

The Governance of Police Reform in the DR Congo (Kinshasa): Informality, Power and Insecurity

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A fundamental change in the mentality, the day-to-day functioning and the management of the Congolese National Police (PNC) is at stake in the Congolese police reform. Since its inception during the Congolese transition period (officially from 2003 to 2006), both Congolese authorities and international actors conceptualize the new vision of the PNC within the Police Reform Follow-up Committee (CSRP). This new vision includes a transformed identity and mentality from military inspired security force to a civilian police service. It has been envisaged to be a proximity police that operates in cooperation with and close to the population, with mechanisms for internal and external accountability.

At least on paper, the work of the CSRP is a tremendous step in the Congolese security sector reform. However, when analyzing the current police structures and more in general the daily governance of individual security and insecurity in the DRC in a political-anthropological manner, these conceptualizations seem hardly to be appropriated; the daily governance of policing in Congo / Kinshasa is characterized by an informal and fragile economic system, by atypical sources and solutions for individual insecurity, and by a tension between traditional and state-installed security organisation at the local and individual level.

Based on intensive and long-term field work research conducted in the DR Congo (Kinshasa) between September 2009 and December 2010, the author analyzes the appropriateness of the actual police reforms to the socio-economic and cultural realities of individual security and insecurity, and the governance of policing in the DR Congo (Kinshasa).