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*“Urban geographies of Violent conflict: Emerging boomtowns and spatial productions of political ambitions in Eastern Congo”*

This paper addresses rural-urban transformations in the Kivu provinces (DRC) and more particularly focuses on the complex relationship between dynamics of violent conflict and the emergence of urban centres or ‘boomtowns’. Over the past twenty years, in a context of instability and violence, societies, economies and landscapes in Eastern DRC have become increasingly ‘urban’ with demographic, infrastructural, economic and cultural characteristics distinguishing them from their rural surroundings. Both the increasing pressure on existing cities as well as the emergence of new urban centres are strongly related to dynamics of forced displacement and mobility.

Based on original ethnographic data from three cases of boomtowns that emerged through a combined dynamics of artisanal mining activities and forced displacement, this paper takes these urban centres as both spatial and analytical starting points to study the (violent) politics of urbanisation. It will be demonstrated how these centres, by their demographic concentrations and economic activities represent important political, economic and social resources for elites, armed groups and the Congolese state in their broader political struggles for power, legitimacy and control.