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Arian, Hadassah (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

ASM formalization as the key to responsible cobalt sourcing in the DRC: by and for whom? An analysis of the contested field of legitimacy practices in the responsible cobalt assemblage, through a case study of Entreprise General du Cobalt (EGC)

In reaction to the global focus on ‘battery minerals’ along with increased sustainability pressures, a new ‘responsible sourcing framework’ is changing the DRC’s cobalt supply chain governance. Diverse actors are actively cooperating based on their common stated goal of making cobalt sourcing more responsible. This includes a range of internationally as well as nationally led projects, regulations, and initiatives, including the launch of the state-owned mining company Entreprise Générale du Cobalt (EGC).

ASM formalization has been presented as the key to creating a responsible cobalt supply chain. Along with its international partners Trafigura and Pact, EGC discursively legitimizes the proposed mining reforms by drawing from resource-nationalist and green extractivist narratives. Formalized cobalt mining is thereby presented as the key to (1) national prosperity, (2) a sustainable future and, (3) local community development. Whereas presented as a real game changer in 2019, implementation on the ground has been limited.

The aim of this proposed paper is to bring an analysis of the narratives through which EGC is legitimized into conversation with an analysis of the everyday practices and interactions of cobalt mining communities, that challenge and repose EGC’s legitimacy. Bringing discursive and everyday practices together gives an insight into the contested field of legitimacy, in the case of EGC as well as the broader “responsible cobalt assemblage”. Pointing to potential legitimacy gaps contributes to understanding current implementation difficulties, while also creating possibilities to propose alternative pathways that center mining communities’ priorities in responsible sourcing activities.

Bahati Mastaki, Olivier (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

Understanding the carbon credit rush in the Congolese forestry sector

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the *Groupe Inter-Bailleurs Environnement et Climat* (GIBEC) currently brings together bi- and multilateral donors in the environment and sustainable development sector. This framework, reinforced by agreements (e.g. CAFI, PIF- CUP), aims to collaborate with government structures to facilitate the implementation of environmental programmes on the ground. To date, however, this collaboration has been very complex.

Furthermore, notwithstanding the key role played by Congolese forests in preserving biodiversity and the climate, and considering the current commitment of donors to these issues, socio-anthropological investigations in this sector are still limited. This analysis attempts to fill this gap in the literature.

Based on investigations carried out at national (Kinshasa) and local (the 'forest' province of Maindombe) level, this contribution attempts to reveal the dynamics underlying agreements on environmental programmes between the DRC and its donors. It focuses on the role of the actors involved (government officials, donors and local communities). The data analysed were collected using a qualitative approach, based on an ethnography of bureaucracy (Bierschenk & Olivier de Sardan, 2021; Olivier de Sardan 2022) and inspired by the work of Mosse 2005, Long 2001, etc.

The bureaucratisation and accentuated top-down management of carbon financing currently observed can explain this lack of understanding of the carbon issue by the bureaucrats, mainly local, and also justify the 'accessory role' that administration currently plays, instead of being a genuine instrument for managing public policies in the interests of local communities.

Bahati Mukulu, Joseph (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

Essay on economic development in construction sector: The Socioeconomic impact of handmade urbanism in Bukavu

Scholars agree that the construction sector is the fastest emerging and growing sector with a significant number of informal workers. Theal informality can take place a different steps or actors, including (1) the informal sector of the enterprise; (2) informal labour; (3) the informal construction system, and (4) informal building/settlement. Since these different types are interrelated, in the construction sector, the sub-contracting of informal contractors can occur in formally contracted projects. Regarding developing countries, including Bukavu, the construction sector has been enjoying exponential growth. For this city, the fragile political situation and the lack of forecasting lead this sector to informality. Although the presence of many actors in the chain informs the high share of jobs created in the construction sector, the fragmentation of the value chain raises the information asymmetry concern. Albeit the scarcity of data makes it difficult to assess trends of employment in the construction industry in Africa, the sector remains the potential for employment in this continent regarding the expected growth of population, which will be mainly in urban areas. This research quests the dynamics and effects of the (rapid) urbanization on the human well-being of actors involved in this sector in a developing context by analyzing the dynamic of actors along the value chain, assessing the quality of jobs created in this sector and the impact of this sector on the livelihood of its actors, and identifying the strategy to solve the information asymmetry concern.

Balungwe Shamavu, Paulin (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

Analysis of pay inequalities of civil servants and their perpetuation mechanisms in the DRC

The Congolese administration has historically experienced – at least since the 1970s – a profound process of decline. In the past three decades, the economic crisis alongside with the armed conflicts of the 1990s further exacerbated the deterioration of administrative capacity, a key indicator of which has been the sharp collapse of civil service remunerations. The resumption of relations with international financial institutions from 2001 onwards, economic and political stabilisation, and the launching of structural reforms allowed a measure of economic redress, indicated by the progressive expansion and consolidation of the domestic budget which rose substantially over the following two decades. The wage bill has come to absorb the single largest share of the domestic budget, hovering around one third of domestic spending until recently.

In DRC, the state is the main employer with more than 75% of formal jobs, the majority of which are in the public administration. Thus, inequalities in the remuneration of state employees has a significant impact on the overall national economy. The structure of public sector wages provides an illustration of income inequality in society.

This study focuses on pay practices within Congolese civil service. It contributes to the literature on human resource management in Congolese administration after nearly twenty years of implementation of reforms by the Government with the support of several donors. Two research objectives are addressed: Measure pay inequalities between the different categories of Congolese civil servants; Understand the dynamics of the negotiation of civil servants' salaries.

Batumike Mihigo, Ithiel (Université de Mons, Université de Kaziba, Université Catholique de Bukavu et Ebuteli).

Contextualiser les négociations minières en RDC au-delà du formel : cas de partenariats de la Gécamines

Depuis la libéralisation du secteur minier congolais en 2002, de nombreuses critiques ont été formulées contre les négociations et la conclusion des contrats miniers. Une littérature abondante épingle la corruption comme principale cause du bradage des ressources minières du pays. Ce bradage se déroule notamment par la sous-évaluation des actifs miniers et la minoration des parts de l'État dans les partenariats avec les privés (Carter center 2017, Rubbers 2013, IGF RDC 2022). Or, la contractualisation qui est la première modalité d'accès aux mines en RDC (Kitobo 2022) n'est pas suffisamment saisie par la littérature.

Cette contribution se base sur l'approche de la *political settlement* (Mushtaq 2010) pour une compréhension intégrée de la politique et des formes sous-jacentes de pouvoir capable d'expliquer la différence des résultats économiques et de développement émergeant des mêmes formes institutionnelles. Avec quelques contrats de la Gécamines comme étude de cas, cette approche aidera à comprendre la gouvernance réelle (Herdt & de Sardan 2015) du secteur minier en RDC. Car, elle permet de capter la complémentarité entre le formel et l'informel dans ce processus de contractualisation en allant au-delà de la corruption souvent épinglée par la littérature.

Ce papier empruntera une approche socio-anthropologique. Qualitativement, sur base d'une perspective anthropo-juridique il analysera quelques contrats miniers liant la Gécamines aux multinationales. En plus de la littérature disponible (Mazalto, Rubbers, etc), les données collectées à travers des entretiens semi structurés, ainsi que des échanges libres auprès d'acteurs étatiques et non étatiques intervenant dans le secteur minier congolais seront mobilisées.

Bikubanya, Divin-Luc (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

Historical review of (socio-economic) construction and urbanisation patterns in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo): a case study of the city of Bukavu.

This paper provides a critical reflection on patterns of construction and urbanisation before, during, and after the Belgian colonisation in DR Congo. We explore the ways in which colonial economic practices and policies (through the colonial trilogy of Administration, Industry/Trade and Evangelisation) and their unintended consequences, resulted in the 'construction' of cities and how this information can contribute to our understanding of fragmented urbanisation in the city of Bukavu, South Kivu. To do this, the paper adopts a historical approach based on the genetic method (seeking the genesis of facts) and the diachronic method (exploring the evolution of facts) by exploiting archival documents available - in DR Congo and Belgium - in museums, libraries, and research centres. These data are triangulated with secondary literature essentially based on the Sub-Saharan African region. By deciphering the close links between construction and urban planning, in particular by taking into account the role played (and to be played) by investment in construction materials, we show the need to revitalise the industrial machine if construction materials are to be genuine development materials. Combined with the setting up of a well-organised materials supply circuit, urban investment would therefore be a prerequisite for Bukavu and other regional towns to become fully-fledged areas of opportunity, creativity, and social and economic transformation.

La fabrique du « corps féminin invincible » : une ethnographie des imaginaires et des stéréotypes de genre au sein des milices Mayi-Mayi au Sud-Kivu (RDC)

Le phénomène « Mayi-Mayi » est une réalité non homogène et multi-facette. Il génère des polémiques, des controverses scientifiques qui départagent les chercheurs autour de perceptions et des grilles d'analyse. Dans la littérature en sciences sociales, il se dégage quatre angles d'analyse. Premièrement, sous l'angle de l'identité, il apparaît comme une expression d'autochtonie tribale et comme une résistance patriotique. Deuxièmement, du point de vue politique, il s'agit d'un mouvement politique du bas vers le haut. Troisièmement, une approche sociologique appréhende ces actions comme des champs sociaux d'ascension sociale des cadets sociaux marginaux. Ces champs sociaux sont des fragments plus ou moins autonomes du système sécuritaire étatique effondré. Quatrièmement, une approche géopolitique analyse les Mayi-Mayi comme des mafias ou de organisations criminelles plongées dans l'économie politique de la violence. C'est sous ce prisme -agents vecteurs de l'insécurité - que les miliciens Mayi-Mayi apparaissent comme des agents principaux de la violence sexuelle. Ce modèle explicatif axé sur la victimisation reste unilatéralement appliqué aux femmes et aux filles, et aboutit à des conclusions hâtives et subjectives. Ce regard simpliste en vient à véhiculer de clichés négatifs et à servir de relais à l'imaginaire collectif local et patriarcal, qui ne conçoit pas qu'une femme (fille) devienne milicienne. Les femmes (filles) apparaissent dès lors comme des sujets anhistoriques dans les violences d'en bas. Au-delà de ces violences, ce papier vise à décrire la socialisation des femmes et des filles à culture violente des milices Mayi-Mayi. De plus, analyser les représentations sociales qui participent largement à la fabrique des corps féminins miliciens invulnérables. Ainsi, les miliciennes deviennent des corps construits comme objet-sujet. Ce processus de milicianisation est ignoré en raison du discours dominant sur les violences sexuelles.

Bitumba, Jean (Université de Kisangani)

Vivre avec les nkodia (mollusques) et lutter contre la schistosomiase dans la zone de Kimpese

La lutte contre la schistosomiase dans la zone de santé de Kimpese est un défi majeur qui met l'homme devant sa responsabilité : s'affirmer en prédateur ou en collaborateur qui l'oblige à nouer des relations qui vont au-delà de son humanité. Dans cette lutte contre la schistosomiase, les sciences biomédicales mettent l'accent sur l'élimination des mollusques (nkodia) et pourtant la difficulté d'identifier les vrais vecteurs de la schistosomiase par les communautés et l'attachement qu'ont ces communautés aux nkodia, ne permettent pas d'adopter cette posture biomédicale. Cette thèse ambitionne de démontrer que le rapprochement de l'homme avec les nkodia (cohabitation) permet de concilier les connaissances biomédicales et les savoirs endogènes pour arrêter les stratégies efficaces de lutte. Sur le plan méthodologique, par des observations ethnographiques et grâce aux entretiens et à la discussion de groupe, une vue du vécu et du rapprochement aux non humains sera dégagée. Grâce à l'écologie des relations développée par Descola dans ses études sur les populations amazoniennes et la nature, nous essayons de faire nôtre l'intimité des communautés de Kimpese et les non humains notamment les nkodia pour voir comment ces communautés acceptent, partagent l'espace et interagissent avec les non humains. Ce qui situe donc notre travail dans le champ de l'anthropologie du post-humain (la parenté multi-espèces).

L'approche « One health » qui est une approche multisectorielle appliquée aux zoonoses, en particulier celles qui sont prioritaires, nous aidera à établir des passerelles entre les secteurs et disciplines pour favoriser l'élaboration d'une stratégie intégrée de lutte contre les menaces endémiques. C'est l'appel que Rémy et Haraway lancent aux scientifiques de toutes les disciplines à jouer chacun son rôle devant le trouble, option qui doit guider les humains pour faire face aux conditions de précarité dont eux-mêmes sont à la base.

Bloch, Igor (Universiteit Gent & Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

A narrative on the making of a “petit bourgeois” homeowner or a self-builder? Engaging with the photographic record of Congolese house construction in 1950s Lubumbashi

In 1951, Deputy District Commissioner Ferdinand Grévisse developed an aided self-help housing programme in Lubumbashi that preceded the *Office des Cités Africaines* in solving the Belgian Congo's housing crisis. Through a construction loan from the *Fonds d'Avance*, Congolese citizens could obtain a parcel and building materials to build their own houses. Applied in the Kenya and Katuba neighbourhoods, the *Système Grévisse* targeted the emerging class of *Évolués*.

Photographs by Carlo Lamote of Inforcongo provide a particular perspective on this housing scheme depicting the case of one of the benefactors, Mr Marcel Ilunga: they document the consecutive steps of application, building and inhabitation. They portray the transformation of Marcel Ilunga from the constructeur, who had built the house with his own hands, into a "petit bourgeois" homeowner who played vinyl records for his spouse seated in the upholstered armchair.

In this paper, I will investigate the protagonist's ambiguous duality in what can be described as social engineering, economic and construction project. I will ask what is to be seen in the photographs - staging, performance, or an actual act of building. Drawing on the scholarship of Daniel Tödt, I will argue that "the disciplining of the *évolué* family did not stop at the front door"¹ but started before the erection of the house. By reading photographs against the grain and confronting them with archival material on house construction in Belgian Congo, I will seek to open new questions of who made and shaped the living environment in the post-war colony.

¹ Tödt, D. (2021). *The Lumumba Generation: African Bourgeoisie and Colonial Distinction in the Belgian Congo*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Carlier, Célia (Université de Mons)

Repenser l'anthropocène depuis les pratiques alternatives de conservation et de soin socio-écologiques dans le secteur minier en République démocratique du Congo

Ces dernières années, le concept d'anthropocène a été au cœur de nombreuses recherches. Il désigne l'ère au cours de laquelle les humains constituent la principale source de perturbation et de transformation planétaire. Toutefois, à plusieurs égards, cette notion généralise indûment les conceptions, expériences et pratiques occidentales modernes à l'ensemble du monde. Ainsi, les manières de penser les transitions écologiques demeurent très localisées. L'objectif de cette recherche sera donc de sortir de cette perspective occidentalocentrée et de complexifier les réflexions sur le concept d'anthropocène en le mettant en tension avec les expériences et pratiques spécifiques de collectifs et de systèmes socio-écologiques (SSE) subissant les effets néfastes de l'exploitation minière en RDC. Plus particulièrement, une étude de cas au sein de coopératives et de groupements locaux mettant en place des modes particuliers de protection des SSE et des personnes face à l'anthropocène, sera réalisée. Il sera aussi question de s'intéresser à la manière dont la résilience peut être pensée dans ce contexte précis, à la manière dont elle est construite par les dynamiques socio-écologiques et l'agencité des acteur·rice·s. Dans ce cadre, l'approche de la *critical political ecology* sera mobilisée afin de mettre en évidence la manière dont les rapports de pouvoir (entre humains ainsi qu'entre humains et environnement) façonnent le processus de résilience qui peut se donner à voir et, plus globalement, le concept d'anthropocène. Il sera alors intéressant d'analyser ce que cela peut nous dire des politiques environnementales dans les 'Suds Globaux' et ses implications sur les politiques environnementales en RDC.

Chen, Cai (Université libre de Bruxelles)

China-Africa intimate encounters: Unpacking how Chinese-Congolese couples navigate ethnoracial boundaries in the postcolonial DR Congo

China's growing economic and geopolitical influence in Africa has led to a significant influx of Chinese individuals into the continent, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter 'Congo') since 2007. These individuals, employed by state-owned or affiliated enterprises or as self-driven entrepreneurs, have contributed to China's expanding presence in Congo. While previous research on China's engagement in Africa has focused on international relations, state capitalism, and development, there has been a recent increase in scholarly interest in exploring the micro-level dynamics of people-to-people interactions within China-Africa social spaces. Much of the existing research on Chinese-African interactions in Africa has primarily concentrated on labour relations or maintained a distanced perspective. Drawing on a multi-sited ethnography following a number of Chinese-Congolese couples¹ in Kinshasa, Haut Katanga, and Lualaba, this paper aims to provide fresh insights into the dynamic ethnoracial relations between Chinese and Congolese, specifically through the lens of intimate relationships between individuals from different ethnic and racialized groups in Congo. The paper has two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to explore how "race" and ethnicity contribute to the social organization of differences between "us" and "them" in postcolonial Congolese society. Secondly, it seeks to demonstrate how Chinese-Congolese couples navigate, negotiate, and ultimately transcend ethnoracial boundaries during the formation of their intimate relationships. This paper makes a valuable contribution to the expanding scholarship on Chinese presence in Africa and offers an empirical case study that enriches the field of ethnic and racial studies, particularly in non-Western settings.

¹The present paper proposal is based on preliminary data collected during the author's first fieldwork trip in Congo between December 2022 and January 2023, including four interviews and fieldnotes during participant observations. A second fieldwork trip is planned between July and October 2023 to gather additional data. As such, the final paper will benefit from a richer dataset, incorporating stories from a greater number of Chinese-Congolese couples.

Collart, Lara (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

Electric cooking and sustainable development: experimental evidence from eastern D.R. Congo

In this experiment (targeted sample size = 1500 households), we ask whether electric cooking can be a credible alternative to charcoal cooking in the context of a low-income country, study the impact on charcoal demand, consumption patterns and the formation of pro-social motivations. Specifically, we randomly distribute electric pressure cookers to households connected to a reliable and green electricity grid in Goma in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo where over 90% of the population relies on charcoal as their primary energy fuel. The majority of this charcoal is illegally produced in protected forests and is a key income source for several armed groups . We design different treatment arms to improve adoption of cookers, leveraging both selfish and pro-social preferences of households.

Dainese, Deborah (Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas. University of East Anglia)

**Between Catholic Commissions and Colonial Craft Competitions:
Rethinking Mashitolo Mwata Zola's Sculptural Production**

This paper investigates how the shifting approaches towards patronage developed during the mid-20th century impacted on the Belgian colonial policies as well as on the Congolese artist Zola's sculptural production in the Kwango region (DRC). The paper first contextualises the creation of a framework for cultural politics relating to art and crafts produced in the colony and in Belgium promoted by Congo-based Belgian organisations (COPAMI and AAI) between the end of the 1930s and the 1940s. Over the timeframe mentioned, colonial representatives were particularly concerned with the production and preservation of artistic and artisanal objects, perceived as two distinct categories. The growing anxiety aimed at determining the value of local material culture was associated with a "broader concern over the conservation of traditional cultures" (Van Beurden, 2015:62). On the other hand, also clergymen were operating in the Kwango region. The Belgian Jesuit Father Gustave Le Paige, for example, commissioned from Zola what became known as "The Wise Man", to be sent to the Vatican on the occasion of the 1950 World Exhibition of Sacred Art. By combining textual and visual documentations on Zola with the artist's production displayed by the Friends of Indigenous Arts in Kinshasa, and the sculptures commissioned by Father Le Paige for the Vatican, the paper aims to address the instability of meanings that have been attached to Zola's objects, in order to retrieve Zola's biography and agency, and to disentangle his sculptural production from Eurocentric narratives in which it was framed.

de Korte, Hannah (KU Leuven & Maastricht University)

An Environmental History of Colonial Healthscapes: the Belgian Congo (1908-1960)

In the past decades, the global health regime has increasingly been based on the perceived connection between human health and the environment through the conceptual tool of 'One Health'. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the feeling of urgency to study the interrelatedness of human-, animal- and environmental health. I aim to contribute to 'One Health' history by historicizing the integration of human and nonhuman health in medical knowledge and practices. In the early twentieth century, colonial public health officials' and medical experts' encounters with tropical environments fueled a scientific paradigm shift in which human health was increasingly studied and understood in connection to ecological factors and conditions. Medical historians have paid little attention thus far to the history of this 'ecological turn' nor to its consequences for healthcare policies. I will study how this paradigm shift towards an eco-medical conceptualization of human health has influenced the ways in which the Belgian colonial government perceived and governed Congolese landscapes between 1920 and 1960. In this exploratory paper, I will discuss some methodological questions that arise when writing an environmental history of colonial 'healthscaping'; should one focus on individual diseases or vectors, certain localities and environmental conditions, or specific control strategies as a structuring principle of one's research? This paper will draw on publications of influential medical experts in the Belgian Congo and on archival sources from the Belgian Service de l'Hygiène to illustrate the opportunities and pitfalls of these methodological approaches.

Derrix, Roos (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

Counterbalancing asymmetric power relations in migration diplomacy? An African agency view on Uganda's refugee policies

Migration diplomacy is a promising concept to unpack immigration policies in countries of first asylum, often located in the 'Global South'.¹ Despite resource scarcity these countries generally face, they host the vast majority of refugees worldwide. As countries in the 'Global North' do not live up to 'burden and responsibility- sharing' of refugees, these countries are put in a rather awkward position, creating an incentive for refugee rent-seeking.² In other words, seeking additional benefits for refugee hosting. Consequently, this literature draws heavily upon an understanding of asymmetric power relations between countries. However, given migration diplomacy's instrumentalist view on policies, these remain a black box. Rather, it is argued here that applying the literature on the agency of African states and elites, nuances this narrative of asymmetric power relations. To demonstrate this, a qualitative document analysis of refugee policy in Uganda is made by reviewing journal articles, reports, speeches, press releases, and news reports. This paper initiates the first application of the migration diplomacy concept to the country. It is argued that the concept has explanatory value in understanding how Uganda engages with actors in the global refugee regime. Research on African agency has found that Uganda instrumentalised its positive image to evade accountability of large-scale fraud in its refugee policy.³ Concretely, this study contributes to the migration diplomacy literature because of a focus on 1) non-tangible rents, such as agency and country reputation, and 2) dynamics of cooperative – rather than coercive – migration diplomacy.

¹Adamson, F. B., & Tsourapas, G. (2019). Migration Diplomacy in World Politics. *International Studies Perspectives*, 20(2), 113-128.

²Tsourapas, G. (2019). The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Foreign Policy Decision-Making in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 4(4), 464-481.

³Titeca, K. (2021). Who depends on whom? Uganda's refugee 'success story', corruption and the international community. *Third World Quarterly*, 43(1), 55-73.

Feyaerts, Mick (KU Leuven)

Ebola, memory, culture. A reflection on the method of oral history in Congo-research.

Oral history is widely accepted as a historical research method. Its reliance on memory is no longer conceived as problematic as long as historians accept that it cannot be used to reconstruct historical facts. Rather, they should redirect themselves to explore the subjectivity that narrators generate for themselves¹. What is often overlooked by historians, however, is that the operation of memory is culturally specific.

Anthropological studies have shown that understanding memory as the discursive recalling of a past is Eurocentric: in (parts of) Africa, discourse is not necessarily essential to remembering². De Boeck for example has argued that in Zaïre, history had become “plural”, and that processes of memory and forgetting were much more embodied than discursive³. This begs the question: how can oral history be used as a method in research on Congolese history?

Such a methodological reflection is crucial to my own Ph.D. project, which aims to explore the postcolonial evolutions of the female Catholic landscape in the Congolese city of Kikwit. Since my research is partly built on oral history, it is crucial to develop awareness of the possible differences in how memory works among European and Congolese sisters, and its implications on the construction of narratives about the past. The interdisciplinary setting of the AfricaMuseum seems the ultimate occasion to do so. To guide my reflection, I will compare the narratives of both Belgian and Congolese sisters, generated during interviews, on the 1995 ebola outbreak in Kikwit, which is one of my case studies.

¹ Summerfield, P. (2016). Oral History as an Autobiographical Practice. *Miranda*, 12.

² Such as Cole, J. (2001). *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar*. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press and Shaw, R. (2002). *Memories of the Slave Trade. Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³ De Boeck, F. (1998). Beyond the Grave: History, Memory and Death in Postcolonial Congo/Zaïre in: Richard Werbner ed., *Memory and the Postcolony. African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*. London & New York: Zed Books, p. 32-45.

Fourchault, Léa (Universiteit Antwerpen & Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine)

Therapeutic uses and zoonotic risks of animal products in central Africa

The WHO estimates that close to five billion people rely on a natural pharmacopeia, consisting of both plant and animal products, for their healthcare needs. At the junction of tradition, wellbeing, zoonotic risks and biodiversity conservation, the use of animals and animal products for healthcare is being increasingly studied. The inhalation, topical application, subcutaneous injection, or ingestion of animal products – such as fur, faeces, brain tissue, or blood – by vulnerable individuals – such as infants, ill or elderly people – is a likely transmission pathway for zoonotic pathogens. While numerous practices could benefit their recipients, certain species are known to host and transmit viruses of public health relevance, causing diseases such as Ebola, Mpox, HIV-AIDS or Marburg haemorrhagic fever. Consequently, identifying zootherapeutic practices of higher epidemiological risk is crucial in developing sustainable alternatives that balance cultural significance and public health.

Studies pertaining to zotherapy in the African continent, and especially central Africa, have not been recently reviewed. This article aims to fill this gap, by focussing specifically on (i) species and tissue types, (ii) modes of administration, (iii) expected benefits and cultural significance, and (iv) zoonotic spillover risks.

Goergen, Kevin (University of Luxembourg)

La communauté luxembourgeoise au Congo belge : La négociation de l'eupéanité et de la blanchité dans le contexte colonial

Dans le cadre de ma thèse de doctorat, je travaille sur l'histoire coloniale du Luxembourg. Bien que le pays n'ait pas possédé de colonies proprement dites, de nombreux Luxembourgeois.es sont partis outre-mer, principalement vers le Congo belge. Sur le plan méthodologique, je m'appuie sur le concept du « colonialisme sans colonies », tel qu'il a été développé dans des travaux de recherche sur le passé colonial de la Suisse ou des pays scandinaves.

Ma contribution pour les Journées des doctorant.e.x.s du Congo Research Network porte sur la communauté luxembourgeoise au Congo belge, qui faisait partie de la population blanche et, plus précisément, des « Assimilés » – des non-Belges blancs. Je propose une analyse de la « marginal Whiteness » et l'« Europeaness » dans le contexte colonial. Cette recherche examine le pouvoir au sein des communautés blanches et assimilées, en étudiant le rôle de la classe sociale et de la religion. Elle pose la question des limites de la blanchité et de l'interdépendance par rapport aux relations de pouvoir. L'objectif est d'explorer le rôle des Luxembourgeois dans le contexte colonial, en étudiant la négociabilité de leur position et les distinctions par rapport aux populations non-blanches et africaines. La question se pose quant à l'importance d'une distinction raciale dans la construction d'une identité européenne et blanche ainsi que dans le rôle significatif de la classe sociale.

Ma proposition consiste à présenter un travail de recherche en cours qui vise à contribuer à une meilleure compréhension des processus de négociation de la blancheur et de la marginalité blanche dans l'empire belge.

Guerreiro Bernardino, Marta (UCLouvain)

Quand les (grands)parents racontent, les (petits)enfants absorbent leurs histoires. Une étude des mémoires (post)coloniales au sein des familles Congolaises en Belgique (1950-2023).

Je souhaiterais partager mes premières recherches sur les mémoires congolaises et belgo- congolaises¹ de la période (post)coloniale. Elles s'inscrivent dans un projet doctoral centré sur les mémoires des aînés Congolais et Belgo-Congolais relatives à la période 1950-1973 et observant l'évolution de leur transmission et leurs résonances sur la construction identitaire de leurs descendants au Congo et en Belgique aujourd'hui.

Pour réussir à capter ces (post)mémoires², je compte élaborer des questionnaires destinés d'une part, aux aînés Belgo-Congolais ayant des souvenirs de cette période, et d'autre part à leurs descendants vivant en Belgique. Ces questionnaires porteront à la fois sur des données quantitatives et qualitatives (données socio-biographiques, contenu des mémoires, fréquence des discussions sur le passé (post)colonial). Ceux-ci s'appuieront à la fois sur des méthodes d'enquête empruntées à d'autres disciplines des sciences humaines et sociales comme la psychologie cognitive³, et seront élaborés en partenariat avec deux ou trois familles belgo- congolaises qui les compléteront et les commenteront.

L'objectif majeur de cette collaboration sera donc de présenter l'ébauche méthodologique, scientifique et citoyenne des questionnaires d'enquête qui seront la colonne vertébrale de cette recherche doctorale.

¹ La terminologie « belgo-congolais » reprend à la fois les personnes qui ont gardé leur nationalité congolaise résidant en Belgique et les citoyens congolais naturalisés belges. Nous incluons aussi les descendants aux racines congolaises nés en Belgique.

² Hirsch M. (2008) The Generation of Postmemory. *Poetics Today*, 29(1), 103-128

³ Heux, L. et al. (2023). Collective memory and autobiographical memory: Perspectives from the humanities and cognitive sciences. *WIREs Cognitive Science*, e1635

Hardick, Emily (Ohio State University)

Global, African, Congolese: Cultural Diplomacy and Neocolonial Collaboration in the Making of a Congolese National Ballet, 1964-1967

Nine years before the establishment of the National Ballet, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo began preparations to send a “traditional” dance troupe to the 1966 First World Festival of Black Arts in Dakar, Senegal in the hopes of demonstrating the new nation’s valor to, as one planning document put it, “global... African... [and] Congolese” audiences. To do so, Mobutu’s new government called upon Belgian theater producers who had served as arms of Belgian “soft power” during both the colonial period and throughout post- independence political upheaval by touring their own performances in Congo. Using archival material, published interviews, and press clippings from these Belgian tours and the 1966 Dakar trip of the short-lived National Congolese Folkloric Ballet, this paper asks how the terms of artistic collaboration between Belgium and Congo changed in the transitory moment of the mid- 1960s. Staged performance during this period served as an important arena of postcolonial diplomatic negotiation, leading the Congolese contingent, as this paper argues, to rework Belgian focus on retaining cultural ties with their former colony into creative and financial support for Congo’s global, African, and national goals at the Festival. While histories of African postcolonial performance largely focus on the establishment of national ballets by the state, Congo’s Dakar troupe prefigured both Congo/Zaire’s National Ballet and Mobutu’s politics of *authenticité*, a fact that highlights the processual nature of national performance and the role of colonial relationships and international agendas in the making of national culture.

Honorato, Felipe Antonio (University of São Paulo & KU Leuven)

Folha de São Paulo 's narrative on Congolese immigrants in the city of Rio de Janeiro: analyzing the period between 2005 and 2010

The aim of this paper is to analyze the approach of Folha de São Paulo, one of the main Brazilian newspapers, to the Congolese community in the city of Rio de Janeiro between the years of 2005 and 2010, using the valence analysis methodology (MAV). The results indicate that there are few articles regarding the daily life of the Congolese community in the capital of Rio de Janeiro state within the determined time frame, and that, when they exist, they tend to be negative in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but with a bias predominantly towards human interest stories. Can also be concluded that, at that time, Favela Cinco Bocas, in Brás de Pina neighborhood, was the main stronghold of Congolese refugees in Brazil's second biggest metropolis.

Lambert, Alicia (UCLouvain)

Mémoires a(nta)gonistiques : revisiter les mythes coloniaux dans la bande dessinée ultracontemporaine

Ces vingt dernières années, le débat décolonial autour du passé colonial belge a gagné en intensité et en visibilité. L'affirmation d'une diversité de voix et de perspectives alternatives continuent de défier un imaginaire toujours fortement centré autour de représentations coloniales. Le médium de la bande dessinée offre des exemples de cette polarisation mémorielle qui traduit des perspectives particulièrement conflictuelles. Cette contribution propose une approche comparée de la série Katanga (2017-2019), de Sylvain Vallée et Fabien Nury, avec Madame Livingstone (2014) et Le Singe jaune (2018), de Barly Baruti et Christophe Cassiau- Haurie. En se focalisant sur la mise en récit graphique de deux événements précis, à savoir le meurtre du roi M'Siri et les troubles de l'indépendance, l'analyse mettra en exergue les potentialités mais aussi les limites du médium à s'emparer de moments de l'histoire. Sur base du concept de mémoire agonistique (Bull et Hansen) et de la théorie des stéréotypes de Dufays (2010), j'examinerai les processus narratifs (agentivisation ou déshumanisation), visuels (réécritures graphiques d'archives) et discursifs (tensions textes-images) qui véhiculent ou défient des représentations antagonistiques et stéréotypées, tant au niveau esthétique/elocutio, que thématique/dispositio et qu'idéal/inventio. En affirmant que Madame Livingstone et Le Singe jaune invitent à déconstruire les mêmes mythes coloniaux que Katanga renforce, l'étude tentera de démontrer les potentialités du médium à complexifier et faire dialoguer les mémoires, tout en mettant en garde face aux dangers de représentations décontextualisées.

Lieber, Talia (University of California, Los Angeles).

A Study of Royal Treasury Objects in the Kingdom of Rwanda

This paper examines objects formerly stored within the collection of the royal treasury in Rwanda until the mid-20th century. Members of the *abiru* who served as official guardians of Rwanda's ritual codes and oral traditions preserved these objects at the court of the *Mwami*, or king. In addition to the kingdom's sacred drums, the collection included ritual objects such as iron hammer-anvils called *nyarushara* that were forged in the shape of the horns of Rwanda's long-horned cattle and promised the *Mwami*'s fertility. On occasion during the early to mid-20th century, the *Mwami* arranged for the *abiru* to display a selection of these royal objects to visitors at court who then documented the objects' forms and meanings in texts, illustrations, and photographs. After the death of *Mwami* Mutara III Rudahigwa in 1959, a period of ethnic violence began and the objects were destroyed, hidden, or taken out of Rwanda. In this paper, I present a case study of one of the treasury objects—a large, wooden quiver incised with triangular patterns—that I located in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

This paper builds on art historian Mary Nooter Roberts's understanding of secrecy in African art to suggest how these objects and the esoteric knowledge of their keepers played a key role in ritual experiences of Rwanda. In addition, I aim to understand how this royal treasury functioned as a means to reinforce the king's divine power in comparison to other royal collections from across the African continent.

Matungulu Tabu, Bienvenu (*IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen & Université Catholique de Bukavu*)

Taxation, Hybridity and Inequality in DR Congo

Proponents of the hybrid statehood such as Khan (2012) and De Herdt and Titeca (2022) argue that, in developing countries, it is difficult to analyze state formation based on the social contract hypothesis alone because of the existence of a situation of continuous twinning of formal and informal institutions within these countries. According to them, it can often be difficult to disentangle the limits of formal and informal actors. The Congolese state negotiates and cooperates with private actors in the provision of education (De Herdt & Titeca, 2011); security (Atanasijevic, 2016; Scoutten, 2022) and other sectors such as road and bridge maintenance (Prud'homme, 1992).

This co-production of public goods and services by the Congolese state and private actors gives rise to co-financing of provision of public goods and services. Part of the costs of financing the production and provision of public goods and services are taken care of by the state and another part is financed by non-state actors (De Herdt & Titeca, 2011; Prud'homme, 1992; Atanasijevic, 2016). Some of these taxes are recorded in the nomenclatures and are intended to be collected by state officials to feed the state treasuries. Others are intended to be collected by public services in direct exchange for the services that these public services provide. The central objective of my study is then to assess the effects of both formal and informal taxes on inequality in DRC?

Mbima Kutwela, Rigobert (Université de Kinshasa)

Perception et acceptabilité de la vaccination anti-COVID-19 par la population dans la ville de Kinshasa, République Démocratique du Congo.

D'une ampleur gravissime, la pandémie de COVID-19 a suscité auprès des populations congolaises dans les quartiers périphériques et urbaines de la ville de Kinshasa, de très vifs émois et l'émergence de nombreuses rumeurs et résistances, voire une certaine méfiance à l'égard de la vaccination anti- Covid 19 à l'échelle des différentes provinces de la RDC.

La présente étude cherche à comprendre les facteurs de la non adhésion et de la non acceptation de la vaccination par la population dans la ville de Kinshasa en dépit de son importance en termes de prévention.

L'étude révèle également que la résistance à la reconnaissance de la pandémie et l'acceptabilité de la vaccination anti-Covid par la majorité de la population de la ville de Kinshasa sont dus à l'inadaptation des mécanismes de gestion de la communication de crise.

Mena Sebu, Baudouin (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

Customary Authorities and Gold Access in Northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Exploring Power Dynamics and Local Disputes

This paper seeks to enhance our understanding of the role played by customary authorities in controlling access to gold in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Previous research has demonstrated the Congolese government's attempt to monopolize this access through the implementation of various decrees and mining regulations. However, in practice, the Congolese government has to negotiate this access with local actors such as customary authorities.¹ This study continues to build on this literature, but provides a more nuanced understanding of the chiefs' contributions to facilitating gold access. It investigates how chiefs consolidate their power in rural areas, by exerting control over gold access, while also considering the limitations of their authority at the local level. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews conducted between 2022 and 2023 in the territory of Faradje, Haut-Uélé province, this research focuses on a case study in the Logo-Doka chieftaincy. Moreover, it unpacks a customary dispute over gold access in this chiefdom, shedding light on the intricate dynamics at the local level. By examining these dynamics, this study enriches our understanding of gold access in Congolese rural areas and offers insights into the underlying mechanisms that shape such dynamics.

¹ De Haan, J., & Geenen, S. (2016). Mining cooperatives in Eastern DRC The interplay between historical power relations and formal institutions. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 3(3), 823- 831.
Smith, J. (2018). Colonizing Banro. *The Politics of Custom: Chiefship, Capital, and the State in Contemporary Africa*, 279.

Mesa, Héritier (Université libre de Bruxelles)

Regulating access to the economic space: Structures and mechanisms of access to Kinshasa's central market

This paper explores the regulation of economic activities beyond the informal/formal binary, by examining the materiality of regulation in the context of the popular economy of Kinshasa. Before or after the destruction of Kinshasa's central market, access to its economic space has always been highly regulated. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Kinshasa between 2019 and 2023, this paper argues that the regulation of the economic space involves a multitude of actors and relies on a variety of regimes and processes that cannot be understood within a binary logic. The text expands on the literature on property and access. Here, access is understood as the ability to derive certain benefits from certain things and is more closely related to power and provides a broader analytical grid than the concept of property alone. Different actors and institutions hold and use different types of power to access or control access to the economic space. This power positions them differently in relation to resources. Access to the market—which is to be seen as a form of capital—can thus be converted to other forms of capital. In this sense, access becomes structuring, because it leads to an accentuation of differentiations. While the argument that control and maintenance of access to resources need not be assumed in terms of social class because an individual can perform both functions at the same time has its merits, the asymmetry of positions in access underlines the various forms of inequality that actors face. And this can and should be understood in class terms.

Mpongo Nziazi, Christel (Université de Kinshasa)

Etude de la perception par le bas de la frontière par le bas. Comprendre la barriérification à Goma.

Certains événements majeurs marquent la quotidienneté des frontières internationales de la République démocratique du Congo au Nord-Kivu. Le premier est, en rapport avec la reprise des combats entre les rebelles du M23 et l'armée régulière congolaise les FARDC en juin 2022. Le deuxième est en relation avec la manifestation populaire en soutien aux militaires des FARDC qui s'était tenue le 15 juin 2022, les manifestants exigeaient du gouvernement, la fermeture des frontières avec le Rwanda accusé de soutenir les rebelles. Au cours de cette revendication, les manifestants menacent de traverser la frontière congolaise.

Bien avant cet épisode, on se souvient de la chute de Goma, capitale de la province du Nord-Kivu en 2009 par le CNDP et en 2012 par le M23, tous soutenus par le Rwanda. Ces événements avaient suscité la colère de la population au Nord-Kivu et dans tout le pays face au voisin rwandais.

Tous ces événements exposent le caractère problématique des frontières et dévoilent la dynamique populaire qui sous-tendent les perceptions populaires. Dans cette étude, nous voulons nous pencher sur les perceptions populaires de cette frontière internationale entre la RDC et le Rwanda telles que vues et vécues dans le quotidien des Nord Kivusiens particulièrement à Goma. Afin de mieux expliciter la frontière lieu d'expression de colère, lieu d'échange, lieu d'instabilité, lieu de construction des opinions publiques, etc.

Muhoza Kanze, Benjamin (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

The dynamics of state land privatization and Commodification in urban DRC: Case study of Bukavu

With recent land scarcity and tremendous increase in land prices in Bukavu coupled with anarchic urbanization, the remaining state land is viewed as the sole viable land in the city. This state land is occupied by state buildings that were mostly built in colonial times and have become old thus precluding the need for their privatization and commodification. Based on in- depth interviews conducted in Bukavu and several cases of privatization undertaken under the Mobutu regime, RCD rebellion to the current decentralization system, this paper investigates the dynamics of access to and use of state power over time and in a context of multiple political and institutional settings in relation to capital, land, and rent.

Existing evidence indicates that the privatization and commodification of state land tend to benefit the ruling elites who manipulate it for personal gains. However, the system of governance is often complex, involving different state and non-state actors who are involved in land management. The study shows that acts of privatization and commodification of state land constitute a major source of wealth accumulation by ruling elites through rent relations. They have become a space for power struggles through negotiation, imposition, and contestation between fragmented branches of public administration and political leaders. Moreover, they have also become instruments of governance and rent extraction in contexts of patronage relationships and a factor driving capital accumulation beyond the scope of ruling elites.

Nieblas Ramirez, Laurent (Université libre de Bruxelles, Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique, Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale)

Archéozoologie et étude des objets et photographies historiques liés à la pêche dans le bassin du Congo

Reconstituer les modes de vie et de consommation des habitants du bassin du Congo au cours du dernier millénaire passe par l'étude des restes fauniques trouvés en contexte archéologique. Depuis mai 2022, des campagnes de prospections et de fouilles archéologiques effectuées dans le cadre du projet BANTURIVERS ERC dans la Tshopo (RDC) ont permis de mettre au jour un grand nombre de restes de faune jusqu'à présent quasiment absents des recherches archéologiques réalisées dans le bassin du Congo. Afin d'interpréter les données issues de l'analyse archéozoologique, d'autres sources peuvent être mobilisées. En effet, l'étude des objets et photographies historiques présents dans les collections muséales telles que celles du MRAC peut nous donner des indices sur les méthodes de pêche et d'approvisionnement en faune aquatique utilisées avant l'introduction dans la région d'objets industriels étrangers omniprésents aujourd'hui, ainsi que sur leur répartition spatiale. Dans cet article, nous aborderons à la fois les bases méthodologiques de telles recherches et la manière dont les données qui en sont issues peuvent être articulées entre elles.

Nsielanga, Simon (KU Leuven)

Rethinking the Decolonization Trope in Religion: A Study of the Jesuit Congolese Members in Congo, 1960–2000

The decolonization of the Society of Jesus in the post-independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1960 has not yet been examined. Most studies on its history have been carried out by Jesuit or lay scholars and are characterized by the apologetic and critical narratives of missionary history. Whether authors such as the Martinican thinker Frantz Fanon and the Cameroonian scholar Achille Mbembe, respectively, understood decolonization as "the complete calling in question of the colonial situation" or "a praxis of self-defense and an experience of emergence and uprising," the Nigerian scholar Olúfémi Táíwò balanced these views by understanding decolonization as a wider complex of a non-ending process, in which one can trace the persistent evidence of colonial and indigenous patterns even after independence has ended.

Building on Táíwò's understanding, this paper analyzes the decolonization in the religion trope within the case of the Congolese Jesuit members by showing the persistent evidence of colonial and indigenous patterns in the lives of the known Congolese Jesuits, such as Octave Kapita, Martin Ekwa, Henri Matota, Simon Pierre Boka, Charles Ngenzhi, Daniel Pasupasu, and Christophe Muzihirwa, to take only these examples. By combining the analysis of archival texts, oral narratives, and unpublished and published written texts with reflection on the theoretical concepts of colonization, decolonization, Africanization, indigenization, and inculturation, this paper significantly innovates on the way decolonization has been studied so far by nuancing the views of Franz Fanon and Achille Mbembe.

Salakheddin, Diana (AfricaMuseum & Universiteit Gent)

(Re)creating histories: retracing biographies of Congolese artists in the colonial context. Methodological inquiry.

Congolese watercolor painters Albert Lubaki, Antoinette Lubaki (Mfumbi), and Tshyela Ntendu, active in the 1920s and 1930s, were widely exhibited in European salons, galleries, and museums. Their personal stories, unlike the exoticism of their artworks, did not, however, interest audiences and the patrons of creators. Consequently, the information about their lives is scarce, and their biographies are incomplete, mainly consisting of place names and ethnicities they belonged to.

This paper is going to explore different ways of approaching the collection of biographical information about people who lived in a not-too-distant past. Firstly, it will comment on the specificity of archival research and the lack of documents relating to Congolese individuals. Then, it will touch upon fieldwork as a means of attempting to fill the archival gaps, by the virtue of collecting oral histories and trying to find descendants of the artists. Lastly, it will examine how “researching around” can help us gain an understanding of what people in a similar position as those artists might have been doing, thereby constructing a sort of speculative social biography.

As a result, it is hoped to open a discussion into methods of historical anthropology and how a combination of archival research, fieldwork, and literature study could help us look through a new lens on a story that has remained largely unquestioned and unexplored. With the understanding that it might be difficult to find precise information, it is nevertheless deemed important to engage in this inquiry to have a grasp of the diverse ways of inhabiting the world that artists could have practiced in the contact zone.

Samnick, Denis Augustin (IOB, Universiteit Antwerpen)

Everynight Governance of Makala Central Prison in Kinshasa-DRC

Socio-anthropological research on everyday Governance in Africa in general (Le Meur and Lund, 2001; Blundo and Le Meur 2009), and in African prisons in particular (Jefferson and Martin, 2014; Le Marcis, 2014), has not sufficiently integrated the distinction between the diurnal and nocturnal temporality of this governance. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the punitivist humanism (Super, 2011), the porosity between inside and outside the walls (Martin and Jefferson, 2019), the combination of the formal and informal organisation (Ayimpam and Bisa, 2020), which characterise the diurnal governance of the prison, are nuanced, contradicted, extended and modified by the carceral night. In contrast to the heteronomous governance that any observer of the daily life of Makala Central Prison can perceive, there is also autonomous governance, which is not always a prolongation of the daytime prison organisation. What grammars of governance are made possible by the nocturnal interactions of the inmates of the Makala central prison in Kinshasa? What methodological, epistemological and penological implications can be derived from this grammar of nocturnal governance? Based on more than 86 interviews conducted at the Makala central prison between January 2022 and February 2023, with administrators and inmates, this paper will answer this double question in two parts. First, it will put into dialogue the empirical data relating to the nocturnal interactions of prisoners and the literature on everyday governance, in order to highlight their epistemic similarities and contradictions. Secondly, the proposal will deepen the debate on prison nightlife, highlighting its methodological requirements and ambiguities.

Scheibinger, Lena (University of Mainz)

Between University, Museum and Lifeworld. Reconnecting an Ethnographic Collection from the Congolese Rainforest

When the German anthropologists Erika Sulzmann (1911-1989) and Ernst Wilhelm Müller (1925-2013) came back from their study trip to the Congolese rainforest – the so-called “Mainzer Kongo-Expedition” (1951-1954) – they had purchased more than 500 everyday objects particularly from Ekonda in the northeast of Lac Mai-Ndombe. As ethnographic objects they formed the basis of the recently found ethnographic collection of today’s Department of Anthropology and African Studies in Mainz. Besides the acquisition for the German university, they handed over more than 200 objects to the Musée de la Vie Indigène in then Léopoldville. During subsequent trips, Erika Sulzmann also visited the Institut des Musées Nationaux de Zaïre and accompanied a staff member to a field trip to the Sankuru on the southern margins of the rainforest.

Ensuing from this cooperation and in preparation for planned fieldwork, I would like to address methodological questions on doing research in and with the Musée National de la République Démocratique du Congo that goes beyond archival studies and historical reconstructions. Following an ethnographic approach, I hope to gain insights into local perspectives on collaborations with European institutions and local dynamics between a national institution and peripheral regions. This perspective will allow me to put a spotlight on various actors, interests and claims when it comes to reconnecting an ethnographic collection and its supplementing documents with a diverse set of possible “communities of implication” (Lehrer 2020).

Via Balole, Christian (UCLouvain, Université Catholique de Bukavu & F.R.S.–FNRS)

Le travail forcé au Congo belge (1908-1945) : le discours de légitimation à l'épreuve du droit du travail colonial

Cette contribution propose d'analyser le droit applicable aux travailleurs « indigènes » à l'époque du Congo belge. Cet objet se justifie par le fait que, les études existantes des historiens, bien qu'ayant le grand mérite de reconstruire la réalité historique des conditions de travail prévalentes à l'époque, passent tout de même, pour la plupart, sous silence les questions juridiques liées à cette situation historique.

En effet, de solides travaux scientifiques sur le passé colonial belge ont été réalisés ces dernières années, notamment par des historiens ayant contesté la crédibilité du discours de légitimation du Congo belge à la suite des conditions de travail horribles auxquelles étaient soumis les populations congolaises, et du recours, par le pouvoir colonial belge ainsi que les sociétés privées (notamment les Huileries du Congo Belge), aux pratiques de travaux forcés.

Dans l'historiographie cependant, il n'en reste pas moins que les réalités juridiques liées à ces situations historiques demeurent le parent pauvre. Cette contribution cherchera ainsi à étudier ces réalités juridiques en vue, d'une part, d'examiner la part du droit ayant facilité et permis les formes de travail forcé et, d'autre part, tester la crédibilité du discours de légitimation du Congo belge à l'aune, non pas des conditions de travail sus évoquées, mais plutôt du droit applicable à l'époque.