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## **Conflict (im)mobiles : biographies of mobility along the Ubangi River in Central Africa**

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## **Conflict (im)mobiles**

Biographies of mobility along the Ubangi River in Central Africa

Proefschrift

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door  
Maria Catherina Wilson Janssens  
geboren te Bogotá, Colombia in 1983

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Artworks:

Front: Detail from *Une ville flottante* (Sapin Makengele, 2017)

Back: *Gbalikouma* or *La débrouille* (Didier Kassai, 2017)

*Maman Clémentine, mpo na maki ya moto opesaki ngai mbala ya liboso tokutanaki.  
Papa Henry Azunda, ndenge oyambaki biso maboko polele na Libenge.  
Pour Juliette et ta force de vivre.  
Sapin, mpo na kolakisa ngai nzela.*

--

To Maman Clémentine, who gave me two lukewarm eggs the first time we met.  
To Papa Henry Azunda, who received us with open arms in Libenge.  
To Juliette and your strength to live.  
To Sapin, who led the way

... and to all the conflict mobiles flowing around the world.

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## Glossary

Arrondissement	City district; administrative unit of the city (legacy of French colonial rule). The Congolese (DRC) use ‘commune’ (legacy of Belgian colonial rule) instead.
Baleinières	Lit. whaleboats. Locally crafted wooden boats that travel long distances on the rivers in the Congo Basin.
Banguissois	Inhabitants of Bangui
Banyamoullengue	Jean-Pierre Bemba’s ALC rebel troops in CAR
Bozizie	Derogatory term that refers to François Bozizé’s presidential rule in CAR (2003–2013)
Capoeira	Afrobrazilian self-defence sport (or dance) with historical links to slavery. During a ‘roda’ (circle of capoeira), two <i>capoeiristas</i> (those who play capoeira) face one another in the circle while the others stand around watching and clapping. Besides the physical training, this self-defence group sport enhances the <i>capoeiristas’</i> sense of self-discipline, respect, solidarity, loyalty to the group, and self-control. According to the Kinshasa <i>capoeiristas</i> , it also teaches them how to deal with adversity.
Cash Grant	Monthly money allowance supplied to the refugees living in camps by the WFP. It was introduced in the second half of 2014 and replaced the monthly food distribution, allowing the refugees to choose and diversify their daily menu.
Centro	Nickname for people from CAR
Chef de quartier	Administrative unit
Churnalism	Term coined by BBC journalist Wakeem Zakir. A form of journalism that relies on recycling press releases and agency copy and which involves little or no independent reporting or attempt at verification. Churnalism is also the result of increasing pressures of time and cost demands for journalists.

Cité	In contrast to the <i>ville</i> , the city centre, the <i>cité</i> is composed of the popular residential neighbourhoods where most of the Kinois live. The <i>ville – cité</i> distinction is a residue from the racist policies of the colonial period. At the time the <i>ville</i> was inhabited by the Belgian <i>colons</i> , while the <i>cité</i> was allocated to the Africans.
Commune	City district; administrative unit of the city (legacy of Belgian colonial rule). The CAR, Congolese (Brazzaville), and Chadians use <i>arrondissement</i> instead (legacy of French colonial rule).
Congolité	‘Congolese-ness’, or being Congolese. This term emerged during the 2006 DRC elections period and encapsulated at the time an exclusionary definition of national authenticity. The meaning of <i>congolité</i> has now expanded to incorporate the affirmation of autochthonic origins and the expression of Congolese collective experience.
Débrouille	The art of fending for oneself; juggling livelihoods and getting by.
Dongolais	Inhabitants of Dongo
Eid-El-Fitr	Celebration at the end of the Muslim fasting period of Ramadan
ERUKIN	Équipe d’encadrement des réfugiés urbains de Kinshasa. A Congolese NGO that works with urban refugees in Kinshasa and which had a partnership with the UNHCR at the time of research.
Évolués	Western-educated Congolese in Belgian Congo
Glissement	Manoeuvre to prolong the presidential term beyond the second mandate
Kambili	Heated palm oil replacing gasoline
Kinois	Inhabitants of Kinshasa
Kuluna	Urban youth gangs operating in Kinshasa. <i>Kuluna</i> are feared for their violence.

Lingala	One of the four national languages of DR Congo. It is widely spoken in the west of the country and is the vernacular of Kinshasa.
Mindele	Plural of <i>mundele</i>
Mundele	Lingala term used to designate white people (and non-African foreigners more broadly)
Operation Likofi	Police operation targeting gangs in Kinshasa
Operation Mbata ya Bakolo	Police operation targeting undocumented foreigners in Brazzaville (mainly Congolese from DR Congo) in 2014
Operation Sangaris	French military operation in CAR (December 2013 – October 2016)
Parlement Debout	An informal parliament in Kinshasa constituted of people who, after work or during free time, discuss politics on Kinshasa's street corners
Pirogue	Dug-out wooden canoe used to navigate on the rivers and lakes in Central Africa
PK5	Muslim neighbourhood in Bangui, also known as 5 kilo. Famous for housing the largest market of Bangui.
Pondu	Cassava leaves. A national dish in different Central African countries. <i>Pondu</i> (in Lingala) is a Congolese dish that consists of pounded cassava leaves cooked in palm oil. It is eaten on a daily basis. Even if prepared differently (often with peanut butter), the cassava leaves are also on the daily menu in CAR, where they are named <i>ngundja</i> in Sango. Other names include <i>sombe</i> (Swahili) and <i>saka-saka</i> (Kikongo).
Poto	Lingala colloquialism for Europe and the West in general
Sango	Official language in CAR (together with French)
Sape	Acronym for société des ambianceurs et personnes élégantes. The <i>sape</i> is a cultural movement in both Congos, composed of <i>sapeurs</i> or Congolese dandies. By dressing up (there are different styles ranging from classic and elegant to extravagant) and buying expensive

clothing, the *sapeurs* defy societal rules and transform failure into apparent victory. *Sape* was turned into a verb, *saper*, which means to be conscious about one's clothes and to dress well.

Seleka	Rebel coalition in CAR that toppled Bozizé in a coup d'état on March 2013
Talimbi	Water spirits and sorcerers in the CAR imaginary
Wewa	Motorbike used as a motor-taxi in Kinshasa. <i>Wewa</i> means 'you' in the Luba language. It is believed that when the diamond-digging business declined in the Kasai, where the Luba people originate, many moved to Kinshasa in search of work and opportunities. They ended up driving motorbikes. Potential clients would hail them: 'You!' or ' <i>Wewa!</i> ' This pronoun became a metonym.
Zairianization	Confiscation of enterprises owned by foreigners for the benefit of Congolese nationals under Mobutu
Zaraguinas	' <i>Coupeurs de route</i> ' (lit. road cutters), or road bandits

## Acronyms

AEF	Afrique équatoriale française
AFDL	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre
AGR	(or IGA) Activités génératrices de revenus
ALC	Armée de Libération du Congo
APRD	Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la Démocratie
AT	Administrateur du Territoire
BINUCA	Bureau Intégré de l'organisation des Nations Unies en centrafrique
BONUCA	Bureau d'appui des Nations Unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République Centrafricaine
CAR	Central African Republic
CEMAC	Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale
CNR	Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés
CNS	Conférence Nationale Souveraine
COCORA	Coalition Citoyenne d'Opposition aux Rebelles Armés
CPJP	Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix
CTD	Connecting in Times of Duress
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DRC	(or DR Congo) Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
EUFOR	EUFOR RCA European Union Military Operation in the Central African Republic
ERUKIN	Équipe d'encadrement des réfugiés urbains de Kinshasa
FAC	Forces Armées Congolaises (under Laurent-Désiré Kabila)
FACA	Forces Armées Centrafricaines
FAR	Forces Armées Rwandaises
FARDC	Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
FATEB	Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui
FAZ	Forces Armées Zaïroises
FC	Franc Congolais

FCFA	Franc de la Communauté Financière en Afrique
FDPC	Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain
FOMAC	Force Multinationale de l'Afrique Centrale
FOMUC	Force Multinationale en Centrafrique
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGA	(or AGR) Income-Generating Activities
ISP	Institut Supérieur Pédagogique
M23	Mouvement du 23 mars
MESAN	Mouvement pour l'évolution sociale de l'Afrique noire
MINURCA	Mission des Nations Unies en République Centrafricaine
MINUSCA	Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République centrafricaine
MISAB	Mission Interafricaine de Surveillance des Accords de Bangui
MISCA	Mission Internationale de Soutien à la Centrafrique Sous Conduite Africaine
MLC	Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo
MLPC	Mouvement pour la Libération du Peuple Centrafricain
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (up until June 2010)
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (From July 2010 onwards)
MWRG	Matsutake Worlds Research Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ONATRA	Office National des Transports publicly owned Congolese company which operates railways, ports, and river transport.
PAM	(or WFP) Programme Alimentaire Mondiale
RC	Republic of Congo (colloquially known as Congo-Brazzaville)
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RVA	Regie des voies aériennes
TVC	Titre de Voyage Conventionnel, or the refugee travel document

UDPS	Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social
UFDR	Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	(or PAM) World Food Programme



From Bangui to Kinshasa

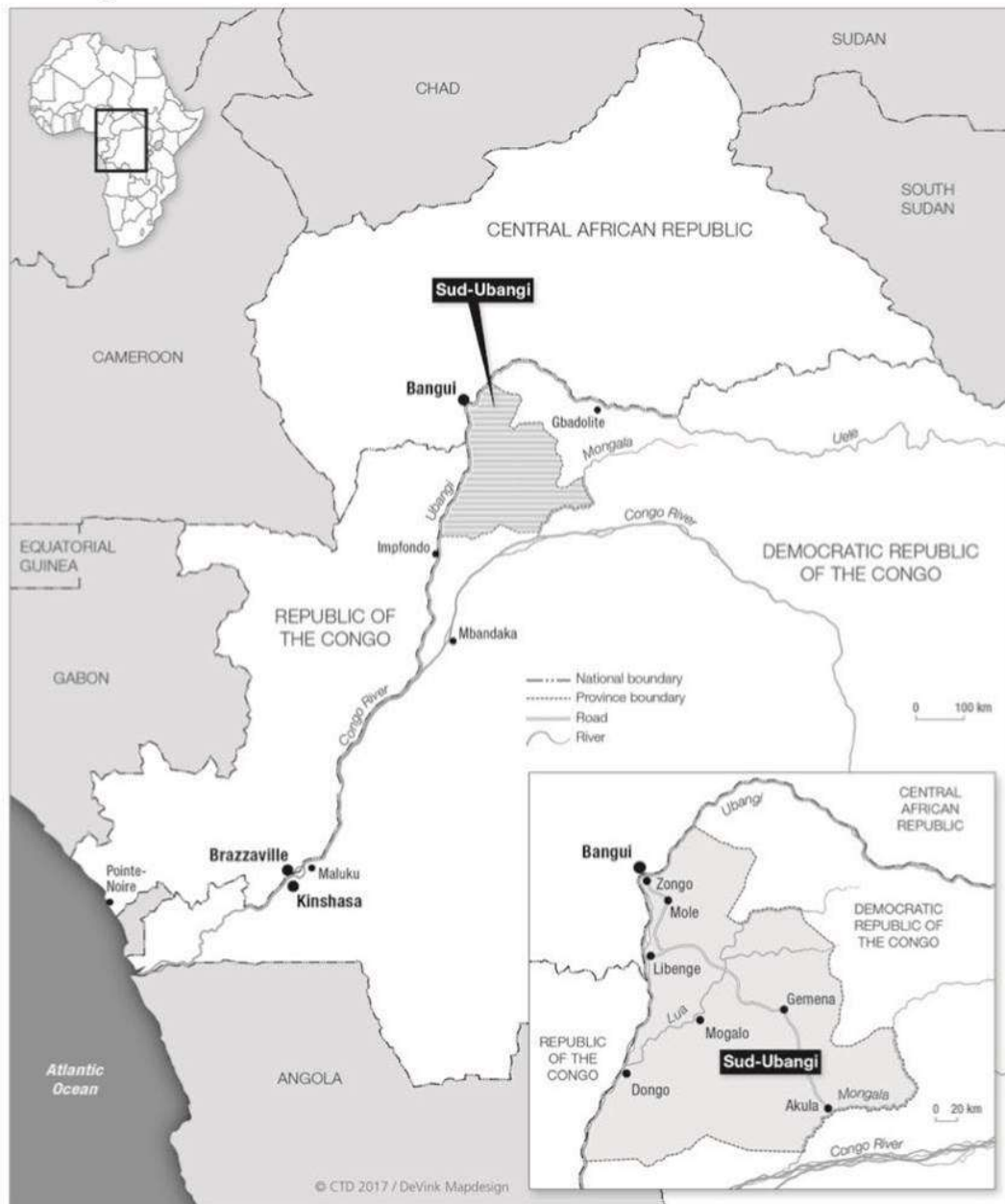


Figure 1 Map area of research: 'From Bangui to Kinshasa'  
Map produced in collaboration with the cartographer Nel De Vink (2017)



Figure 2 The Central African Republic<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> © Nations Online Project (accessed 1 June 2019)



Figure 3 The Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> © Nations Online Project (accessed 1 June 2019)