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Publication Date

2023-04-01

2023 Best Undergraduate Thesis

Politics, Culture, and Action:
Political Assertions in the Sud Kivu Province

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Working Paper Submitted to the Center for African Studies

May 2023

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Abstract:

Past research has identified African youth as central to the organization of politics across the continent, forming an agenda of inquiry into their causal function and the nature of young people's political centrality in debates on and transformations in membership, belonging, and hybridization of identities. Political participation forms a crucial point of entry into the study of young people and social action on continental Africa. The social and political landscape in the aftermath of regime changes emerging after the 1990s enabled new forms of political participation and authority that exclude and include youth in novel ways, and debates about those forms are debates about the nature of citizenship, responsibilities, and the moral, immoral, and amoral nature of social action, issues. Young people across the continent are said to engage politics through certain openings in systems of authority or governance as emerging sites of agency and personhood within repressive regimes. Despite the salience of youth to political processes across the continent, the political balancing act youth must play is not well understood

Given this background, how do young people make political sense of themselves in insecure contexts? I trace the political action of young people in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to answer this question. To better understand how individuals engage collective action in contexts of insecurity, where some individual's entire lives have been overtaken by the auspices of repressive regimes, I focus on 39 interviews and life-history statements from young students from the Sud Kivu Province to show how individuals engage politics with little access to formal political institutions. I show how, in no uncertain terms, young people make politics central to their lives in insecure contexts despite limited political opportunity. In the effort to create sustainable social and political change, students form a competing standard of moral and ethical governance outside and above the state through primary and secondary institutions.

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Introduction:

At the turn of the century the centrality of youth in the question of African politics in a postcolonial and globalized economy took hold social inquiry. Past research has identified African youth as central to the organization of politics across the continent forming an agenda of inquiry as to their causal function and the nature of young people's political centrality in "debates on and transformations in membership, belonging, and the hybridization of identities (Durahm 2000: 114) or the implications of a more central form of division as Jean and John Commaroff write of post-Aprartheid South Africa: "the dominant line of cleavage here has become generation (1998: 284)," to which Durham summarizes: "where a crisis between hopes and frustrating realities are formed against the background of authorities extracting the political and social potency of youth to sustain conventional order (Durham 2000: 113)."

It would seem political participation forms a crucial point of entry into the study of young people and social action on continental Africa. The social and political landscape in the aftermath of regime changes emerging after the 1990's enabled "new forms of political participation and authority exclude and include youth in novel ways, and debates about those forms are, debates about the nature of citizenship, responsibilities, and the moral, immoral, and amoral nature of social action, issues (Durham 2000: 114)." Youth across the continent are said to engage politics through certain openings in systems of authority or governance as emerging sites of agency and personhood within repressive regimes. For Diouf, a focus on the body as the location and site of political struggle and memories of said struggles (e.g, through adornment or through "licit and illicit activities such as prostitution, vagrancy, or delinquency [Diouf 2003: 9]) form one locus of political assertion for young people. More generally, he writes: "by escaping the political and moral discourses that hemmed them and by moving into the cracks opened up by the crisis of the state and society, African youth has provoked an unprecedented moral and civic panic. Young people are now seen and construed as a menace, as much because of their pleasures and leisure activities as because of the violence they manifest." Young people in some ways are perceived as caustic to prevailing political orders as they find political opportunity within the cracks of conventional systems. In a similar way, globalization has enabled the permeation of certain discourses, ways of acting and being in primary and

secondary institutions from the 'West.'. With a focus on the institutions that transpose certain moral standards and cultural schemas, changing "technologies of governance target and redefine youth through schools and other educational initiatives, through programs on health and sexuality, and through attempts to control population movements (Durham 2000: 114)."

Despite the salience of youth to political processes across the continent, the political balancing act youth must play is not well understood. There is a focus on discourse (Durham 2000) and the relationship between agency, personhood, and politics that reveal youth as a socially shifting category, straddling certain boundaries of kin-based, domestic, and public spheres political change in Botswana (Durham 2008); or young people as the recipients and regurgitant's of institutionally based-models related to education, morality, and sexuality in Malawi (Frye 2012). In Madagascar, the construction of youth does not flow unidirectionally from Western imports, but instead is selectively mediated by older ideas and practices associated with the construction of youth (Cole 2005). In West Africa for both Vigh (2006) and Utas (2005), what young people do and how they make sense of themselves forms a critical question of how young people endure a social landscape marred by political and social conflicts.

Durham (2000, 2008) is very curious about the relationship between agency and personhood in the new millennium, especially on the African continent (e.g, Vigh 2006). Despite this curiosity, the relationship between politics and agency is uniquely conceived in various incompatible ways. For Durham (2000), "youth enter political space as saboteurs- as political actors whose politics is to open up discourses on the nature of society in its broadest and most specific terms (Durham 2000: 119)" on the continent. Other studies, namely in sociology or cultural demography would suggest a less politically salient endeavor in order to emphasize the role of institutionalized, imported models (Fyre 2012)--- young girls' assert their virtuous self-hoods as a form of identity in partial response to institutional discourses on bright futures, sexual morality, and educational accomplishment. For Diouf, narrative history and articulation forms a crucial avenue for young people engaging politics. For Diouf, they are searching for a narrative that provides a "free territory (Diouf 2003: 6)" for "the work (and play) of imagination, and on the increasingly interesting field of sentiment in the shape of love, hope, anxiety, pain, and pleasure (Durham 2008: 945)."

A continental narrative seems to emerge as it relates to youth, politics, and action with a few approaches. Broad continental claims are made about African youth as social shifters, enacting ideologies of moral panic and civil unrest, and transitory fragments of a multiplicity in an era of globalization and political intimacy between east and west through a broad and changing sociological imagination. In incredibly tight political systems, young people seek to find room for political expression. The more sentimentalized approach (e.g., considering future hopes, loves, anxieties, pains, expectations and plans), the narrative approach (e.g., constructing new histories and futures through changing narratives that distinguish young people from more traditional modes of governance and being), and the identity approach (e.g., hybridity, self-understanding, and fragmentation due to large patterns of movement and social conflict) mix in some studies (Frye 2012, Hanks 2015, Vigh 2009, 2006) to explore the nature of how people engage a social terrain mired by unpredictability, insecurity, volatile situations, and changing social categorizations.

Throughout, young people seem to occupy an ambiguous space lined with constraints and enablements in post-conflict settings. For Diouf and Durham young people operate within a hybridity or multiplicities (Durham 2000: 114) creating fragmented political narratives effaced of national identity and familial origins (Diouf 2003: 103) or hybrid like identities; some are rooted in political refusal or the savvy of political saboteurs "whose power comes from their incomplete subjugation to contexts and co-opters, and to their own power for action, response, and subversion in contexts of political definition [e.g., victims, rebels, etc.] (Durham 2000: 113)." Young people can be said to be a source of moral and civil panic (Diouf 2003) that waxes, wanes, and builds symbolic extractions occurring on the backs of young people and their older purveyors within prevailing systems of authority – the symptoms "of an occult economy waxing behind the civil surfaces of the "new" South Africa [i.e., new civil society] (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999); through the novel political narratives they create for themselves, they are seen as a source of change as they "reconfigure webs of power, reinvent personhood and agency (Durham 2000: 114, Durham 2008)," or reorient terms of institutional and political tension in war-torn contexts such as the categories of victimhood as a form of self-representation (Utas 2005) and attempt to build stable social networks amidst a social terrain that is insecure, obscure, and uneven, a broken social imaginary (Durham 2008: 956, Vigh 2008:144, 187).

While these considerations offer a useful view of young people and social action across the continent, I take a different approach to the question of African youth and political change in East Africa. I ask pointedly, what do people do and how do they make sense of their political insecurity in political contexts? How do young people make politics central to their lives if political institutions are uniquely restrictive? Moving away from the idea of fragmented narratives (Diouf 2003), multiple identities (Durham 2000, Durham 2008), a broken social imaginary (Vigh 2006), political subterfuge or moral panics, I show how in Eastern Congo a particular form of action emerges that is at once both moral, civil, and political despite the limited opportunities for political participation and political representation. My data reveal that across institutions like marriage, politics, and education, young people are reorienting the terms of engagement through a unified ethos and broad political practice observed here to be edification.

Methods:

I focus on semi-structured interviews and life-histories from 39 young people aged 19-24 from the Sud (South) Kivu Province in Eastern Congo. Attending the Catholic University of Bukavu, these young came from a variety of towns and villages to pursue post-secondary education in the capital city of Bukavu. This a region (North and South Kivu) notable for both its political uncertainty (namely long and enduring civil wars: see Autesserre 2012, 2014, 2019) and broad-structural disadvantages. A large portion of Eastern Congolese people live below the global poverty line, local and provincial governance has been extremely repressive during "post-conflict" periods – civilians find themselves appealing to security forces and politicians with little to no recourse. Certain regimes have produced a large marginalized population with no education, living in deep poverty, and no political recourse due to a patrimonial regime politic (Autesserre 2012). During periods of political conflict and post-conflict, governance, and governing meet political protest from a variety of actors international and local. Opportunity for political participation, labor market expansion, educational completion, and political stability during these times is mired in insecurity for the people who do or do not choose to engage in immediate protest but must pursue their means of living anyway.

Interviews lasted around 45 to 90 minutes, some individuals contributed to group discussions, and others wrote more about their life-histories on written, structured questionnaires with open space for free writing. I focused on identifying themes related to morality, civility, political sentiments, political conflicts, everyday struggles, and "identity" in different institutions. The institutions I focused on were that of education, politics, marriage and I asked about their career trajectories (i.e., their hopes and expectations), the obstacles they came up against, and the salience of political impediments in the respective parts of their pursuits. Individuals offered various and competing ideas of the institutions and the political situations embedded within them. For example, some individuals enjoyed their schools and reflected on them as the best in the nation while others were more critical of the political nature of education accomplishment and nepotism in the University. To give some foundation to this, I first offer an accounting of the political relevance of the accomplishment of adulthood looks like in the first section on *coming of age, the cause, and the intellectual.* Rather than see identity as a narrative account of

who someone is at present based on a model of the future or a scheme of self-understanding (Frye, 2012) I focused on what these young people expressed for themselves politically as it related to tastes, hopes, everyday engagements, and claims.

For the concluding analysis I grouped common assertions related to different elements of everyday life that seemed to be most salient for the individuals themselves. The four organizing themes are *segregation and education*; *love, politics, and parties; marriage and kinship*; and *senses of action.* In between, I break in some sections to elucidate how certain themes operate in context namely *The Intellectual* and *What Conflict Looks Like.*

Findings:

How do people make political sense of themselves in politically insecure contexts? Young people do not often complete their secondary education and have little to no opportunity to challenge their local and provincial leaders. Given this context, it is important to find how political instability is challenged in unexpected, ordinary ways. Efforts towards political participation are extremely limited, so what do young people do? The evidence provided here shows how in contexts of political uncertainty, people act in more ways than we might assume. Not only does action not follow any procedurally rational account, where social actors calculating and maximizing interests amidst uncertainty, that is countered by some demographers (Johnson-Hanks 2015), it also fails to follow an accounting of the model provided of sustained effort, ambition, unbridled optimism, and resistance to temptation that relates to aspirations as an assertion of identity (Frye 2012). In this context, young people attempt to change politics by participating in their own scheme of it.

While an important component of peacebuilding are the macro-level components (regional and national negotiations between armed, rebel, and political actors, electoral efforts, democratic transitions), the micro-level components (local reforms, setting up fair local courts, forums and workshops for grievances) have long-been neglected in the Congo (Autesserre, 2012). This article focuses on grassroots peacebuilding efforts and contradictions at the everyday level in line with research focused on local level tensions, dynamics, and peacebuilding efforts.

The sharing of traditional (through organizations such as the church or land-rights on the basis of ancestry or tribe) and administrative power (governance through that of governor or mayor of a city) in this region forms a core political complaint for those in Bukavu. At the local level, young people are unable to petition their local leaders (mayors or governors) for specific social support — decentralizing power through expanding opportunities for political office is one example or building roads. Often, their demonstrations are met with harsh repression from mix of traditional and administrative figures, with some leaders embodying both. In a patrilineal, nepotistic political environment tradition and administration mix to form an obdurate lineage of rule that is sometimes impenetrable for young people.

This becomes increasingly tense from the perspective of those attempting to complete their education. Where teachers and parents ask for their provincial governments to pay for school-fees and pay for teacher salaries, or young students are ask their mayors for a hand in political office to which they are rejected because they are not a part of or related to the family in charge or are not a part of the family that leads a large church political interdiction remains persistent. When they stage demonstrations and non-violent protests from then they are apprehended by state-authorities or local authorities, there is very little room for safe engagement. There is little opportunity for employment – unemployment is so severe that parents often cannot find work to pay the school fees for their children to attend secondary school. Despite the absence of formal political, economic, and social support writ large, as they come of age, young people who have not completed or had their educations interrupted use their moral and ethical standards to situate themselves outside of political conflict not unlike an aspirational assertion, but certainly as present-day strategy anchored in the future.

They do this to create room for themselves to participate in politics. This is negotiated largely through amended features of adolescence and adulthood, changing goals, and practices. Paying attention to the specifics of their claims might enable and relate to peacebuilding efforts that find harmony between top-down and bottom-up approaches, while also standing to counter the notion and idea of an enduring conflict that lacks the moral presuppositions of law and order, namely an obedient and decent society. Because Eastern DRC is often written about as a place lacking morality and authority, it is important to see where and how young people develop and disperse these two foundational concepts themselves.

Coming of Age

> *The conflicts that the Eastern DRC are going through now date back more than three decades. You will understand that young people between the ages of 35 and under only experience the consequences of old conflicts. I personally am a part of the youth networks at the level of the country the DRC as well as*

at the level of the Great Lakes Region (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania) where we share and sensitize other young people to align themselves behind peaceful coexistence" – David, Student and LUCHA Movement Historian, Goma

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David relates quite succinctly how young people have spent some of their entire lives with old conflicts. He also shows us just how expansive the effort to create lasting political change is in Eastern Congo. Extending out to four other countries, what we can begin with is that a peaceful social life is an of immense importance for young people and sophisticatedly spans across multiple national borders. It also shows us that young people are intentionally and purposely trying to generate political activity to people in a variety of places. To better understand where and how young people are finding the capacity to generate political action and will elsewhere, we can observe how Congolese youth see and accomplish their transitions to adulthood in a course of life afflicted by age-old conflicts.

I'll start with how Congolese young people described coming of age. Individuals generally reflected the importance of 18 years as the time in which one became an adult. But when asked about how this was accomplished, there was variation in the notions of morality, obligations, and how they described this process. Respondents articulated those 18 years of age as identified by the constitution, or as a general fact, was the age at which one became an adult. To study the culturally specific processes that might suggest an analysis of a social age (Clark-Kazak 2009) a way of viewing the socially constructed meanings related to physical development and characteristics attributed to infants, children, young-people, adults, and the elderly.

Some described an orientation related to specific roles between family members, notions of maturity, morals, and the role behavior plays in growing up. One young man, Jean, studying information technology at the University said "it is not the age which shows the adult but maturity. We reach maturity when you have wisdom in front of a situation." These situations may be a tussle between friends over who gets to pick the game of the day or managing family duties like farming, cooking, and cleaning. Following maturity, another young student, Matendo, studying English at the University said, "we become mature when you have a kindness in you."

This related to treating others with a sense of respect and openness. Other students reflected ethical notions related to the accomplishment of adulthood. Simply put, by University graduate Sylvain adulthood can be considered "a way of behaving," with responsibilities to "collect my brothers' problems and advise them." Simon said as well, ""I help my brothers go forward and I am a student." Cherice described his obligations as an adult as advising his young brothers. Attending their peers', brothers', and sister's problems, how to court for example or how to handle a bully, formed an important component of what it meant to become an adult.

Joseph, a student studying biology at the University of Bukavu also described 18 years as the age at which the constitution determines adulthood. While others reflected an adulthood focused on maturity or kindness, and assistance to kin, in discussing accomplishment and responsibilities Joseph reflected a desire to "work in the development of the country," a responsibility as "an actor of peace and development," what he described as "a call and a civic duty." Ines, a student studying French emphasizes the same point that her "responsibilities to my family is to keep well the education that my family gave me, and to keep well my young brother and sisters and their education." She notes, the people who must change the conflict is me and otters. I wish I can participate by this change by learning the training of the change of conflict."

Duty and a call were not an uncommon consideration. For Paul, he suggested adulthood is accomplished when "he works for the community and for the survival of the family," put in practice by "the research of the work and the enterprise of youth." Responsibility came to be understood as "the responsibility of the family, of the enterprise [of peace], and of the entire country …felt throughout our academic training and secondary education."

Adulthood is seen through various narratives and roles to accomplish presupposed by morals, the surrounding actors in their environment, or the individual themself. Samuel shared he thought the responsibility of the adult is to "respect others and the authorities of the other country." Roger reflected one accomplishes adulthood when he can "depend to himself…when we already have the means…" and further responsibility to "take care of myself." Nadine, who is graduating with a degree in public health, describes accomplishment as an effort to "build my

life, family, and help my country move forward… [and to] help my parents with some of their duties."

And another individual puts it plainly in response to a question about how they felt about their conceptualization of adulthood as state defined by the "age of 18 years old," with responsibilities to "help my parents…I have the feeling of satisfaction (interviewee, student)."

One interviewee relates adulthood to obtaining a career, "to have a job in one's life…" accomplished by "looking for work and seeing people that we may collaborate with…" in order to "pay for my young brother's studies and feed myself," says Christophe. The purpose and goal here was seeking work to do three things: pay for a sibling's education, providing basic needs, and get a job.

The association of the accomplishment of adulthood is varied and goes beyond the determinations of biological age, relations to the constitution, labor occupation, degree accomplishment. The accomplishment of maturity, kindness, as well as assistance to the family, providing the means of continuing education for younger siblings, filial mentorship, and extensions to the nation, or to lasting peace, suggests adulthood as a practice. Contributions towards that end are present in the young person's conceptualization of adulthood in this region and in this sample. These conceptualizations do not relate exclusively to the young person's relationship to war, to violence, or to any form of humanitarian concern related to injury. For Faustin a young man from Uvira and a graduate of the University says, "the more I am growing up, the more I belong to the community." He reported feeling very good about his responsibilities to his job as a secondary school teacher, working with children, and his studies.

And Robert, studying health care says adulthood means "being well performed and mature in health-care," as his aspirational or desired accomplishment of adulthood. Similarly, he related that he would "help [his] parents," of which he feels a present sense of satisfaction in providing income assistance. Maturity and competence in his aspirational role circumscribe the role he desires, and the aspiration he claims are pegged to a long-term goal, a part of a broader strategy to visit "mature politicians and with the change of the country in mind." Indeed, these forms of adulthood are expressed in interaction with other people's parents/kin, extend out into various

means of intercommunal interaction, and a sense related to the nation. Some may recognize the accomplishment of adulthood *through* community (in its contextual configuration of roles, rules, morals, and practices, obligations, and other social investments) and not as a consequence of conflict or incidence in the community. I want to emphasize that this is not as simple as growing up in conflict. But a change in the relationship to what is and can be accomplished in an enduring period of uncertainty.

There is no single way to become an adult. The experiences and expectations of young people are shaped by a range of factors, including cultural norms, social contexts, and political realities. We can gain a deeper understanding of how young people make sense of any opposition, conflict or political turbulence in their social context. For example, for Robert, his concerns were based on the "bad behavior" of the nation which will be clarified in the next section.

The Cause

With a little bit of an understanding of what the accomplishment of adulthood and the 'community' looks like, we might elevate how young people see their adulthood and their obligations to the politics of the day and the institutions around them, the local tensions. These questions and their responses relate to young people's sense of conflict but do not always relate to any political or humanitarian issue. It was broadly related to any quality of interactions. Institutional disruption comes to fore as young people describe the features related to their coming of age and these interactions. Indeed, what is clearer is how "bad behavior" is the nomenclature for bureaucratic elites that neglect the needs and interests of everyday people.

For this sample, young people described the quality of the politics of the nation in terms of a disposition. Louise, from a town in Bukavu and studying to be a nurse at the University said "we are living in bad mood because there is no peace and no jobs." Another student from the Kasai central village, Henriette, said "our school has no problems so far but teachers are not paid by the government." Another student Lawrence, in his early 20's studying computer science, described his relationship to the *nation* and his understanding of the staff:

"I like Congo so much but the way of ruling of this country does not please. I like to be Congolese but I have doubts about this country, our government is very badly organized by their staff. Our school is the best one all around the country, but the staff is mediocre." When asked about how he felt about conflict he described, "we call conflict all that we call misunderstandings between two people," and "when there is a conflict, we are afraid of rebels." He hoped to be "a formatter of the enterprise of change."

It is important to note the dispositional terms these young people describe. The disposition provides an entry-point into countering the vocabulary provided by a peacebuilding culture that locates the problems in Congo within 'political conflict.' 'Political conflict' has referred to national tensions (war, genocide, mass rape), regional tensions (armed groups embedded in conflicts between provinces), and local tensions (between ethnic groups said to be entrepreneurially instrumentalized into violence by more conflict-oriented elites or the armed groups find them and grant them incentives to harm other groups). These terms as Autesserre claims persuasively are Hobbesian in their background (Autesserre 2009). She writes that the notion that violence has been privatized and criminality is endemic to Congo or natural to its people is a result of an "urban bias" in the writing of civil wars.

While Congolese young people speak of bad behavior, bad ruling, or disorganized staff others in the international arena see a Hobbesian World (Autesserre 2012: 68)," where violence is as innate to the Congo as the name of the country itself. This is a key feature of international intervener's narratives. The missing leviathan (69) and the criminality induced in its absence reflects the "anarchy envisioned by Thomas Hobbes (69)." For international interveners, a top-down approach to intervention elides local level and grassroots engagements because they are broadly seen to be criminal (72). The absence of authority in the east is seen as a failure of the transitional government to extend it's tools of enforcement which makes "petty criminality all the more attractive (72)." President Felix Tshisekedi's State of Siege draws from this narrative. In 2019, his effort to establish greater authority by controlling the activity of armed groups and rebels in the Itrui and North Kivu provinces have been reported to crush a significant amount of dissent in the region after evaluation. An Amnesty International report entitled "Justice and Freedoms under siege in North Kivu and Itrui," outlines how the state of siege also entailed attacks on Human Rights Activists, killings of journalists, vesting the criminal jurisdiction of

civilian courts with military courts effectively suspending the civil judiciary, worsening prison conditions, and imprisonment sentences after year-long pretrial detainment.

This Hobbesian view is to some extent held by diplomats, policymakers, interveners, and is abhorrently reified on the peacebuilding level as UN Soldiers from other countries (there was a brief anecdote about a solider giving a child a cookie when he is running to him hoping for protection from armed groups entering his village to rape his mother.) This, to these young people, reflects a disposition related to ruling, poor organization of the staff (bureaucracy), and false link or misunderstanding that ascribes conflict to Congolese people or rebel groups. The focus on moods and dispositions cannot be understated here. Descriptions like bad behavior seem to be one choice in language that does not match dominant narratives and a key way of reflecting their situation.

For Cynthia, the bad ruling and poor infrastructure have long been sources of political tensions. She says, "There is problem of ruling in the country especially of the governor. It has been for a long time that the population is begging for him to build roads for the population, but it became tough for him to do so."

For Jerome, "there are always troubles because it is every day that we have conflict in our parliament." When asked what this conflict was, he says, "it is the way of being in opposition because of one interest or benefit. When you conflict with someone things must collapse. The impact of this is the division." A more consistent term that emerged related to division was segregation. For Jerome, conflict operates when one person is opposition to another based on a singular benefit or interest and results in a collapse that presents itself as division and segregation in a variety of areas the University, the school, or in governance. He tells us just how general this kind of governance is which some students also share.

For another student Michel said, "I have grown up in bad conditions. At my place, there was no means to support us. We did not have access to good schools, food, or rights. I love studies and I didn't like the war but I learned how to love peace." Michel lost family during a period of conflict in his village, and found his way to school through patronage. Following Rachel Neihuus' investigation into the rthyms of Congolese social life showing how deep some sense

of hunger, rights, and safety go in response to decades of war (2014) this may reflect the ways in which living in war may also shape how an individual feels about and learns to love peace. In an area where protracted conflict shapes so much of his conditions, Michel shares that some of his strongest influences at 18 are the "the University and Peace." We must remember that for some of these young students, the University and Peace are related.

For Ines, she says "because the government does not promote jobs for the population, people come from all different corners of the country to see whether or not they will get riches there." The poor governance, and lack of opportunity in other parts of the country causes movement from various corners where people find politics as a potential means of income or growth again only to be met with interruption.

For Rosalyn and her hopes, they are foregrounded in the family. She says, "my family means very much to me and (it) misses me a lot, because I am at school. But my one responsibility is to advice my young brothers. I feel very proud and happy about this responsibility. My family does not have money because we are a lot of people and my father does not have a job. She expresses a sense of assuredness about her own participation in change and education. She says, "the nation must be well to build a good nation and I am sure to build that for le changement (change – language kept because it relates to the movements). I have to resolve [fulfill] my issues in the matters of politics. I will no longer drop out of passions because this is my behavior. I want my country to have a good future." Rosalyn shows just how deeply politics and the family, assurance, education, and peace are uniquely connected. Making politics matter and fulfilling issues through politics to build a better nation are guiding.

Unfortunately, for Michel, simple features related to education that span times of peace and war present themselves as dilapidated conditions. When asked about school, he described, "it is a good school but there isn't a laboratory." A simple assertion but when taken in the context of the region and international politics, a laboratory becomes a central commentary on the lack of international attention related to the protection of education in conflict and institutional support in peacetime. A focus on building and restoring social links between communities in conflict is quite important. Autesserre (2012: 185) relates how effective the creation of enterprises, health

centers, markets, and schools whose success all parties could participate in worked in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Tajikistan, and a pilot project in Ituri, Nord Kivu (DRC).

However, as these young students express, coming from rural villages the links between schools, health centres, and markets is essential to supporting not only individuals' like Michel's desire for education and peace, but also necessary to rebuilding a dispositional representation and actual experience of peacebuilding. A good University, a structured, safe, and peaceful University stand in stark contrast to schools and villages invaded by rebels whose ends are not clearly identified. I write this to further emphasize the context (cite ACAPS).

From here, in combining the social links necessary to community, underpinned by the varied set of actions related to the accomplishment of adulthood and our brief introduction to different terms, we can move to definitions of nation.

Robert, who is studying public health, makes the distinction between the sense of a nation distinct from the state. He says when asked about his likes and dislikes and Congo, being Congolese: "I like life and I hate death. Living in Congo is not good. To be Congolese is not a problem, but the way of living inside Congo is bad. Our government is full of madness. Our school has no problem, it is a good school." And when asked about what he perceives conflict to be, he says it is "a war, between two or more people." When asked how the conflict has impacted him, he says, "there has been no impact because I am not in conflict." For Ruth conflict is a "misunderstanding between two people. It leads to trouble."

There is an explicit separation then from what would otherwise be a totalizing narrative related to conflict based on this individual's definition of what conflict is; a war between two or more people. For another, it is a misunderstanding between two people. Both are predicated on the character of the violence in this region. Robert also positions himself in/out of conflict, as 'in Congo' but not as Congolese. In a simple separation between nationalism and statehood and ethnicity and conclusions related to ethnic distinctions, Robert counters the narratives that suggest Congolese people are inherently, on the level of concept, self-interested in indecent behavior or violent action of whole by separating what happens in Congo from Congolese people and state-practice from national identity, but also does some work to decouple the slight

link between ethnicity and rudimentary, baseless inclinations to violence and barbarism specific to this group of people.

That is on the level of concept it is most likely international actors congeal Congolese people into a static-set of traits and characteristics to act upon efficiently (Autesserre, 2012). In the interaction between dominant political narratives and local political understandings, practices and concepts consequentially do not cohere. Interestingly, this suggests to us that there is a teasing apart of contradictions between imposed narratives and explicit, lived interpretations and experiences. I did not ask what Robert meant by 'war' or who he thought the two or more people were. What I can surmise is that based on other data he likely means armed groups or rebels.

What is important here is that bad behavior, bad moods or what conflict 'is' to these young people does not match what conflict 'is' to international interveners. Without being too grandiose, I would venture to guess, living in conflict grants different insight *and* revision to the evaluation of experience that works to even generate a sustained narrative of a population as Hobbesian.

Separating the personal from the political is an interesting twist in his narrative because it functions to indicate the relationship between two distinct political narratives – the dominant international peacebuilding culture (Autesserre) that personalizes violence in the Congo and depoliticizes it and that of the Congolese young person that depersonalizes it and moves to politicize it.

For Florence, she intends to pursue tailoring and has since she was 18. When asked about the conflict, she says, "I think it is not a hazard that I am Congolese. I think it was my destiny to be a Congolese. I think that the [government] does not work as it could. I think one day corruption will end at my school." For Florence, a definition of conflict certainly extends beyond the definitions of humanitarian and military contexts. "According to me the conflict is a miss of love to each other." When asked if the conflict has had an impact on her, she says, bluntly it has "no impact." Following this she says she can see that "one day I will be in Congo's politics." And

when asked about her peers," she says, "yes because they have that same feeling as me of developing the country. It was one of my passions when I was a child."

These students help us understand the stakes of conflict as it affects their life chances a bit more. If conflict is related to a misunderstanding, a miss of love, war between people, and they share expressions of the end of corruption in the places they hope to learn in and become changemakers through, it becomes clearer to grasp the texture of life these young people are living in. Ethical and moral stances respond to a war, misunderstanding, and misfires of love that have shaped the experience of these young people. More concretely, these stances have been shown to permeate core primary and secondary institutions like the family and the school.

Marriage and Kinship

> *"I have a photo of a mixed wedding celebrated today somewhere in South Kivu but I lost it in my thousands of messages received every day. I wanted to forward it to you too. Anything good in this area interests me..." - John, Uvira*

The importance of a wedding is not a trivial matter in Eastern Congo. It forms the beginning of this article for a reason. This WhatsApp message reflects a broader concern and excitement over how and why marriage forms an essential piece of the puzzle in Eastern Congo. Weddings offer not only a symbolic representation of a part of the tensions in the conflict emphasizing rigidity or flexibility between groups, the consequences of changing ethnic citizenship tensions affecting land-rights, political participation, and work opportunities at the local level, there are implications for the same features at the provincial, regional, and national level. Marriages, their documentation, relationship to property and land rights, civic participation, education, internally contested (issues within the family or extended family) and externally contested (issues within the community), and labor-market opportunity are somewhat understood in Rwanda (Berry 2015). Here they present a core component of political contest in a time of insecurity.

It is from here we might extend into marriage. In Eastern Congo this is a fraught topic. Practices begin with bridewealth and dowry and partnerships fall apart because of desertion due to

conflict, displacement of some kind, or reasons related to . At the local level, marriages between people are caught within the constraints of ethnicity. While choice is granted in some cases, and cross-marriages occur, from the interviews, marriage between groups is a contentious issue. Marriage is seen as an alliance between families, a source of legitimacy, social recognition, status, acceptability, and determines individuals rights and privileges. Property rights and the acquisition of citizenship are determined through patrilineal lines, and the family becomes patrilocal, living on the land of the husband's father.[1] The cost to marry is quite high with dowry estimates from $1500 - $5000 depending on location.

Faustin related that marriage formed an interesting part of everyday life in Eastern Congo. Faustin, he lamented the difficulties of courtship. The lack of opportunity for work and low wages made it difficult to anticipate or desire the rites and rituals of courtship in Eastern Congo. To put it simply, he didn't have the means to flirt. With not enough disposable income to engage in courtship, buying someone a drink, taking them out to a meal, etc. seemed impossible. On a grander scale, this inability reflected anxieties about partnership at large. As Faustin noted and asked, in what ways are you desirable if you are unable to provide financially for a future partner so early in the first stages of partnership?

Anabelle shared that marriage was something she looked forward to and hoped for. As a young student intending to become a teacher from the University of Bukavu her specific desires for a partner were not necessarily financial in nature, instead she emphasized the character of a future partner. She hoped for someone that was an intellectual, who emphasized values and morals that stood in contrast to the political conflict in DRC.

Agatha shared that marriage was something she did not want or desire. She rejected marriage outright, reflecting on it as a cage that traps those it holds with serious disadvantages and consequences for women in the region. She reflected her distaste towards the roles, disproportionate burdens, and imbalanced divisions placed on women in Eastern DRC and how so often in Eastern Congo women were not able to gain an education let alone do what they wanted freely outside of the rights and privileges of their marriages. Studying English, she

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[1] https://www.refworld.org/docid/537db2b14.html I use this paper to show contextual features related to marriage namely what it means.

reflected the words of Simone De Beauvoir relating that marriage was essentially a trap where the rights and privileges of society are not afforded to women. Other students hoped for partnership, largely to express the home and comfort of their own families and engage in the practices they had shared.

Following the direction of this argument, the political-conflict terms would focus on some element of social life related to it – forced marriages, child-marriages, and egregious violence, or tensions between two groups of which there is heavy documentation, record, and analysis. (cite). But an accounting of the circumstances and thoughts outside of this are less pervasive.

The Intellectual

I do not think the intellectual can be neatly linked or more neatly linked, I should say, to a semi-loosely structured sense of commonality, connectedness, and groupness, or bounded by lineage and a common set of practices, or identifications, decisions, or a strategy of action. Though it is clear, the intellectual does a lot of work in this area. For these young people the intellectual was someone who was a good 'man,' emphasized non-discrimination, and was moral and ethical in their view.

I also do not think it can distinctly or solely have any relationship to an aspirational horizon. I hope to show a perspective that reflects this terrain as a terrain where 'identity' in the colloquial sense doesn't really hold up, and in relation to sociological inquiries related to demographic and economic change, and cultural norms are not the unit of analysis.

The intellectual doesn't reflect who a person is, what a group is, or what they do to be who they are or should be. It doesn't work to challenge the specific interest of a group. It works, most clearly, to challenge the overwhelmingly disabling political context these young people exist within, with its components being a unified ethical and moral stance that are at once aspirational and presently negotiated in a particular local context. In the realm of global interactions, it concludes to reshape the grammar and terms of what political-conflict is for the sake of a new way of doing politics and being political.

The intellectual is not an indication of a moving 'identity.' This does not suggest a transposable or durable set of practices and dispositions that can be 'identified.' The intellectual does not really represent a scene of hybridity either: of an extra set of practices, ideals, sense of commonness a more fluid identity can borrow from because of rupture or fracture. The multifaceted identity or multiplicative identity does not operate here (DIOUF (6) does not operate!; it does not extend out into differentiation so much that it loses synchronicity and cohesion (Brubaker and Cooper, (20). It is not a study, necessarily, of demographic and economic change reflected through cultural practices, or asymmetry in cultural norms and a contestation in practices. The vital work of demographers and sociologists studying demographic and economic change and cultural phenomena give us a little indication as to how people may negotiate allure, status, and desire, but it is at the point of political urgency behind what these young people do and why they do it that this is really unique.

The intellectual is not (yet) an identity that people really battle over. This is not even a 'cultural identity' per say. I think at best the intellectual reflects, idiomatically, a context of action (Mische and Emirbayer) at play, and the combined elements of what is so deeply relational and interactive for young people in this circumstance, and another example of what people do in insecure times.

What an "Intellectual" looks like on the ground

In crude terms, for men in a system of patrilineal political lineage the intellectual functions to amend or work within political struggle – in terms of political participation it reflects egalitarian ideals contra ethnic rigidity, land rights, and practices related to agriculturalism and pastoralism, and ethnic or nepotistic hierarchical political opportunity structures. It serves as an idiomatic vehicle for their ethical stance as students with a more professional disposition despite a labor market that is unwelcoming to them *while* relating to broader political concerns.

In the patrilineal political system they describe the intellectual challenges notions of claims to marriage in the form of rigid ethnic pairings, challenges practiced claims to offices based on genealogical lineage or nepotism in the Sud Kivu province, and relates heavily to the political setting related to a conflict itself whose roots lie in the history of changing forms of ethnic

citizenship, and ethnic claims. As they form the assumptions of dominant narratives in the region, the names people are given in conflict-literature Banyamulenge, Rwandaphone (Rwanda-speaking peoples), etc., or armed groups and rebels, and their intertwining relationship with state forces, is not necessarily the 'intellectual' that young people situate within the same terrain and in a lot of ways outside of it.

For women, the intellectual functioned as means of negating or contrasting behaviors and politics related to ethnic rigidity and inequitable partnerships. Not only this, but the intellectual functioned as a means of engaging both peacekeeping endeavors, equitable partnerships, and efforts related to community ties – i.e. an individual who could teach and help members of the community to engage in more moral and ethical terms. It was indicative of a potential claim to office and political participation although conventional practices and data do not reflect increases in political participation for women in Eastern Congo, and this was not expressed explicitly. The differentiated and unequal set of practices related to child-care, work, and other forms of gendered labor, were not invisible, but were not represented as complaints in this sample outside of the narrative of one young woman I shared earlier. Of course, these inequalities were felt for many of the women in this sample; how it was expressed was opaque regarding gendered differences.

For both, it was a comment on the moral and ethical behavior of bureaucrats, those they called staff both in education and in government. The intellectual also shaped obligations to kin - efforts to impart upon their siblings' opposing standards of ethical and moral behavior and reflecting on peacekeeping as their duty in the endeavor to accomplish adulthood. The components of the/an (modifiers do not indicate a static object) 'intellectual' are the terrains of political relationships and obligations to kin themselves. The political relationships emphasized, the struggles for economic resources, the struggles for political representation and participation, enable a different interpretation of the self, civility, and political context, one that cannot be said to be political in dominant narratives.

What was interesting was where and how they conceptualized the 'political.'As Brubaker and Cooper note on political theory and groupness (31), contemporary political theory has a questionable sociology. These young people clearly recognized the political as a terrain in which

fights for resources, representation, and electoral privileges, or job creation persisted, largely manifested by their abject exclusion and quests, expressions, and hopes for change. They also asserted moods, affectations, and differences in core pieces of what supports dominant understandings. When asked if they saw themselves in political conflict, they opposed. They were not at conflict (emphasis varies) at various levels, whether it be at the level of groupness (ethnicity – by situating Congo as different from Congolese), the self (having love for other people), or even in enterprises (peacebuilding). While they had suffered losses from a direct result of the conflict, family members, economic standing, and social status they were not at or in conflict. The 'intellectual' also stands as a point of critique to who or what is 'political' in political conflict. In fact, despite suffering losses, Ruth, when asked how her family bodes in times of conflict she says, "My family and I are well. I come from a modest family whom I am very proud of." Of course, it would stand that families and people who are not in conflict must find their sense of meaning and wholeness outside of it, together.

Following this analysis, the intellectual represents a different form of exchange, a principally moral and civic exchange, in the marriage market. Rather than ethnically or nationally-based, young people are reorienting the terms and representations of marriage and unions in their deliberations on relationships to be anchored moral and ethical terms.

The Character of Conflict

For Ruth, conflict is a "misunderstanding of each other. It brings trouble and honest people try to do die because of that."

What we must take from Ruth is that she is describing the character of conflict in this region. Honest people are not self-sacrificing in response to the conflict nor is their action and its fatal consequence a result of misunderstandings that present in government corruption. It is not an expression of altruism.

Ruth is referring to the number of people who have purposely attempted to create political change and either suffered imprisonment, torture, or execution in their attempts to try to change their circumstances honestly. Conflict to Ruth rearranges choices (whether they be rational, or

pragmatic is beside the point). Quite clearly, Ruth is expressing that misunderstandings between people (and how consequential these are in this context) bring strife (continued poor and bad governance, repression, violence) and honest people *try to* die because of that.

The hardest thing to grasp, it seems to me, is how closely linked mortality and political action semiotically rather than procedurally. We can retrace Ruth's statement by reversing the causality in a way, not to impose our understanding but to better grasp what she is saying. Death (or political action) tries to bring honesty (maturity, kindness, decency, and civility) through people.

The ethics and morals young people are so poignantly referring to, imparting among their siblings, nurturing in their careers, passions, and works and hopes towards peace are vehicles *and* anchors that guide action, some of it fatal, for political change. Ruth does not see this as rational or irrational. She did not say it bewildered her. She did not express confusion. She clearly reflects on how the current circumstance guides a specific kind of political action, it's unified ethos, and it's consequences.

Most of the interviewees I spoke to shared very bluntly about the mortality shaping their reality. "I like life and I don't like death," one student said. "I don't like when my friends die," another student expressed. "I don't like suffering," from another student. I asked them about these questions because it seems suffering or pain don't find analytical use in some studies of East Africa in sociology. To gain more clarity on how these sentiments and expressions shape and forms action we can observe the account by Rebecca Kabuo. She expresses in a translated interview by published by the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights: "But, when I go to prison, it is also a form of struggle against the injustices that happen in our prisons in the DRC. It was an education, it was a moment of suffering, yes, yet it encouraged me to go forward in my struggle… I am a woman. It has responsibilities. I have to stand up for my family but I also have to fight for my country. To be imprisoned as an activist in my country is akin to being a criminal." But to her peers this is an act of moral and ethical purpose and civility. As Rebecca writes of the impetus of her action: "I saw the courage, the enthusiasm, the determination of the LUCHA activists and I asked myself, "why not me?"

For Rebecca, pursuing political action, taking action in these situations is a reflection of courage, enthusiasm, determination but most uniquely, is a means of education and encourages her to go forward. It is also a form of struggle and a moment of suffering.

The relationship between suffering and struggling is not necessarily consonant. These young people here expressed moments of suffering in the family, in politics, in school, as moments they have endured, but in their course of their life it is not suffering they possess but a struggle. In order to make this struggle political, they define the good life around making politics matter, around edifying those around them, and sometimes, to borrow from Ruth, try to die because of that. To futher elaborate on the relationship between suffering and struggling Illouz (2007: 47-62) suggests the hearing of suffering, emotional fields, and emotional capital relate to a broader need to be heard in American society, to express suffering as a narrative understanding of the self. The various assessments of this narrative reduce it to exactly that a narrative form rather than a clear and concerted political experience that reveals some distinction between suffering and struggling that interview data challenge.

The effort to make one's life political may bring you closer to mortality and fatality, but this is thoughtfully considered one as Rebecca shows us. Whether it is participating in a protest that leads to death or death at the hands of a violent actor, imprisonment, or torture in response to public demonstration, teaching your siblings different standards of behavior, or leaving family to go to school, the forms of action when contextualized reflect an ethos that tries to bring and translate to greater moral and ethical stitching to their political situation. Rebecca further emphasizes, "can you imagine a woman who spends six months, a year, two years in prison without any contact with her family, with her children? They do that to reduce you, to destroy you once again. It shatters your dreams, your convictions. Even if I am in prison, I have my rights, I am a human being. I also need to have my dignity respected while in prison. I have found the courage to go on despite what I have been through as an activist. I still have hope that there will be human dignity and social justice in my country one day."

Expressed in this is the clear and important dynamic between political participation in political conflict. The significance of finding within the self an intrinsic sense of purpose, dignity, and being is in its relation to some other thing whether it is other human beings or the need for

respect from the state as it attempts to break, reduce, destroy, and shatter the self, mortify it into instrumental acquiescence. It is from here we might see where Ruth is also poignantly remarking on the circumstance in Eastern Congo. Rebecca expresses to us how and why the self is so thoroughly targeted, mortified, and we can remember that this is not just in protest, but in other areas of everyday life — it is not fatality that is most significant here, but mortality. As it relates to the self, the politics these young people strive towards are a change in direction of the aims of respect, dignity, being, dreams, convictions, and love as something directed towards young people, but also intrinsic to them, and emanating out from them in their efforts, practices, and hopes that cannot be destroyed, erased, reduced, rearranged for the sake of self-oriented ends, or competing narratives. It would seem the end is some collective good life for the nation.

It should not be too unfamiliar to see those arduous, difficult moments of life as 'lessons,' or 'learning moments.' What may be unfamiliar is the kind of lesson and the kinds of learning experienced across political contexts. What might be new is that identity is not formed through struggle, but more precisely through the possession of that struggle as an experience one learns through doing — where what is found to matter is the very fact that the individual can assert themselves as political and as a political experience they may endure in spite of a struggle or suffering in various arenas of life like the family, the home, in school, and in protest. We should not see this as an example of people putting themselves above others for the sake of communal benefit, a form of prosocial action in high-risk contexts (Calhoun 1991, 69-51): Loveman 1998, 482). Clearly, these young people live in a high-risk context. However, they are not necessarily in it for some aspect above themselves, but for the sake of the nation and their lives as an expression of a political self-hood that *already includes* them.

We can also avoid a notion of a natural or novel resilience to these young people by understanding that these are very painful, harrowing experiences and efforts. We can focus on what, why, and how young people respond to these experiences in creative and thoughtful ways. What we can focus on is how unique it is that risk follows a variety of forms of action whether it is leaving the family to pursue an education, seeking and hoping for a safe and free marriage, or pursuing non-violent protest that may lead to arrest. Precisely because the context is so saturated with conflicts and corruptions that curtail their political abilities in the name of poor and self-interested governance, repression, and restricted choices, young people are attempting in various

ways to practice politics, to improve the moral and ethical circumstances of their lives at some time in their lifetime, and to mold and reshape the political terrain they live in. Politicizing their lives takes an immense effort. This push and fight for change that shapes ambitions, notions of fidelity, honesty, and love are consistent throughout young people's expressions of political change as a precise engagement. As a result, not all forms of political action *have* to be threatening to the self in order to be political.

For Ruth, it seems Rebecca Kabuo's statement would reflect an honest person asserting themselves politically. For Rebecca, at the time, "international media described [her] as the youngest political prisoner in the world. She was arrested more than a dozen other times during peaceful protests and tortured by police and state security services that were against LUCHA's activism (OHCHR, 2020)." Given these stakes, it is important to observe these young people's actions not as collectively high-risk or conveyed through the contradiction rational choice. It is helpful to see them as reflective of a clear ethos that follows from the notions of morality, civility, education (broad moral and ethical duties and learnings), and what people do and hope to change. The self-sacrifice, self-preservation, and self-saving that we find in other literature regarding collective social action would render these people's sentiments, expressions, and notions of conflict and political life as *too* self-oriented/interested.

For example, family is immensely significant when it relates to a connection and sense of safety as well. For David, he comes from a large family. There are almost 40 members in his family. He says "I love my family. It is very large, and I have many siblings around me. It brings me a sense of ease and companionship." For Apolinye, with a family size of about 14, she says "When my family and I are together I feel a sense of ease. She says "My family may wish that I go forward so that I can rise them up." Taking care of their siblings, being in ajd around family, and experiencing a sense of companionship while also managing their siblings' affairs shows how young people to bring politics home with them as they share their new leanings and also attempt to build their own families in a way that is oriented towards betterment.

We do not have to valorize or exceptionalize actions that seem supremely noble in the name of self-sacrifice. These young people are clearly expressing that the self is not placed over and above collective interests. Instead, they show us the self is an intrinsically imbued subject of the

collective politics, ethics, and morality that they hope to be a part of and create for themselves in a variety of arenas. Young people, it would seem, have found creative ways to engage low-risk political action by standing in their ethics and morals as an act of politicization.

Love, Politics, and Parties

For some of these young Congolese students, when asked about what they like, and dislike certain political qualities came up.

For Mathias, he expresses that he "likes fidelity because he likes honest people and dislikes segregation." For Rosalyn, she expresses that grudges and indulgence are things she does not like. She sees change occurring "if we love each other," even if many people are express or embody negative behavior. These explicitly relate to the behavior they push against In earlier statements. Whether it is the indulgence and self-interest of the staff and leaders or segregated institutions that do not award privileges and merits equitably, their likes and dislikes are political.

For Robert, he expresses that maturity of mind is most important quality in a Congolese person. He left his family at 12 years old to go to Goma and pursue his education. Now he pays the school-fees for his young siblings as they pursue primary and secondary education. His education matters to him because "education is the main means through which I know how to behave in the matters of love." We can look back to the previous mentions of love and passion for peace and nation that are reflected in these young student's narratives.

For Matenda, she says that she became an adult at 12 years old when she left his family to pursue her education with another relative. She says she loves someone who is honest. When describing how he feels about the nation she says, "I love being in Congo but unfortunately the situation has collapsed. The government is here but they don't speak to the rights of the population." She enjoys her education, describes it as something she loves, and hopes to pursue a career in commercial science, or business. She looks up to people who have been successful in entrepreneurship. She also likes writing and hopes to write books. She reads many authors her

favorite, she notes is also Simone De Beauvoir. She believes to have a good life you must have self-confidence in you.

She writes of marriage in a different way. She says, "I learned to love and live in the present. The future is useless for me. You are asking me If I want to get married. Yes and no. Marriage is a foil for me. When I am married, I will no longer have the freedom to live as I want and I want to live a safe life of freedom. My views have changed now so that I hope I will be a wife who will live in freedom, who will mark the story of the Congo, and a wife who will be living in freedom."

"If I can decide to marry, I must take a boy who is an intellectual, kind, and has true love towards me. My parents wish that I can marry a good husband who is intelligent and kind. My parents don't have a specific view other than that it is my choice."

Choice and freedom are two important features of Matenda's narrative. The freedom she writes of relates not simply to the constraints of marriage in an interpersonal sense, but also to that in the nation. Matenda makes the explicit point to see marriage as a relationship in which the potential for political freedom finds itself in two senses that relate to each other given this context. Most importanty, she says to have a good life you must have self-confidence in you. For Ines three components of a good life are prayer, peace, and love.

Apolinye further emphasizes this point on choice and freedom as it relates to school and marriage. Enjoying her studies as a journalism student she says "I love my studies and my school because it was my choice." "When I think about the relationship between marriage and love, it is my education that has taught me it is one of choice. When you get engaged, you should try to do it better than you think you are or is expected. Weddings should be about the way of knowing each other deeply. Political conflict should not change the heart of two lovers."

For Isabel, she says "I must marry someone who values me and is an intellectual."

For Augustin, he says "I took this idea with me for such a long time. But when I think to get married, I will make a point to never ask anybody for their opinion or point. Personally, I would like to marry someone who does not belong to my tribe, who is not of my community, who is even not of my province, who is educated very well."

Odani adds when talking about the complications of courtship and politics: "It may be that if you are courting someone whose father is in a political party, it is where the problems may happen."

For Djuma, it may be that marriage represents a sense of collapse when politics invades. She says, "The marriage may collapse when it is political. The couple may fight over these things."

For Obeni, when there is political strife and change, he says, "it should not impact the love relationship." He describes marriage and says, "it is very hard to be married here because the way of living is difficult." No jobs, no money, and very sparse income mean a family or a couple do not have much to work with to sustain itself. He says, "the place where we live is badly organized, so we cannot find room to support our families." He goes on to share that it is the mindset of his peers that can be changed through education. "The way of ruling and organization is bad, the country has been destroyed by bad people, and I hope to write books to talk about Congolese rights." He makes a point to say that political conflict should have no impact on love relationships, but marriage is very difficult in this country. Obeni even says that marriages between rebels and solders in their shared communities might be beneficial because they can bring about union. Obeni, when he was 10, was sent to live with his grandmother where he has spent most of his adolescence and adulthood to pursue an education.

We see where and how marriage and education, the family and romantic relationships relate through Obeni, Djuma, Apolinye, and Matenda's accounts. To these young people, love is not the domain of conflict and conflict is not at all related to the domain of love. Intellect, choice, freedom, value, and union relate intimately to reflect a change in the nature of authority these young people hope for. It is clear to see, from the question of rebels and armed groups, the limits of love are in fact at the bounds of its incompatibility with conflict. Obeni does not forward a standard of resolution between armed groups, and militant groups, and the communites they

belong to. He does however should just where and how sentiment finds its ceiling as it relates to political conflict and relationships.

Another student, Marion-Urma, says that there may be no problem in a union between a solider and a rebel, or anyone of two different factions, "so long as there is love between one another it is sufficient." She later relates that "My ambition is to help fix the country. I do it because I wish to do so and the situation, we are living in is what pushes me." But in the current time, ""Struggling in a difficult problem because of the teachers who make complaints about the academic fees so that means nowadays there is no academic activities because of the government who has refused to pay teachers well." Urma's family struggled immensely with difficulties and griefs related to loss and burdens of income. For Urma, to live a good life is to have a job. For Apoline, the good life is to be in a good mood with others and to be a good citizen. When asked how she believes this change will occur she says "by teaching them in good ways."

The ways of understanding love and politics in this region, ironically, give insight into how class-status is a largely generally shared (most people in this region are egregiously poor) and though only few hold some amount of wealth or power, it would seem young people relate political parties, politics, and unions through notions of love and education or education as a provision or curriculum of how to engage in loving action, ethics, and morality based on a definition of conflict that is their own that they refuse or oppose. It would seem love, ambition, education, and peace rather than status are how they relate their political circumstances to what they can do and how they wish to change them. Love of country, love of nation, love of the other, love for education all explicitly relate to features of politics even if they are concomitant with suffering and struggle as well as unions. It is through their passions, hopes, and actions that their politics become real in a sense despite enduring repressions.

Education and Segregation

As Ruth writes, "Our school is doing well, but it is full of a kind of segregation where if you are well known by the authorities, you cannot reach a promotion."

For young women and men who seek to be teachers, professors, and intellectuals with official engagement within the University, the University is not exactly the place where this can occur. It is the best in the country but is not well-supplied, well-organized, features some nepotistic relationships, and teachers are not well paid. In fact, one student talked of his brother working at a secondary school and teaching at a University to pay for his means to attend. Another speaks of doing this for his younger siblings. While the University and Peace hold immense meaning for these young people, education as a credential is not achievable unless you are well known. The lack of fidelity, honesty, and proper teaching or instruction are the very qualities they see in those who try to die for the sake of repairing the conflict as an expression of education without its conventional or formal components.

Mentioned earlier, another student hoped for the end of corruption at his school in the form of a judgment. He thinks one day it will happen.

For Rachel, studying Journalism and French she says, "My favorite department in the University is French, and I love training as a teacher." She makes a point to say "Conflict is the source of violence, right? It is misunderstandings between people and leads to death and very bad things. It is a danger to us."

As Ruth mentions, she sees the conflict (these misunderstandings and misfired aims of love) that honest people try to die to counter. Many of the young students have lost friends and peers to these situations, but to grasp how it shapes their environment requires paying attention to how they contextualize and politicize these deeply personal events to counter dominant narratives that would otherwise prevent us from understanding the stakes and the terms they are expressed in.

For example, fidelity, as expressed by Mathias and honesty are clear characteristics that inform those who are participating in political change (either through protest or in schools through learning), those who are interested in engendering a sense of promise in civility and an ethical stance. Honesty, fidelity, maturity, and kindness permeate political life on many levels. They counter the government's narrative of political protest as criminal, they counter the segregation that occurs because of what would otherwise be dishonest means of accomplishment and

promotion, and most clearly, young people know that this honesty or maturity are a preeminent key in creating a political environment in which they can learn and participate in peace. They function as traits people hope to embody and find in partners; they are the terms of engagement for managing siblings affairs. We must takeaway that peacebuilding is a form of education (as edification) and edification is a form of peacebuilding. This allows us to move beyond the school-credential, governance, or more conventional political terms (democratic transitions, regional and provincial elections, or treaties, etc.). In the most extreme sense, young people are risking their lives in a variety of ways for the sake of edifying their general context, out love and ambition, in hopes of improving its moral and ethical character partially through the practice of a political adulthood.

For the prosocial form of action in new social movement work (Calhoun: 1991), people put the needs of the community above themselves to enter high-risk situations. These young people move themselves out of a pre-defined politics, teach and manage their siblings affairs, pursue education against immense odds and provide for their siblings to do the same, define qualities they desire, and express clearly, a communal, national interest as individual interest, rather than above or below it, against what is already the oppositional self-interest (e.g., the opposition that works for the benefit of one side only) that they say reflects conflict. This is precisely so they do not *always* have to engage in high-risk action. Young people, it would seem, are trying to equalize heinously disproportionate and asymmetrical relationships to the self, community, province, nation, and interest that they see in their current and ruling staff, bureaucrats, marriage choices, and sites of learning (schools, Universities, etc.), their broader social environment.

Politicizing their lives and depersonalizing them to counter national narratives that construe them as criminal has immediate costs in areas where a feeling of love and peace should run throughout their education and affairs as sustaining itself. Evidently, as attempts to change the system of authority, this form of action remains social rather than prosocial.

In another view, studies on the political culture in East Africa (Karlstrom, 1996) are immediately useful in grasping this context. The grammar of everyday experience and specific notions of democracy in practice reflect a socio-political cosmology to Karlstrom. From Kalstrom, we may focus on linguistic or grammatical differences in etymology. Various Swahili

and French phrases refer to senses of action. We can take Ruth's statement on honest people "try to die" through the French vernacular. Without delving too much into comparative etymological origins or mixes in the linguistic dominance as a result of Colonialism we can gain some sense of action. For the French verb, essayer, or in English "try to," the roots meanings when brought back to the verb *essai* are "trial + weight, testing on the balance from the latin root exigere. Exigere means to drive out and expel (Vaan 2008: 30). This is from the proto-Indo-European mix ex- + ago, -ere (to drive, with the ex – out, to drive in motion out) which refers to, in this context most readily, "I make" (for something that does not continue to exist after the maker stops). Some synonyms are to accomplish (in Latin: perficio, conficio), to conduct, drive, or lead (in Latin: actus, or agitare), to spend one's life (in Latin: degere), or to disturb (in Latin: agitare), to bring under control (in Latin: redigere). It would refer to a sense of purposive doing or making as a continuative action, rather than an isolated instance or occasion of action. (An Etymological Dictionary of the French Language, George Willam Kitchin and Agugste Brachet 2015: section 50, 150, 201, 248 in the introduction; verbs: essai (139), aisselle (18), allier (20); An Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language, Vann, 2008).

In Swahili, various phrases refer to endurance in the midst of suffering. The most well known is "Pole Saana" which works to convey a sense of a shared burden, a sense of a shared grief, and continuity of purpose after hardship, to tread with care. "Se Debrouiller," refers to finding a way, finding your path, and your purpose in work, a career, or vocation to provide a means for your own needs and daily survival. From these three, we can see how contextually, the effort to change politics is a burden, continual means, and attempt or assertion, and demand for change within which a focus on specific high-risk action or instances are incompatible. (I know these from personal experience). It is a general sense of action that is referred to. Honest people commit to these in various ways against immense senses of mortality to affect political change. It is important to understand the general sense of the context which shapes these linguistic dimensions that of pain, suffering, hunger, corruption, international intervention, and uncertainty (Niehuus, 2014).

Added to this, we can borrow from political culture studies of the 60's (Easton and Dennis 1969) that help us understand the origins of political legitimacy or patterns of authority that are embedded in primary and secondary institutions (e.g., the first traffic or parking ticket, the first

run in with the pledge of allegiance, the first presidential campaign speech heard on the radio, TV, in the newspaper). Evidently, and together, it would seem young people are attempting to change the relationship of authority from the inside out, from within primary and secondary institutions, into the realms of governance and politics they hope to engage. Education, family, marriage, love, fidelity, honesty, and the intellectual all relate in some way to young people doing or hoping to be different things – managing their siblings affairs, going to school, paying for sibling's school fees, meditating on peace, and who they hope to marry, and what they see as significant in that marriage show where it is done more clearly. These political notions are embedded within a particular political social fabric for these young people. It would seem peace as a relationship and institution of authority is overwhelmingly consistent in their expressions, practices, and hopes for the national future. Edification, then, is the means through which young people attenuate and ameliorate the prevailing system of authority in the region, that of political conflict.

Discussion: Politics and Social Action in Eastern Congo

In this discussion, I explore the role of ideology in shaping authority and personhood in Congolese society, and how this relationship between politics and culture impacts the youth's political and civil activity. Despite the repressive state, young people are creating their own unique and productive political and civil activity. Through a varied sense of political selfhood and purpose, young Congolese are finding and creating affinity, unifying into a hopeful, enduring, and peaceful shape amidst division, *without* any link to formal or conventional politics. Our sample shows that the story of politics and young people is characterized by clear, burgeoning availabilities of sense-making, purpose, and a varied sense of political selfhood. Additionally, concerted subjects of political vitality are finding and creating affinity, unifying into a hopeful, enduring, peaceful shape amidst division *before* any link to formal or conventional politics. However, there is a missing marriage market that could contribute to the formation of stable trajectories, which in turn could positively impact the broader society. Despite this, the future of Congolese politics looks promising with the emergence of new forms of political engagement and activism.

Social Fault Lines

As Y.V. Mudimbe, Congolese philosopher and scholar writes of the Mobutu regime during the 1970's to which he political refused admission, "when Mr. Mobutu decided to have me as a member of his Central Committee in charge of, I guess, Ideology, and things like that with, I think, a cabinet status (Mudimbe Reader 2008: xv) it is clear to see how central ideology is in shaping authority. Mudimbe, a prominent critic of the relationship between the logic of dependence between sub-Saharan Africa as the object of knowledge production developed in and for West (Mudimbe Reader: xiv) tells us in his biography the change in from that accompanies ideological frictions. In *Parables and Fables* he writes of the sharp contrast between autochnous traditions operating alongside Westernization of the area he is from in 1949. He writes of his parents struggle in representing this friction, between pride in Catholicism and parenting through tradition; he shows us just how these divisions disperse and settle into a unified sense through him, through his self-hood –- any balance between a Catholic upbringing and ancestral traditions or religions operates through the organization of persons, selves, and kinship. After leaving his family to pursue an education at the age of 10 to join a Benedictine seminary, Mudimbe writes of the Benedictine affiliation as "the order which will most likely colonize my life until I die (Les corps Glorieux des mots et des etres: Esquisse d'un jardin africain a la Benedictine, Mudimbe 1994) indicating multiple modes or modalities of being and enclosure related to these frictions between ideology and enduring practice. What we can take away from this is how central certain forms of ideology are in the organization of personhood across time in Congolese society.

Making Sense of Politics and Youth in the Kivus

In order to understand the relationship between politics and culture, we can go back to some grounding debates in the sociological literature. Marx would have you believe culture is not the starting point of social change, Weber suggests it is the other way around (Swidler 1986, 2001). While multiple movements and critics from different areas of the globe have engaged the debate between bases and superstructures, political and civil society, culture and structure (Rodney, Robinson, Hall, Mbembe, Chakrabarty, Federici, Hays, Scaff) it is through this context that we in

fact see action, speech, doing, being *and* form as clear principal drivers of change-oriented action, at least partially— as a related form of social engagement of political production. The meiosis of form does not occur in its beginnings from an alienation and appropriation of labor or the reorganized self for the sake of labor, but from a deeply historically rooted, thorough, harmful and consistent estrangement from politics— a clear colonial and political history that has distanced young people from the practices of politics. When a political culture is studied some texts suggest different kinds of political subjects. Almond and Verba (1963) refer to different kinds of political orientations: "A participant is assumed to be aware of and informed about the political system in both its governmental and political aspects. A subject tends to be cognitively oriented primarily to the output side of government: the executive, bureaucracy, and judiciary. The parochial tends to be unaware, or only dimly aware, of the political system in all its aspects (79)." How a political form in this context settles and appears, without any formal structural components of governance to relate it to (e.g., national and regional elections, different forms of governance like school boards or groups like Parent Teacher Associations, an executive, judiciary, etc.) is clearly multivalent or mixed to borrow from Almond and Verba but entirely unrelated to the available, in non-democratic political systems. In some ways, young people are originating their own unique and productive political and civil activity unrelated to the mores of the repressive state but certainly related to it.

By that I mean, these young people do not represent a proletariat hoping to achieve a resounding collective consciousness or a political subject related to a broader civic culture in which their lack of participation and unclear differentiation renders a political cultural analysis reductive. These are not the Protestants and the Calvinists entrenching the self with ethic, morale, skepticism, and the question of election; there are practicing Muslims, Catholics, Calvinists, Protestants, Kimbanguists, and more in this region and sample and are not necessarily hybrid like mix. Young people attach moral and ethical positions to different elements of social life, areas where political engagements can effectively be deliberated and engaged outside of an ordinarily repressive political regime.

The story of politics and young people in this sample is held in clear, burgeoning availabilities of sense-making, of purpose, a varied sense of political selfhood, and, most certainly, concerted

subjects of political vitality finding and creating affinity, unifying into a hopeful, enduring, peaceful shape amidst division prior to any link to formal or conventional politics.

New Social Movements, Accomplishments, and the Missing Marriage Market

In Paschel's 2016, Becoming Black Political Subjects, we see a perfect case-selection and example of how global political fields and various instruments of the state and collective action mix. Paschel shows us how exactly different groups indigenous, agrarian, rural, and peasant negotiate their claims to rights in Brazil and Colombia. We are able to witness the the timing of these as they relate to specific political alignments (e.g., multiracial, ethnic) that then embedded into primary, secondary, and state-mediated institutions as moral, ethical, and political wins enacted in constitutional or legislative changes. In a political fields approach, the change in shape and form of ideology to become "Black" political subjects is clearly mediated between the state and different urban and peasant movements. As Paschel writes, "As I elaborate in detail in the following chapter, one of the defining features of this new black rural movement was the distance they maintained from urban black organizations like Cimarrón. In fact, these two tendencies within Colombia's black movement—urban black organizations that fought for the right to equality and integration, and black peasant associations that fought for the right to difference and autonomy—would prove a perpetual source of conflict within the movement, as well as between these movements and the Colombian state Paschel 2016: 71-73." The shape and form of Black subject changed over and through the movement's arcs and alignments with different claims for constitutional reform as the subject of collective rights (Paschel 2016: 222-224). The state and the actors that work within and between it mediate this political subjectivity.

For Paschel, political fields, and the ideologies that saturate and embed themselves in social movements are "a terrain of struggle over power, meaning, and—more fundamentally—over the very categories of contestation. As such, rather than analyze how social movements draw on, and resonate with, certain preexisting cultural understandings, we should move toward examining how different forms of power—symbolic and material, local and global—are constructed as well as how they shape the conditions and dynamics of social movement contestation (225)." While also referring to "political openings (227-228)," it is unclear how this

elaborates in primary and secondary institutions. The relationship between primary and secondary institutions and what young people do within them is unclear in the text beyond state-sanctioned adoptions such as the incorporation of quotas for Afro-Colombian students in public universities (143-144) or the lack of curriculum adoption of Afro-Colombian history and culture in public schools (190-19), to racial equality policies in 2003 requiring public and private elementary schools to teach African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture (206). Nevertheless, how different movements (peasants and urbanists) negotiated their imaginations of Blackness mapped onto different periods of political alignment across Colombia and Brazil (222-224). We also need to know just how it is that a certain group of people may create numerous claims or hopes for an interaction unrelated to emancipatory processes and deliverables by the state. In this sample, it is young people, or a group of young people asserting themselves as the subject of politics, as primarily internally mediated, rather than a political subjectivity mediated by broader, larger organizing institutions.

In another geography, Jennifer Silva's *Coming up Short (2016)* and "Constructing Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty" (Silva, 2012) the construction of adulthood in a time of uncertainty we see a completely different view of adulthood between the U.S. and DR Congo. Clearly, edification happens in both contexts, people try to improve themselves, offer a therapeutic language for this, in hopes of improving their standing and life-chances in adulthood. It it would seem neoliberalism fragments improvement-models within institutions extending out from the self (to marriage, education) and stops at politics through a therapeutic logic. For Congolese people, it would seem edification occurs generally to some extent throughout institutions. Evidently, it would seem it is the (neo)liberal-capitalist form that manufactures a particular kind of accomplishment of adulthood within an already centralized and established politics. In Congo, psychological discourse and a pervasive neoliberal ideology does not necessarily exist. Social supports in the form of psycho-psychiatric care do not operate the same way in East African contexts outside of development regimes related to health (both public and private). As such we cannot reasonably conclude Congolese people are acting within a different language of psychology to translate a specific kind of self-oriented action. Precisely, because Congolese people embedded the self through this unified ethos, in some ways, it would seem neoliberal forms of being are incompatible, or perhaps appearing within interactions or institutions rather

than across them necessarily (hierarchies of the self in marriage or courtship, or different evaluations of self-efficacy in education as seen in Frye 2012). Nevertheless, the gestalt political goal appears more consistently than the distinctions between the sum of its parts. Still, the comparison is hard to make given the data.

One core difference would be in primary and secondary institutions like the family because of the structural differences in access to and sustained educational accomplishment — the poverty, conflict, and low likelihood of educational opportunity may make family cohesion, or the reasons for family separation different between these two. Congolese young people expressed explicit efforts towards cohesion within the family through what their family expected of them (e.g., to go forward and make my family go forward), obligations to kin (paying for school fees or leaving school to go back home to assist when there are no means), and in social or political aims (seeing their families as sites of ease, safety, and managing sibling affairs to be decent and obedient). In other words, the difference in the various structural and semiotic opportunities for adulthood has at least some consequential on the construction of adulthood across contexts. Gaining meaning or value (or losing it from receiving or not receiving an education) are not synchronously afforded across contexts. From one point of view, structural contexts shift the terrain, grounds, and coherence of significant meaning. In another, significant meaning shifts the dynamics of attachment to linear structural expectations. A degree or university do not mean the same things everywhere, and the process of accomplishing them certainly do not match. In fact, in some ways, the nature of international pedigree that orients Western degrees with some higher quality than those in conflict-affect contexts is a case in point of how this might shape the terrain of accomplishment construction between places.

The transition to different periods of economic and political life requires at least in part a transition in the marriage market. In the analysis I provide, marriage its changing moral and ethical form are emerging. However, historically, the most prominent example of this may be Henry VIII's repeated lamentations for a male-born child that led to reorganization of the Catholic Church and England the 16th Century. Clearly, unions have had an immense political salience historically. For Congolese young people, this transition and its importance may look nothing like that of Europe or America. For Congolese young people then who express their

opinions on love, politics, and parties it would seem they are preeminently astute as to how broader social divisions are mediated by the relationship and institution of marriage.

Acting, asserting, and making are key in ensuring young people are already the subject of the political home they hope to create rather than dependent on the state or external agents and institutions. The intellectual is a cohesive and porous subject of politics — its own sense of politics —rather than a political subjectivity or identity to be retreated into or distanced from. To gain more clarity on this we can move to the specific ideological transitions in the DRC, the new social movements of young people, and their goals. It is the venture into ordinary hopes, expectations, practices, and plans within primary and secondary institutions where we might also find causal components related to social movements and social change.

A New Era: Movements in the 2010's in Eastern Congo

Lutte Pour Le Changement (Lucha): Lesser known in Congolese civic history is the 2011 Lucha movement that started in Goma, the capital of North Kivu in the tortured East by young students to counter discrimination and repression the Lucha movement: was a transitional focused movement rooted in a network of citizens intended to contest discrimination and repression in the Kabila regime in a region ravaged by enduring civil wars. This has crossed regimes despite current President Tshisekedi's intentional alignments with actors like the UN, NGO's, Political Officials, and international "elites." after his state of siege, a securitizing agenda of the east, which was demonstrably his political debut and entailed further repression and discrimination. Young people were and still are imprisoned, beaten, killed, endure stigma, death threats, gender-based violence, and torture or killing by the government. For this specific demonstration in large numbers.

Solidarite Pour l'Encadrement et Lutte Contre la Pauvrete (SELP): For example, transnational organizations have also formed a budding issue network. One makes clear that "promoting sustainable development and *social cohesion* (emphasis added) through community-based activities" is the objective assigned by SELP.

What is different between the 2010's and other eras is that young people are the authoritative voice of this change, the central political authority is not a member of a regime (e.g., President, Military Leader, Governor, etc.) it is young people themselves. Despite this, the state during its "State of Seige," extended 22 times from May of 2021 to April 2022, the central authoirty further suppressed rights, freedoms, expressions, and pursuit of justice.[2]

When I asked David, the historian of the LUCHA movement whether Congolese young people teach others, their siblings and peers of these movements and its points he says: "Certainly. Actors keep holding workshops and conferences to instill the notions of responsible citizenship – – political leadership, responsible citizenship, democracy, good governance, the ideology of the movement." It is clear to see how even without workshops or explicit participation in these movements, as it relates to the family, siblings, educational pursuits and goals, and peacebuilding, a clear ethical and moral stance is central to these young Congolese people's sense of action.

It is against a context of immense repression that these new movements find their urgency. David offers a thorough detailing of the two central movements Filimbi and Lucha below where goals and processes are made a bit clearer as it relates to the goals and reach of these movements:

For the LUCHA Movement:

The Lucha was founded in May 2012 in Goma in North Kivu, a region ravaged by long civil wars, claims to be exclusively about nonviolent resistance inspired by the struggles of Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. At the beginning, it is explicitly in the wake of the Tunisian spring. To support its claims to oppose state violence, it resorts to massive sit-ins, announcing that it will never respond to violence with violence, and uses lobbying in case of arrests of demonstrators.

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[2] https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr62/5495/2022/en/

According to its own words, "Lucha activists contribute to the advent of the New Congo as dreamed of by Patrice Émeri Lumumba" by working for "a Congo of Freedom, a Congo of Justice, a Congo of Peace, a Prosperous Congo, a truly Independent Congo. It is composed of young Congolese of all backgrounds, origins and religions. It believes that this objective will be achieved by "the Congolese citizens themselves, provided they are aware of it and work towards it with courage and determination". In her mobilizations, depending on their themes, she obtains the active support mainly of young people or more broadly of citizens of all ages. As it is strongly anchored in the underprivileged areas, its fronts of actions are multiple: against unemployment, for access to drinking water, for roads and other demands of the poor populations.

It has also relayed the need for political change, particularly in the face of President Kabila who wanted to run for a third term in an unconstitutional manner, while his regime has been marked by numerous human rights violations, corruption, endless and devastating civil wars and misery for a large part of the Congolese population. In this context, Lucha is involved with other movements in the "bye-bye Kabila" campaign. Together with other social and political forces, it led a national showdown and achieved a great victory, but the repression was terrible (at least 40 deaths) and it was a partial victory, because Kabila remains provisionally president, with a prime minister from the opposition, but he should not be able to be a candidate in the next elections. However, the elections were postponed from December 2016 to 2017, with no specific date. Kabila is clinging to power without even having run for a new term, and keeps postponing these elections. moreover, he still does not seem to be ruling out amending the constitution in order to run for a third time.

On the issue of corruption, Lucha has published a list of the 35 main "predators" and has called on the population to identify ill-gotten gains and seize them, as well as to boycott the businesses of the corrupt.

Although carrying out eminently political actions, Lucha refuses to be a political party. It is not an association, and has no spokesperson, believing that it is less exposed to the repression that would decapitate its leadership, in a highly repressive context. It presents itself as a network of

citizens, is organized in decentralized cells of 10 to 20 members, some of which are focused on common tasks. It believes that a flexible and largely decentralized movement allows it to adapt well to different environments. Flexibility is one of its strengths. At an annual meeting three or four major actions are defined and taken up by all.

For its communication it can hardly count on the traditional local media, the international press relays a little more its mobilizations. La Lucha uses a lot the social networks, but also its network of activists to sensitize the population by direct contacts to reach another public.

For the Filimbi Movement:

"Filimbi was officially born on March 15, 2015 in Kinshasa in the presence of, among others, representatives of Y'en a marre, Balai Citoyen, Lucha and other personalities and journalists. The ideas of the new movement are immediately translated into songs, even though the co-founders are not artists, but a banker (Floribert Anzuluni), a doctor (Franck Otete) and a law graduate working in a company (Yangu Kiakwama Kia Kizi), so men not from disadvantaged backgrounds. The launch press conference ended dramatically with the kidnapping by the military of some 40 people, some of whom were not released until 18 months later. From the time of its founding, Filimbi's leaders were accused of terrorism and of wanting to prepare a violent insurrection, even though they resolutely claimed to be non-violent and to respect the legal framework, wanting to break with the cycles of violence that had ravaged the country. This brutal reaction by the government did not prevent the movement from developing, despite the departure of its main leaders into exile.

As with other citizens' movements, Filmibi's main objective is to stimulate citizen participation, especially among youth, in order to improve living conditions by influencing the decisions of the authorities for the benefit of all by breaking with the passivity that allows those in power to continue their misdeeds. The name of the movement, which means "whistle" in Swahili, is a summary of this program: it is a reference to the alerts that the inhabitants of the neighborhoods and villages give each other in case of threat, calls to mobilization, but also to the referee who whistles the faults, those of the power towards the population in this case. Ideologically,

Filimbi's leaders, like Lucha, make strong claims to Patrice Lumumba, the historic leader of Congolese independence, and to Nelson Mandela. But the majority of Congolese youth know little about these important personalities, so Filimbi wants to revive their struggles in order to root the youth in an ideal inherited from the history of their country.

In an original way, Filimbi wishes to articulate its action on four "drawers", potential engines of change in its eyes: a political drawer (for a healthy management of the country by politicians), a citizen drawer (for a broad involvement of all in social life), an economic drawer (so that the entrepreneurs get involved in a healthy management action) and an intellectual drawer (so that the intellectuals provide an analysis of the dangers which threaten the country) Within this framework, Filimbi has chosen as a priority, but not exclusively, the sensitization of citizens and complementary mobilization actions towards the authorities, authorities in which the Congolese no longer have much faith given the widespread corruption.

In order to deploy its action, Filimbi has also decided to be a collective that is independent of politicians, whom the population distrusts a lot. The goal is to be "the vehicle of expression of an indignant youth, who are fed up, who are determined to transform their frustration into positive and creative energy"; it is not a question of destroying but of building, the leaders specify. Filimbi does not necessarily seek to carry out massive actions, but those that can have a large echo, thanks to their symbolic character. This does not prevent the movement from being widely supported by young people, sometimes by their parents despite the fear of repression.

Filimbi has set up a collective coordination, which plays a central role. Unlike the Senegalese and Burkinabe movements, Filimbi is not embodied by popular artists, but this does not prevent it from using music and other artistic forms to "speak" to the youth. In a context of clandestinity, Filimbi makes extensive use of social networks to inform, educate and mobilize, knowing that "the revolution will not be made on Twitter, the quality of an act of activism requires contact and exchange between people. Radio remains the main medium in the DRC, especially outside the big cities, and Filimbi is careful not to be too absent, despite the difficulties. Nevertheless, Filimbi remains an urban movement and struggles to reach the deep rural Congo, which has 60%

of the population, which is a challenge for it. For its mobilization grounds are numerous: health, security, education, employment and civic participation can offer a basis for shared actions.

Filimbi carries out actions to question managers and elected officials. On the central scene with other movements, it is part of the "bye-bye Kabila" campaign. At the same time, Filimbi addresses itself to the Congolese people for actions of citizen awareness, but also so that they carry out themselves concrete actions of improvement of their daily life (digging of gutters with an aim of cleansing for example). It also fights against superstitions by explaining the real causes of diseases (unhealthy water and not witchcraft in case of diarrhea for example). Filimbi also works to improve the lot of women and is present in the field of information on sexuality.

Filimbi and Lucha have links with their Senegalese and Burkinabe counterparts and with those in other countries, with whom they share many views. The future will tell whether their actions and their ambitions to see a new citizen emerge for a new society will be able to break through the wall of obstinacy of the Kabila regime, in conjunction with other movements and parties. In any case, these attempts to create a "New Congo" in the tradition of Lumumba's dream deserve to be encouraged and supported."

Conclusion: Key Takeaways and the "New Congo"

Key takeaways here as it relates to the interviews are 1) an understanding that goal of creating a "New Congo" as a clear and expressed movement-oriented aim begins with an understanding that it has long been in the making. However, where, and how young people engage this in their everyday and ordinary lives is not apparent in the historian's documentation. From the interviews, we can see just how much effort Congolese people are putting into political and social change, as they hope to change its basic components in various areas of life through a variety of means as they edify or in "identities" like the intellectual in ordinary life.

A second 2) takeaway is a point on rational action and collective behavior. Loveman (1998) notes the tautological scheme of rational action in relating death to honor to show that rational-

choice models would predict inaction in such a high-risk setting in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina. This conception of participation and courses of action is quite helpful, but we need a little bit more to understand ordinary action outside of organizations. Because the government is not the only agent of repression in Congo and danger, death, violence, and constraint arrange indiscriminately (by rebel groups, military factions, armed groups, or splintered rouges, opportunists, peacekeepers, NGOs, primary and secondary institutions, and even in families), contexts that may have various features of conflict or more specifically have a varied array of agents who provoke conflict (as young people describe it) that come from many places and in many directions may need a better explanation for what people do in these circumstances outside of high-risk, organizational action.

Despite the challenges and challengers to rational choice models that see values, interests, and the rationally optimizing actors working between them (Swidler 1986, Douglas 1986) as largely impractical and offering poor explanatory weight, it would seem the problem with rational choice in high-risk contexts is the inappropriate cost/benefit analysis based on values. For example, it would be too risky to pursue high-risk action if the cost is most likely death, disappearance, or some form of threat. While it is entirely probable and plausible in high-risk situations a high probability of "death," may correlate to a high probability of the same variables "maintenance of honor," "respect for human rights," (Loveman 1998: 482, phrases borrowed) "protection of the family," or "the genesis of political action" (Mohamad Bouazizi – Tunisian Vendor whose suicide sparked the Arab Spring) that we have seen in the form of political suicide, rational choice models are said to be poor for their analytical utility rather than contextual compatibilities. We can look to examples of such cases as the Arab Spring and the New Congo to understand that the rational-choice model should not find so much weight as the tool of tautological implication for analytical leverage. The model's failures do not necessarily implicate the strict adherence to a collapsed perception of the semiotic structure of a high-risk context. We are unable to see how rational choice models, for all their faults in causality allow us to not only contradict the isolated utility of values, meanings, or psychosocial processes in explaining behavior, but ensure we realize and take into consideration the importance of social context in understanding what people do in these troubled times.

Even still, it is important to pay attention to the way certain forms of action are granted political valence, resonance, response, or trust in its patterning (Douglas 1986: 10) when organized around certain institutions. As Loveman shows us (1998: 510-515) for the mothers marching in Madres Plaza de Mayo with portraitures of their disappeared children, this form of action was apprehended as political or ascripted as political by the state — the category being relatives of the disappeared. A relationship to the Church, protest as an expression of the church conferred a sense of security in demonstrations by lawyers, activists, and others in Chile (Loveman 1998: 515). As such, these actors were able to safely organize human rights based movements under the auspices of the Catholic Church (Loveman 1998: 488). Similarly, in Kenya, a longstanding form of protest by mothers in Nigeria and Kenya as a form of collective action engages in what is called women's nakedness as a longstanding form of protected political protest pre-dating independence in these states (Karari, Peter. "Non-Violent Struggle." International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution 3, no. 1 (2015): 71-90; Fallon, Kathleen & Moreau, Julie. (2016). Revisiting Repertoire Transition: Women's Nakedness as Potent Protests in Nigeria and Kenya*. Mobilization: An International Quarterly. 21. 323-340. 10.17813/1086-671X-20-3-323). Repertoires of action and form are, evidently, supremely important to action both collective and interpersonal (Tilly 1983 (speaking your mind), Tarrow 1995 [Cycles of Collective Action: Between Movements of Madness and the Repertoires of Contention / Sidney Tarrow] and action Swidler 1986) especially as they relate to the various institutions in the political theatre.

What becomes important then is the question of how these forms translate across different spheres and dimensions people operate within. Noticing multidimensional actions as both a real and necessary feat for political actualization helps us move away from the idea that relates doing or action to the commitment to an "identity that would be irretrievably violated by pulling back from risk (Calhoun 1991: 69-51)." Rather than participate in protest alone or non-violent demonstrations, it is important, in this scheme that social actors can engage in "multiple spheres of action and interact with different social groups (ToL, Swidler, 2003)." The challenge here, and the most important part is that commitment must be flexible, open, and malleable for young people to place their investments in a way that does not violate them. Therefore, it is not the kinds of people that they are (e.g., they are not radicals, revolutionaries, or troublemakers) that is most salient or most operative in this context, it is first and foremost a unified ethos that affords

and congeals protection and politics for these young Congolese people despite the complex prevailing system of authority that would have them be criminals, radicals, or revolutionaries, as Rebecca reminds, across institutions. Therefore, social context and institutionalized repertoires or forms of action are also important factors to consider.

A third takeaway 3) is that each of these young people came up with their definitions and ways of living and accomplishing the good life. Some described having a job, another said it was characterized by peace, love, and prayer. Others mentioned self-confidence and some reflected putting politics or political matters first. It would seem Congolese young people have a concrete idea of what the 'good life' looks to them as one in which they can choose their partners, pursue careers and passions that mean something to them, participate in political change, ensure, and maintain the ease of family-bonds, and endure the circumstances they are afforded as they endeavor for peace. Uniquely, though, it would seem as they come to know, think, reflect, and experience any good life, they are inextricably linked to creating it above or outside of what is currently or conventionally political.

Finally, 4) as they move through their adulthood, congolese young people are not solely reacting to ideology as it shapes their narratives of themselves, the futures they imagine that form different images through cognition (Frye 2012). Some rejected "the future," and decided to live in the present. They also are not really seizing opportunities as they arise in a time of uncertainty (Johnson-Hanks 2015). While they may look for work while their education is interrupted, this is not the guiding relation of doing evidenced by the intense political efforts across nations and within personal expressions. While thoughtful, courageous, and judicious in a nation-state that holds clear extractive and political-economic institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), Congolese young people are refashioning authority by locating and acting upon where it may be most feasibly rearranged — through their peers and obligations to family and kin, courtships and unions, passions and careers, and peacebuilding efforts of the nation — but feasible does not mean seamless. They shape who they want to be and marry as intellectuals while forming a political space for safe engagements. Rather than approaching DR Congo as the quintessential normal state of objective violence (Zizek 2008: 3, 14, 180) or a Hobbesian world arrested by anarchy (Autesserre 2012), we can take a more sensitive approach to the idea that identities or

experiences are formed through the political struggle to understand the variety of ways people maneuver in these contexts.

Between Wendy Brown (1995), Oyerunke Oyewumi (1997), Gayatri Spivak (Scattered Speculations: 1985: 80-83) and Catherine Mackinnon (1982) is a clear limitation. That there are spheres of consent that come to shape political life and the neocolonial elements that inform them are true. This doubly derogates women in these contexts. In labor (divisions of labor for women in Eastern Congo), education (education inequality in East Congo for women), and amidst conflict (social consequences of conflict-related sexual violence), these must be considered. The political-cultural schemes that seek their empowerment but fail to match the political and social gird of the area (KUUMBA, MONICA BAHATI. "The Limits of Feminism: Decolonizing Women's Liberation/Oppression Theory." Race, Sex & Class 1, no. 2 (1994): 85–100. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41680222, Berry 2015) manage to create a super-exploited worker in the international division of labor.

How women and girls fare in this scheme I could not find. The importance of religious-cultural forms or economic conditions and divisions that pervade everyday life were mentioned, but they are not at the forefront of this paper as they relate to women's subordination. While incredibly important, choice, freedom, value, and purpose were explicit mentions by the women in my sample and meditated on. How this animates in the social life of Congolese women who are hoping to gain their education while their mothers or aunts must tend the fields miles away, go to the market to sell the harvest at the expense of their meals, or are also mining for gold to find a way for their families is untold here. What we can know is that women play an important role in the pursuit of political purpose, the details of whether they are afforded the same protections I do not know in practice.

However, it would be through the institutions of marriage and education that this function is most coherent in this paper. For that reason, more powerful inquiries should be made into the patterns and processes that occur across primary and secondary institutions in Eastern Congo like public, private, rural, primary and secondary schools, university schooling, families, labor, and exchanges in markets, centers of engagement in the public, churches, etc. It is very clear to

young women intellectuals, global scholarship and authorship, writing, and literature are very important to the formation of their political modes and aspirations. As Teresa de Lauretis writing in The Practice of Sexual Difference and Feminist Thought in Italy shares of the genealogy of authors, Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich, and Simone de Beauvoir (2-3) enable "a "genealogy of women" that is at once discovered, invented, and constructed through feminist practices of reference and address (de Lauretis doi provided). Of course, we can remember from Oyerunke Oyewumi (1997) in The Invention of Women that there is specificity— a political, cultural, ethical, experiential, geographic, and role specificity— related to women's particular condition of experience and possibility in this region that has changed as a result of political processes. It cannot be overshadowed by the gloss of universal womanhood everywhere. Moving to either side of the universal claim in such a power-laden context creates what Lwambo (2013) and Merger (2012) write of when placed in conversation: a certain elision of the root causes of violence, power, and authority for the sake of gender-based resolutions that do not accomplish their goals and instead lead to clear, severe consequences for the beneficiaries of these so-called reprieves.

As a concept map edification, the form of action relayed in this context occurs as follows:

a developing system of ethics and morals (e.g., maturity, decency, kindness, fidelity, honesty, good behaviour ~ authority) > 2) edification (appears in its clearest form as instruction and education, obligations to kin, teaching peers, being an intellectual, deliberating unions and marriage, explicit protest, and attending school) > 3) dispersal through kinship, peer relations or peer network interactions > 4) promulgation of a particular practice of political creation/expansion in a severely repressive context

As Sharon Hays writes of the sticky structure-culture problem in her forwarding of culture as a structure (1998), she reminds us of a famous Dukheimian dictum: "[L]iberty is the fruit of

regulation. Through the practice of moral rules, we develop the capacity to govern and regulate ourselves, which is the whole reality of liberty [1965b, p. 54; (Hays 1998: 61]." To Hays this is a paradoxical truism (Hays 1998: 61) where in rules we may not necessarily enjoy in fact do govern our lives, give us a "secure position in the world (whether we like it or not) (Hays 1998: 61)."

For young people in Eastern Congo, it would seem it is this very paradox that enables life beyond war. It would seem Durkheim may overestimate the relationship between a general scheme of liberty, the security it provides and the governance circumscribing it. It may be true that some forms of being and acting are cohered through the unassailable weight, pain, vitriol, and clear brutal endurance of conflict or difference, through the rules that give it it's inertia in a variety of places. Actions like textbooks or scientific literatures are already deeply embedded within a cultural politics. However, that the rules that govern different forms of action are most easily comprehended through their formation and structural ossification through political and institutional struggles is a wholly inadequate view. Instead, we can see that, for these young people, forms of being and acting are positioned as ethical and moral stances through primary and secondary institutions as a sense of purpose. Congolese people can participate in politics and be political without the immediate risk of death, a threat to life, or curtailment. As political assertions of a sense of purpose and change amidst multiple political worlds, endeavors, or narratives, in a system of authority where chiefs are fathers, fathers are mayors, mayors become governors, and governors align with their interests through national authorities or military figures, the intellectual represents moral and ethical governance, political practice, and reality designed and effused freely by young people themselves.

Notes:

1. The question of agency, rational choice, and political systems is lengthy and widely debated. Across the texts cited, I tried to understand ordinary schemes of action that find some harmony and common-sense in their unified logic without relating specifically to protest to the state. Across different disciplines it seemed political scientists and sociologists had a better grip on patterned schemes of action as it relates to politics while they diverge on where and how politics become central to a specific form of action.

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