

Urban Governance beyond the State. Practices of Informal Urban Regulation in the City of Goma, eastern D.R. Congo.

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Goma is a vibrant and dynamic city, located at Congo's eastern border with Rwanda, that over the past fifteen years has undergone a remarkable urban transformation. From a small and dormant town of marginal importance, the city developed into an influential economic and political centre in the Great Lakes Region, today counting an estimated 700,000 inhabitants. Dynamics of violent conflict and state decline, and the city's position as the headquarters of rebellion between 1998 and 2003, drastically changed the overall city profile. As part of the struggle over the city as a political and economic space, new urban power structures emerged that not only changed relationships between political, economic and military elites but also had a considerable impact on the socio-economic and spatial development of the city itself.

This paper will analyse the impact of these processes on practices of local governance in Goma. Through the recent political and economic evolution of this city we observe new forms of urban organisation and regulation, and emerging forms of informal, semi-autonomous urbanity. Instead of being the outcome of any formal urbanisation process, Goma developed itself outside the direct scope of the central state.

A process of generalised state decline has opened opportunities for the proliferation of non-state armed actors, the development of a new business elite and the increasing involvement of non-governmental organisations in the city's development. As such, urban regulatory practices are being exercised by multiple non-state urban actors, resulting in informal and hybrid forms of urban governance. This often results in dynamics of fierce contestation over the political, economic and social urban space.

In this paper the author will specifically focus on the emergence of an influent urban elite of businessmen –Goma's '*grand barons*' or '*nouveaux riches*'-, who became dominant urban actors in the context of violent conflict and the political economy of war. In complex negotiation with state authorities as well as rebel leaders and non-governmental organisations, they actively engage in local urban decision making. Finally, this paper will analyse the ways in which this economic elite is mobilizing informal urban 'pressure groups' (transporters, street children, ...) in its power strategies.