxation or refusal by the customs officers to allow us to do our work… There is no membership obligation, but you have to be serious and should not disturb others (FGD-ULEI-IA-001-COD).*

The group of fruit and vegetable sellers described here did not ask for a membership fee. This is unusual as many of the other associations that we heard about do, making them less accessible for those who arrive in the city without any capital to spend. This exclusiveness of the associations hence risks creating even larger thresholds for newcomers to enter the urban labour market. Several of our respondents indicated that they would want to become a member of an association, because they were aware of the benefits, but were not able to pay the initial membership fee. The associations can hence be seen as a way to become better integrated but also as a way to remain excluded; if all stalls in a market are divided among members of an association, or if all the transport of cargo in the harbour is negotiated via associations, it means that non-associated people are not able to compete in the market.

Concluding remarks

The eastern DRC is trapped in protracted conflict. As a result of this, many inhabitants of Bukavu have experienced displacement in their lives or have seen loved ones being forced to leave their places of origin. This is a factor that should be reckoned with in assessing the willingness of members of the host community to accept newcomers in the city. Building new alliances can be helpful to better integrate, but our findings also show that support from 'unknown' or new contacts can easily become interrupted under adverse circumstances and can place IDPs in vulnerable positions. The relationship between better-off IDPs and the city dwellers is less self-evident in this regard, as the better-off ones are seen as competitors that do not have the right to assistance.

Key findings

- *IDPs depend a lot on existing networks to rebuild their lives in displacement but also manage to expand these networks and to build new alliances.*
- *The solidarity of 'unknown' hosts is based on their own experiences of displacement, expectations about future displacement or on cultural or Christian norms of solidarity.*
- *Weak network ties can become easily disrupted when the network contact ends up in adverse circumstances. It underlines the vulnerability of such networks of dependence.*
- *Building new alliances helps to find new economic opportunities, but new economic opportunities also help to build new alliances.*

3.5 Seizing opportunities—Development incentives and new economic interactions

In this fifth Theme of TRAFIG, the overarching question is: What are the economic impacts of protracted displacement situations (PDS) and transnational figurations of displacement in the medium and long-term, and how can policies contribute to maximise development effects? The Congo research team was not foreseen to conduct research on this particular theme in the project, but we nevertheless came across some interesting and relevant findings. A journal article about this is forthcoming (Jacobs et al., 2020). In the following, we provide a summary of the main argument that we developed in this article.[30]

As we set out under Theme 1, policymakers and practitioners in humanitarian and development praxis in the DRC believe that the rural exodus that leads to the rapid expansion of Bukavu should not be promoted—preferably even halted—as it only puts additional strain on the services and resources that are available in the city. IDPs and other migrants are mostly seen as a burden to the city who compete with longer-term residents who are more entitled to the services and resources that are available in the city.

But this is only one side of the coin. The other side is that IDPs and other migrants actually contribute to the development of the city by mobilising resources in their communities of origin that are fed into the urban market, or by providing services with a low reputation that better-off residents of the city are unwilling to do. By occupying new niches in the urban markets, IDPs work towards their local integration in two important ways: First, they become more self-reliant and improve their economic position. Second, their clients in the city who no longer see them as a burden are starting to appreciate them and see them as an asset. This improves IDPs' relations with members of the host community and makes them feel more at home. However, an impediment to the capitalisation of rural resources in the city can be the infrastructure: Poorly main-tained roads and numerous roadblocks can make it extremely costly, time-consuming and risky to transport goods from rural to urban areas and vice versa. There is always a serious risk of losing investments.

Our findings show that policymakers and practitioners might fear the rural exodus for the wrong reasons. Obviously, con-cerns about the consequences of overpopulation on natural resources and the environment are justified. Yet, rather than worrying about the additional pressure on the city, they should acknowledge that IDPs in the city are not only seizing oppor-tunities but are also actively creating new opportunities and

adding value to the local economy. What they ought to worry more about is the 'resource drain' that the rural exodus is triggering and which leads to an investment of benefits from rural areas in the city rather than in the areas from where the resources are extracted.

Key findings
- *IDPs should not only be seen as a burden to the host communities in which they reside but should also be appreciated for the resources and services they have to offer.*
- *Mobilisation of resources in the community of origin and translocal practices contribute to local integration in displacement.*
- *Investing the benefits of these same rural resources in the city risks creating a resource drain in the rural areas, which could further accelerate urbanization.*
- *IDPs not only seize but also actively create economic opportunities in the city.*

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30 The article 'The upward spiral towards local integration of IDPs: Agency and economics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo' will be published in the *Refugee Survey Quarterly* in a special issue on internal displacement.

4. Cross-cutting findings and emerging trends

In Chapter 3, we discussed the five main themes of research in the TRAFIG project. In this chapter, we will look at some cross-cutting findings and emerging trends that we discerned in the DRC. Please note that most of these findings have not been at the focus of our attention but have emerged from our data analysis and merit follow-up research to be better understood.

4.1 Gendered protractedness

In our samples (both qualitative and quantitative), women are slightly better represented than men. Although there are no data available about the gender division in the total IDP population, we believe that this overrepresentation is reflective of the general group of urban IDPs in the DRC. Several factors play a role here. Building on previous and our current research, we see that in many instances, husband and wife initially flee to the city together but that after having settled, men seem to have more difficulties in finding employment opportunities in the city. Although more in-depth research on this would be required to validate our findings, it is our impression that there is an element of shame involved in this, first because men have not been able to adequately protect their families in the community of origin, and second, because they are deprived of their usual means of income when they live in displacement. Out of necessity, they then either return to their community of origin on a permanent basis, keep on moving between their place of origin and the city, or they move on to mining areas in the hope of finding work there.

In all of these cases, wives and children are usually left behind in the city in de facto female-headed households. In the absence of their husbands, many women still contend to be married as being seen as single women might make their household more vulnerable and could lead to stigmatisation. From our previous research, however, we gleaned that in some cases, men have not been in touch, nor have provided for their families for years on end. In their absence, women have to fend for themselves and their children in a new and challenging environment, with high risks of being stuck in limbo. But our findings also show that despite these adverse conditions, many female IDPs show impressive resilience and strength in rebuilding their lives in displacement, with or without the support of husbands.

4.2 Local and onward mobility

We have already described how the mobility of IDPs is oriented towards their community of origin. This is by far the main mobility pattern that we can distinguish in our research. But where else do IDPs move to? We have identified two directions of some significance: First, there are high levels of local mobility within the city. The first shelter that IDPs find in the city is usually only temporary (unless their move to the city has been prepared well in advance and with sufficient financial means to allow the identification of a suitable house to live in for a longer period of time). So IDPs are either forced to move by their hosts or decide to seek better conditions themselves. The more integrated IDPs are, the better the housing conditions become. This often entails a move from the urban periphery towards the more central neighbourhoods. When we asked our survey respondents about their intentions to move elsewhere, most of them indicated neighbourhoods in Bukavu with slightly better conditions in terms of infrastructure, improved roads, availability of water and electricity, etc. Some of them indicated the most prosperous neighbourhoods. The more stable the socio-economic situation of an IDP is, the more central they live within the city.

A second type of mobility, mostly limited to male IDPs, is the move towards the DRC's mining areas. These areas have an ever-persisting lure of wealth and prosperity, and men leave their families behind in the hope of returning with a fortune. There are real-life examples of such stories in Bukavu, which enforce the impression that such dreams can be realised. But in reality, only the lucky few succeed in escaping from misery in this way. More often, men who leave for these areas return disillusioned after a number of years or are never heard of again unless through hearsay of others who testify that they have seen that the person has remarried in his new community. Some women also told us stories about their husbands being stuck in the mining areas and not able to save enough money to pay the transport costs needed to return to Bukavu. Against better judgement, they stay and work while their spouses continue in their everyday struggles for survival in the city.

4.3 Witchcraft and trust

Several of our respondents indicated that they had left their community of origin not only because of the climate of insecurity but also because of witchcraft-related issues. Some of them had experienced illnesses (of themselves or of relatives) or deaths of family members that they suspected were caused by witchcraft. To escape from nefarious powers and to seek medical treatment, they decided to move to the city. Others, a much less outspoken group, had been accused of witchcraft and thus of having caused illness or even the death of people in their direct social surrounding. Out of fear of retaliation, they fled to the anonymity of the city to rebuild their lives, as it is usually not easy to simply refute such accusations.

Although witchcraft and witchcraft-related accusations have been and are widespread phenomena in Africa across time and space, there may be two main reasons, both related to the overall security situation, that indicate why they might be more persistent and harmful in conflict settings (both would need further investigation). First, there is no central authority that would curb witchcraft accusations—and potentially harmful and fatal punishments that sometimes follow—or establish order, provide protection and guarantee fair jurisdiction in such cases. Second, in contexts of protracted conflict, in which frontlines frequently shift and alliances are constantly made and broken, mistrust in communities is thriving. This can exacerbate the insecurity that people experience and induce them to use witchcraft themselves or to accuse others of witchcraft.

4.4 The DRC's culture of self-reliance

During the early years of the Congo crisis, the unrecognised secessionist state of South Kasai developed 'Article 15', a fictional addition to the 14-Article Constitution that was in place in the Congo at that time. Article 15 was said to read 'Débrouillez-vous' (fend for yourself). Former president Mobutu famously referred to it in a 1976 speech, in which he called upon his officials to fend for themselves but to do so in a clever way. Since then, Congolese refer to 'Article 15' and its instruction in common parlance to explain the high levels of corruption and fraud in society. It has also become a style of life that many Congolese have internalised. They have gotten used to becoming self-reliant and not to expect much from the state. IDPs are no different in this regard, and many of them have become masters in self-reliance. A note of caution, however, is appropriate: Our findings show that many people depend on others in being or becoming self-reliant: They get access to employment, housing or basic services through their networks. It is a way of fending for themselves with the help of others within their social figurations. But this means that they are vulnerable to external shocks that they cannot control. As soon as there is a change in the social figurations, it can directly impact on their personal situation. We would, therefore, argue that being self-reliant in this case does not yet mean having moved out of protracted displacement. If the informal support network collapses, there is no institutional state or non-state actor that will step in and provide the needed support.

4.5 Ethnicity, belonging and intercommunal relations

Although ethnicity is not frequently talked about in Bukavu, it is a factor that is below the surface. People make assessments of somebody's origin based on family names or other factors. IDPs who are part of the most powerful ethnic group are therefore at a slight advantage in comparison to IDPs of other ethnicities (Jacobs & Paviotti, 2017a).

A shared sense of belonging can also become stronger in displacement and subsequently be beneficial for social relations, especially because IDPs tend to settle in the city close to others with the same origin. During a focus group meeting, several displaced gave examples along these lines: One woman admitted that she used to have lots of misunderstandings with the co-wife of her husband but told us that since having arrived in Bukavu, their collaboration is very good and that they carry out small services for each other as they feel united by their common fate. Another woman told us about a family with whom they always used to have words back in their community of origin. She now feels that they left not only the village but also the conflict behind as now they always exchange news from the village and inform each other about possible employment opportunities in the city (FGD-ULEI-IA-001-COD).

The flipside of belonging and inclusion is, of course, exclusion. Integration is thus more difficult for those who do not speak the right language, who are part of small minorities or who have reasons to avoid contacts with people from their past, as we have set out before. To escape from protracted displacement is much more difficult for these people.

Conclusions and outlook

The main research question of the TRAFIG research is: "How are protractedness, dependency and vulnerability related to the factors of local and translocal connectivity and mobility, and, in turn, how can connectivity and mobility be utilised to enhance the self-reliance and strengthen the resilience of displaced people?" (Etzold et al., 2019) The central hypothesis that this question is based on is that "the more connected and mobile refugees, IDPs and other migrants are, the less likely it is that they end up in a situation of protracted displacement. Conversely, the less connected and the more immobilised displaced persons are, the greater the risk that they are vulnerable, dependent and become stuck in precarity" (Etzold et al., 2019). How then can this question be answered when looking at IDPs in the DRC?

Urban IDPs under the radar of humanitarian actors

Talking about people in situations of protracted displacement, one might be inclined to think first and foremost of refugees living in refugee camps for prolonged periods of time, surviving on food rations that are provided by humanitarian actors. These are not the urban IDPs that we meet in our research. In contrast to refugees, IDPs in the DRC are hardly on the radar of policies and programmes in the fields of humanitarian aid, development and protection: No systematic and formal registration takes place, and many of them are hesitant to register with the local authorities as they fear the (in)formal payment that usually comes with registration. If they register, it is usually at the request of their hosts.

To some extent, it is not surprising that IDPs remain under the radar. It reflects the more general observation that IDP legislation and policy are much less advanced than refugee frameworks of support (Ferreira et al., 2019). In fact, the protection of IDPs is largely lacking, despite nice words and good intentions put on paper, and despite the power of international organisations, humanitarian actors or donors to intervene (Verdirame & Harrell-Bond, 2005). At the same time, the eastern DRC has already been in the focus of many humanitarian aid interventions for decades, especially in the rural areas. Our findings show that many IDPs did benefit from some humanitarian or development aid when they were still living in their communities of origin. Having had positive experiences with loan and savings associations in the rural areas, many IDPs are keen to adhere to or even set up such associations in the city of refuge, as we set out in Section 3.1.

Enduring impacts of violent conflict

Most IDPs feel that they are largely left on their own in the search for durable solutions to their situation. What is revealing in many life stories told by IDPs is that the armed conflict has a long-term impact on their lives and contributes to the challenges they face in escaping from their situation in limbo even after having left the war behind and staying in relative safety in the city: People who leave their community without any capital because their belongings have been looted, people whose physical condition has deteriorated substantially because they had to sleep in the bush for long periods of time and did not have access to medical care, people who never went to school because their parents were killed and there was no money, people who are traumatised because of the violence they had experienced, and many more. These factors are not frequently addressed nor can they easily be remedied.

Interconnected insecurities

Many IDPs find themselves in a situation of limbo, also in displacement; in spatial, socio-economic and relational terms: They move from one temporary housing situation to the other, make ends meet mostly through uncertain day labour and feel unable to provide for a stable family life. We argue that it is important to understand the interconnections between the different limbos, as they are contingent on one another. To overcome protracted displacement, IDPs need to overcome all these limbos and move towards more stable social figurations. As pointed out by Etzold et al. (2019), this requires an understanding of the forces that constitute one's social figurations and will hence vary from person to person. Unfortunately, there is no blueprint to offer to policymakers on how this can best be achieved. The positive side of 'living in limbo' is that the instability that is related to this limbo can open up windows of opportunity for breaking out of existing social patterns, norms and expectations and lead to changes in lives and livelihoods that people otherwise would not have considered. If such changes turn their lives for the better, the 'agency-in-waiting' (Brun, 2015) can eventually lead to an escape from protractedness and an improvement of people's situations. Escaping from protractedness enables IDPs to make a positive contribution to their host community. This can be economically but also by taking up active roles in the social life of the neighbourhood.

How do IDPs escape from protractedness?

People who manage to escape from protracted displacement and manage to integrate in the city, are often those with more entrepreneurial spirit and able to fend for themselves. But also here, we see that bad luck can easily throw people back into a position of bare survival: What one day seems to be a relatively stable life, can turn into precariousness the next day when a landlord decides to expropriate a family, when a source of income disappears, or when the breadwinner of a household unexpectedly passes away. In the absence of formal support, IDPs seek help from benevolent and better-off family members, friends, business contacts, or even random benefactors they happen to meet along their way. For many IDPs, such contacts are the indispensable entry points into easier lives, access to the housing market, the labour market and the city itself.

The power of connectivity

We hence find proof of TRAFIG's central hypothesis that connections are important, but also want to emphasise that the power of these connections should not be overestimated. Existing contacts in Bukavu are certainly drivers of people's decision to move to the city, but for many, these contacts are limited themselves in what they can offer. It is not only the number of contacts that counts, but also the quality of these contacts. This relates both to the strength of the tie between an IDP and the network contact, as well as on the position of this contact. Many of the IDPs we have met rely on contacts with relatives that had fled some time before them, but who often lack stable lives themselves. Such contacts can be seen as horizontal contacts while vertical contacts, with those who are powerful or socio-economically more stable, are more useful, but rare. Long-term residents of Bukavu show some solidarity with IDPs, but prejudices, exploitation and misunderstandings exist as well. They can prevent fruitful relations from developing and reduce networking chances.

Translocal mobilities

Our findings show that IDPs in the DRC maintain high levels of mobility during their displacement. This mobility is of a translocal rather than a transnational nature, and backward rather than onward-oriented. Many IDPs mobilise resources in their home communities, which helps them to survive in the city—under the condition that road conditions enable such mobilisation. For those who intend to return, maintaining connections with the home community is necessary for a smooth return. Returnees are not always welcomed by those who have stayed behind, who feel that they had to bear more hardships and therefore believe that they have become entitled to claim resources that once belonged to IDPs. Those who intend to seek integration in Bukavu have to survive as long as they have

not yet managed to create stable livelihoods in the city. For some, however, mobility—and especially the mobilisation of resources in the rural areas—becomes a durable, and indeed translocal, livelihood strategy that helps them to move out of protractedness. Yet in most cases, mobility is a temporary rather than a permanent solution out of protracted displacement.

What is the relevance of this to policymakers and practitioners?

First of all, we noted that connections indeed count, but that what counts most, is the quality of these connections and that these need to be well understood. Our findings show that there is room for improvement in the intergroup relations between IDPs and hosts. This would need constructive dialogue and better knowledge and understanding of each other (see also Jacobs & Paviotti, 2017).

Second, we note that many IDPs depend on certain levels of mobility to make a living in the city. To mobilise resources in their community of origin, regular return visits are often needed. The success of this strategy depends on two main factors: For one, those who stay behind have to accept the resource drain that takes place in this way. IDPs need trusted gatekeepers and guards who are willing to share the benefits from farming IDPs' fields as it is not self-evident that access to resources is still assured in their prolonged absence. Our research team has not talked to those who stay behind, but the reluctance that some IDPs felt to return and to claim back their resources show that this might not be self-evident. Two, to be able to capitalise the resources, it is usually necessary to transport them to the (urban) market. This requires safe and accessible roads that are not dotted with road blocks where people have to pay (informal) fees that make their business much less viable. This is often an impediment to the commercialisation of resources (Schouten et al., 2017) and makes people take the smaller back roads rather than improved, yet insecure, roads (Ferf et al., 2014).

Third, we note that displaced people bring some translocal capital with them to the city through their experiences with development associations, savings groups, etc. Strengthening such initiatives further can contribute both to more economic empowerment, but also to better inter- and intragroup relations.

In sum, improving the quality of connections people have, and improving the possibilities to maintain mobile livelihood strategies would help to strengthen the translocal figurations in which they are embedded and could make it easier for IDPs to escape from their situation of protracted displacement.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFDL	Alliance for Democratic Forces for Liberation
AVEC	Village Association for Savings and Loans
AU	African Union
BICC	Bonn International Center for Conversion
CEBCA	Community of Baptist Churches in Central Africa
CNPA-PDI	National Commission Charged with Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (not yet in existence)
CNR	National Refugee Commission
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally displaced person
ISDR	Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural
MUSO	Mutual Solidarity Fund
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SNEL	National Electricity Company
TRAFIG	Transnational Figurations of Displacement (EU-funded research project)
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFP	World Food Programme

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