Roadblocks 'at the rhythm of the country'

PREDATION AND BEYOND IN SOUTH KIVU, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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CRG — CONFLICT RESEARCH GROUP

GEC-SH — GROUPE D'ETUDES SUR LES CONFLITS ET LA SECURITE HUMAINE

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Executive Summary

This report analyses the phenomenon of roadblocks in South Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Departing from a socio-anthropological approach, the report argues that roadblocks are sites where a variety of state and non-state actors interact with each other and with the population. The report shows that roadblocks are more than just instruments of predation. Over time roadblocks have become part of the socio-economic landscape in eastern DRC and function as sites of social regulation in the context of state fragility. Finally, the report highlights the paradox that people both support the maintenance and removal of these roadblocks, thus opening up a debate on their future in South Kivu and DRC more broadly.

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Glossaire

ACCO	Association des chauffeurs du Congo
AFDL	Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre
ANR	Agence nationale des renseignements
ATTK	Association des transporteurs par tricycle au Kivu
AVD	Association des jeunes volontaires pour le développement
CNPR	Commission nationale de prévention routière
CPEA	Chef de poste d'encadrement administratif
DGDA	Direction générale des douanes et accises
DGI	Direction générale des impôts
DGM	Direction générale des migrations
DGRAD	Direction générale des recettes administratives, judiciaires, domaniales et de participations
DPMER	Direction provinciale de mobilisation et d'encadrement des recettes
EAD	Entité administrative décentralisée
ECO-GARDE	Garde des parcs nationaux
ETD	Entité territoriale décentralisée
FARDC	Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo
FC	Franc congolais
FDLR	Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda
FFN	Fond forestier National
FONER	Fonds d'entretien routier
GMI	Groupe mobile d'intervention
IPM	Impôt personnel minimum
OCC	Office congolais de contrôle
ONG	Organisation non-gouvernementale
OPG	Office de police Judiciaire
PCR	Police de circulation routière
PM	Police militaire
PNC	Police nationale congolaise
PNKB	Parc national de Kahuzi-Biéga
RCD	Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie
RDC	République Démocratique du Congo
SECAD	Secrétaire administratif
TRACTED	Tricycle en action pour l'entraide et le développement
TRANSCOM	Transport et voies de communication

1 |
Introduction

This report studies the phenomenon of roadblocks in South Kivu, a province situated in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (henceforth: DRC). Roadblocks have flourished in this province since the mid-1980s. They are erected and run by both state and non-state actors.[1] Roadblocks are very common phenomena in DRC, as anyone who visits and travels in the country can attest to. In 2017 there were over 300 roadblocks in South Kivu province alone and almost 500 in North Kivu (Schouten, Murairi, and Kubuya 2017). These roadblocks are put up in both rural and urban areas on the often bumpy roads and other transport routes.

Scholarly interest in roadblocks has recently increased. Focusing on the economic dimensions of roadblocks in eastern DRC, Schouten, Murairi, and Kubuya demonstrate that control over roads is a major issue in the DRC conflicts (Schouten, Kubuya, and Murairi 2016). In addition, the authors demonstrate that roads are one of the main sources of illicit funding for various state and non-state armed actors. This is the maan reason for the ubiquity of roadblocks on Congolese roads and other transport routes, including rivers (Schouten, Kubuya, and Murairi 2016; Eriksson Baaz, Olsson, and Verweijen 2018). This study seeks to understand and document the social relations that develop around roadblocks in both rural and urban areas. From this

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[1] This may be for economic reasons (roadblocks as places for taxation), security reasons (to control the circulation of weapons, to track down armed bandits or armed group members who try to infiltrate the city), practical reasons (to regulate road traffic), political and/or social reasons (to challenge an administrative provision or to make demands on behalf of citizens' movements or students).

standpoint, this report expands on the work of Schouten, Murairi, and Kubuya, which not only highlights the extractive nature of roadblocks, but also discusses the social aspects relevant to this study.

The core argument of the report is that roadblocks are important sites of social and economic exchange in eastern DRC, rather than simply sites of traffic regulation, harassment, or tax collection. Roadblocks are made up of physical objects, symbols and human beings. The physical objects, for example, may be a swinging bar (made of metal or wood) or even a simple rope stretched across the road. When a physical barrier is erected on the road, this structure symbolizes the roadblock. Frequently, these physical barriers are accompanied by a structure that houses the people who operate the roadblock. It can take the form of a small bench or a straw hut, a building, or something else.

State roadblocks are erected for various official and unofficial purposes. The former includes, for example, anti-poaching, countering fraud in the mining sector, control of illegal logging, and migration control, and security. However, in general, their primary function is to serve as sites of resource extraction for the authority that erected them. Only a very small proportion of the resources extracted at roadblocks are returned to the state treasury. This is because, in the context of DRC's *self-service state*, the roadblocks are the source of livelihood of the agents operating them and their bosses (Englebert 2012; De Herdt and Titeca 2019; Trefon 2009; Eriksson Baaz and Olsson 2011). As a result, roadblock staff are perceived as triple agents, acting simultaneously on their own behalf, on behalf of their bosses, and to a small degree on behalf of the central state.

Agents operating at roadblocks are not autonomous. There are networks of dependents and patrons with direct interests in maintaining and controlling the roadblocks. Beyond the operators and their networks of dependents and patrons, there are a plethora of other actors whose daily lives are affected by roadblocks – including travelers, traders, transporters and residents. Hence, as this report demonstrates, roadblocks are not just instruments of domination and resource extraction through which the strong can prey on the weak. Indeed, despite the extractive nature of roadblocks, the surrounding

populations and road users sometimes find in them islands of negotiated security that are conducive to the rise of small commercial centers.

Over time several new functions have gradually been added to the official functions of roadblocks. These functions make roadblocks important inter-sections of socio-economic, political, military and security dynamics. As a result, roadblocks have become part of everyday life for people in spite of their extractive character. This is equally true for roadblocks operated by state actors as it is for those erected and managed by non-state actors, including armed actors. Hence, roadblocks are dynamic spaces of interaction where state and/or non-state authorities interact with road-users. All these actors are part of different social networks, which alternately compete and collab-orate over the resources extracted or generated at the roadblock. As such roadblocks are flashpoints of intense competition for resources and authority between different groups.

This report is organized as follows. After a brief introduction, it provides a brief review of the literature on roadblocks in the DRC. It then presents the meth-odology adopted for data collection and analysis. The next section provides a brief historical overview of the phenomenon of roadblocks in eastern DRC. Finally, the report analyses interactions between different actors. By way of conclusion we reflect on the social function of roadblocks in DRC.

2 |
Understanding roadblocks

Two key elements are highlighted in the existing literature on roadblocks. First, their inherently political nature. This implies that they are used to collect taxes, oppress and control, and to delimit or divide space by the state. Simultaneously they are used to disrupt and resist. Second, the function of roadblocks and checkpoints vary according to the context where they are located (Schouten 2019; Ndjio 2005; Hammami 2004; Olken and Barron 2009; Klaeger 2013; Scott 1985; Newbury 1984; McDonald 2009; Longo, Canetti and Hite-Rubin 2014).[2]

The Congolese central state authorities have neither the legitimacy nor the capacity to govern the country's entire territory. This is particularly the case in the eastern part of the country, which has been torn apart by war for three decades. The weakening of the central state in DRC has created opportunities for local state and non-state authorities to govern resources and populations. Roadblocks are among the sites where new forms of public authority develop around "fiscal contracts" between authorities and populations (Hoffmann, Vlassenroot, and Marchais 2016). State actors and non-state actors, including armed actors and self-help organization (civil society organizations, "volunteers," self-defense movements, and so on) put up and operate roadblocks. In spite of the resource extraction that goes at roadblocks, they seem to be taking hold in the landscape. While there is variation between roadblocks in eastern DRC, certain common types can

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[2] The authors would like to thank Michel Thill for preparing a literature review on roadblocks for this study.

be identified. Schouten, Kubuya, and Murairi (2016) broadly distinguish five types of roadblocks:

1 **Strategic roadblocks** (the forward positions, or outer limits of an armed actor's sphere of influence, placed in response to the nearby presence of an enemy)
2 **Roadblocks on administrative boundaries** (between two decentralized administrative entities)
3 **Roadblocks for road traffic** (especially along major roads)
4 **Roadblocks related to natural resource exploitation** (on mineral or other natural resource extraction chains)
5 **Market roadblocks** (erected at the entrance and/or exit of localities during markets).

This typology essentially concerns rural areas where roadblocks are put up where economic goods circulate. However, urban areas are as complex as rural areas. In cities, the *Police de circulation routière* (PCR, the Traffic Police) and other actors but up checkpoints and roadblocks. There are also circumstantial roadblocks. There are several different reasons why these are put up. They may be put up as a protest against an unpopular administrative decision, or they may be put up by students demonstrating, or they may be put up to put pressure on rival politicians, or they may be put up to combat road insecurity and so on. For example, the many traffic accidents in Bukavu on *Avenue Industrielle* have prompted youth in the Nyamugo neighborhood (Commune of Kadutu) to erect roadblocks on the stretch of road commonly known as *Sens-Unique* (one-way street).[3] Another example occurred when Bukavu was plagued by robberies and murders in January 2018 targeting money changers *(cambistes)* and retailers of prepaid telecommunication cards (Mudunga 2019). In response, the political-administrative authorities decided to involve the population in their own security. They launched an operation called *Tujikinge* (let's protect ourselves). This operation took the form of roadblocks and checkpoints at key access points in Bukavu for security reasons (Thill 2019b).

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3 Interview no. 36 with a volunteer from the *Sens-Unique* association, Bukavu, November 2020.

In the context of the militarization and insecurity that characterizes life in eastern Congo, the official functions of roadblocks and checkpoints have gradually been supplemented by several additional functions. These new functions have turned them into veritable intersections of socio-economic, political, professional, military and security dynamics. As a result, roadblocks have become dynamic spaces of interaction where state and/or non-state authorities interact with road-users and with each other. All these actors are part of extended social networks, which alternately compete and collaborate with each other over the resources extracted and generated at the roadblock.

As we will show, behind every state agent working at a roadblock in the field there is an administrative, military or political authority sitting somewhere in the city in a government office. This is why agents at roadblock are seen as triple agents acting on behalf of themselves, their bosses, and very rarely on behalf of the central state. In ths sense roadblocks are sites of competition for public authority over opportunities for predation. This is true both for roadblocks operated by state actors and those managed by non-state actors, including armed actors.

It should be noted that the fragile security context of eastern DRC implies that roadblocks and checkpoints also function to demarcate buffers zones between different actors in areas of mixed control. This can be exemplified by the momentary settlement of units of a Rwandan rebel group, the *Conseil National pour la Renaissance et la Démocratie* (CNRD, The national council for the rebirth of democracy) in Kalehe territory. Upon arrival CNRD units began to control an area around the market of *Shange* (Bunyakiri). However, the market was already a supply point for several rival groups, that is, the Nyatura, the Raia Mutomboki (Angry Citizens), and the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC, the Armed forces of the democratic republic of the congo), which controlled other areas around the market. In this context of military competition, *Shange* market evolved into place where these armed actors could supply themselves. They often met there without confronting each other. On market days it was a buffer zone separating different spaces of military control.[4]

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[4] The *Nyatura, Raïa Mutomboki*, and the CNRD are among armed groups that remain very active in South Kivu.

There is a specific category of roadblock, which we call the *parking space-roadblock*. *Parking space-roadblocks* exist in both urban and rural areas. These are sites where travelers embark and disembark and where trucks are loaded. In the rural areas they are situated at the junction between feeder roads and main roads. All government agencies involved in the management of roads are deployed at the *parking space-roadblock*. Transporters can only disembark or embark if they have paid all taxes. In addition, *parking space-roadblock*s involve a number of non-state actors in search for opportunities for making some money. These include, the so-called *parkingiés*,[5] the members of the *Association des transporteurs* and the "volunteers" involved in the management of traffic. They are very busy and constitute the end-points of several roads that connect rural areas to Bukavu, the provincial capital: Essence-Mwenga, Chai-Ngweshe, Essence-Kankinda-Shabunda and Essence-Uvira.

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[5] From the word *parking*, the neologism *parkingiés*, refers to uneducated youth young people which are recruited into public service. Parking spaces have become their professional environment. They can sell their physical labour to load and unload vehicles and secure luggage. At the same time, they ensure that the order of arrival and departure of vehicles is respected. All these services are paid for. And each parking space has its own staff. Gradually, the *parkingiés* have also extended their reach to some roadblocks that offer this possibility.

3 |
Methodology

The data collection for this report occurred in two phases and used a classic socio-anthropological perspective. Several teams of researchers spent time observing everyday interactions at numerous urban and rural roadblocks, and interacting with informants in their daily environment (Vlassenroot 2006).

3.1 Data collection

The first data collection phase took place from March to April 2019. Observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted by six research-ers deployed in pairs. The first two pairs worked in rural settings (Kalehe, Uvira-Fizi), while the third pair worked in urban settings (Bukavu). The latter collected additional data during the second phase of the research. In addition to informal observations and conversations, the research team conducted 85 interviews of which 53 of were individual and 32 were focus group interviews. Of these interviews, 42 involved road users, while 43 were conducted with the people who work at roadblocks (state or non-state), including their bosses and agents appointed to roadblocks. We conducted 66 interviews in rural areas and 19 in Bukavu. The second phase of data collection was primarily urban. It took place in November 2020. The team conducted 40 individual and group interviews. Informants included road users (transporters and travelers), service agents involved in road governance, and people staying close to the roadblocks. The dominant criteria for selecting informants was therefore the link to the road.

Particular attention has been paid by the researchers to what Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan describes as the gaps between professional norms and the actual behaviors of agents working at roadblocks (Olivier de Sardan 2008). Indeed, the regulation of road-users at roadblocks deviates noticeably from the legal framework. It involves a range of "informal norms" that shape social life at the roadblock and its immediate surroundings. These "informal norms" could be classified as a "fuzzy" category of so-called "practical norms." That is to say, a set of often illicit practices that agents resort to in order to cope with precariousness.

Moreover, in order to understand how practical norms participate in shaping the social spaces around roadblocks, we also borrowed some elements from the sociolinguistic approach (Boutet and Maingueneau 2005). The discourse and vocabulary related to corruption at roadblocks, and in Congolese work-places in general, provided interesting insights. They helped us to understand the trivialization of illicit practices (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2001) and their socialization. In addition the sociolinguistic approach pointed us in direction of Christian Lund's concept of "twilight institutions" (Lund 2006). By this we mean institutions that depend on the idea of the state to justify their exercise of public authority and access to resources, even if they are not officially recognized by the state. Non-state actors, that evoke the idea of the state, at and around the roadblocks neatly fit in this classification. Even state institutions can be considered "twilight institutions" insofar as they themselves operate outside of official state norms.

3.2. Case study selection

Given that the phenomenon of roadblocks in North Kivu has already been extensively documented by Schouten, Kubuya and Murairi (2019), the research team focused on roadblocks in South Kivu. The *Miti-Bunyakiri* road via Kalehe (in rural South Kivu) and the *Kamanyola-Fizi* road via Uvira (bordering Burundi) were chosen not only because of the fluidity of traffic in the area, but also because of the context of insecurity that prevails in the areas they pass, and the diversity of actors involved. These include both official state services and non-state actors, including armed actors. The *Miti-Bunyakiri* road axis has attracted the attention of researchers because of the

strong presence of armed actors in and around the Kahuzi-Biega National Park (PNKB). Despite the prevailing insecurity in the region, these roads are frequented by mineral traffickers and other traders who supply Bukavu with food provisions. This provides a favorable context for tax collectors of all kinds.

In the urban context, we focused on the following roads in Bukavu: i) *Place de l'Indépendance-Essence via Avenue Industrielle; ii) Maison Blanche-Panzi Hospital-Maria Kachelewa; iii) Major Vangu-Nyawera; iv) Place de l'Indépendance-Nguba and the v) Office National de Logement-Gendarmerie.* These roads link the city center to the overcrowded and poor neighborhoods where security services are mostly absent. From the standpoint of road governance, these roads have a special feature: civic management of road safety. We have also documented dynamics around *parking space-roadblocks*.

4 | Historical context of roadblocks in the DRC

The following chapter provides the historical context of roadblocks. It is divided into three sections: the colonial period, the independence and Mobutu era followed by the period since 1997. It provides a *long durée* overview of the phenomenon of roadblocks.

4.1 Roadblocks in the colonial context

While roadblocks have recently drawn the attention of some researchers (Schouten, Murairi, and Kubuya 2017; Schouten, Kubuya and Murairi 2016), they are a long-term phenomenon in the landscape in DRC. During the Belgian colonial era (1908-1960), state authorities already erected roadblocks to control the movement of indigenous people. In order to travel to certain areas indigenous people needed a special permit. For example, the decree of 9/12/1925 supplemented by that of 23/03/1928 stipulated that no person of color could go to indigenous areas for commercial purposes without being in possession of a trading permit. Beyond the racist dimension suggested by this kind of "roadblock legislation," it is clear that control of indigenous movements was central to colonial security policy.

4.2. Between independence and the fall of Mobutu in 1997

On 30 June 1960, DRC gained its independence. Six days later, it sank into politico-military chaos. Clashes broke out between 1960 and 1965 between four rival, more or less autonomous power blocs: in the south, secessionist Katanga came under Moïse Tshombe's control (Gérard-Libois 1963), in the center of the country, "independent" South Kasai was led by Albert Kalonji Ditunga (Gérard-Libois et Verhaegen 1961), Province Orientale became the stronghold of the "Lumumbists"[6] under Antoine Gizenga (Young 1965) and Leopoldville (the capital) remained under the control of the government, led by President Joseph Kasa-Vubu, although army chief, and future president, Joseph Mobutu wielded considerable power behind the scenes. This turbulent period was thus marked by intense rebel activity. Roadblocks were erected as checkpoints between the areas of the different blocks. In his songs, Kampeti,[7] a griot from Bukavu, refers to roadblocks held by supporters of different regimes of this period. Crossing these roadblocks was sort of "password-controlled": one had to speak the language of the militia correctly in order to pass from one area to another.

In a coup d'état on 24 November 1965, Mobutu came to power. At the beginning of his reign, roadblocks were erected for security purposes and were a logical continuation of the previous practice. In fact, roadblocks were necessary to contain rebel infiltration from Kwilu, the stronghold of Pierre Mulele (Kalema 2019). But in the 1970s another roadblock logic developed. A sharp drop in copper prices in 1973 led to a collapse of the state's economy. This had a dramatic effect on the foundations of the Mobutu regime, which could no longer pay its government officials. This prompted the latter to accumulate as many resources as they could as quickly as possible by extracting them from the citizens (Schatzberg 1980: 184). As a result, security forces in particular became a "free-floating source of insecurity" (Schatzberg 1988: 70). Across the

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[6] Patrice Lumumba's (1925-1961) supporters, who worked for a unified Congo. He was the Prime Minister of the Congo after its independence in 1960 from Belgium.
[7] Kampeti, known as "Révolutionnaire," was a Congolese griot in the 1960s. He sang about the "exploits" of President Mobutu Sese Seko in his fight against the rebellions that marked the First Republic and the beginning of the Second. Yungu Amisi-Kampeti Revolutionary. "A La Fasso". See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ECeRP85cr4&t=316s

country, roads were dotted with roadblocks erected by army units, state party youth groups, or local police units conducting cordon-and-search operations, supposedly aimed at hauling in criminals. However, in reality, they were yet another form of resource extraction (Callaghy 1984: 288–90; Fairhead 1992: 22–23). People protested this breach of the social contract with authorities. Catharine Newbury provides a striking example from Buloho chiefdom in Kalehe. Here, in 1982, a group of asava growing women protested against the multiplication of taxes: over the 10 km to the market, three different levies were imposed at river crossings where roadblocks could not be bypassed. The women were driven to their unprecedented act of protest because of the declining conditions of the cassava trade and because the new taxes brought nothing in return (Newbury 1984: 48).

In the second half of the 1980s, some roadblocks were legalized. Presidential Ordinance No. 84-003 of August 28, 1984, which created the *Garde civile* (Civil Guard), now the *Police nationale congolaise* (PNC, Congolese National Police), authorized this new police unit to set up checkpoints in towns to ensure the safety of people and their property. As a result, several so-called "road regulation" stations were erected in Bukavu. This is the case of the current PCR station at *Place de l'Indépendance* and that of *Essence/Rumama* in the *commune of Ibanda* (Ibanda municipality). These police stations functioned in almost the same way as the present-day roadblocks in Bukavu.

Later, in the early 1990s, the *mikange*[8] were used to control individual taxes and other fees, which had to be paid at the bank or the municipality. Towards the end of Mobutu's reign, more or less mobile and nocturnal roadblocks had popped up. They became sites of harassment and enforcement of the notorious *Article 15*[9] by soldiers who hardly ever received their salaries. Roadblocks thus became sites of resource generation not only for the military, but also for other services involved in the governance of population movement. Very

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8 Derived from the Lingala *tokangi nzela* (We have barricaded the road), the term Mukange (plural Mikange) was used by the population to designate a roadblock held by the *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (FAZ) military. By extension and in military language, Mukangi came to mean an ambush.
9 Article 15: "fend for yourselves". This saying, which originated with Mobutism, meant that all Zairians, including state forces, should be "hustle" in order to survive.

quickly, these harassments became part of what several informants called "the rhythm of the country", that is, the practical norms governing population movements on the ground. From that point on access to seaports, airports and markets was controlled and "taxed" by the Civil Guard. People were asked to pay up in *na ésprit ya bien* to avoid unpleasantries.[10] The step towards consecrating and formalizing illicit practices (corruption, influence peddling, etc.) was thus taken.

4.3. Roadblocks today

1996 was a turning point in the country's history. On 27 May 1997, the rebellion unleashed by the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL, The Alliance of democratic forces for the liberation of Congo-Zaire) in South Kivu, put an end to Mobutu's 32-year reign. The new regime was led by President Laurent-Désiré Kabila. It tried to introduce reforms in the security sector. During his first year in power, roadblocks were mainly operated by the military. These were almost all checkpoints erected at strategic locations (at the entrances to cities, on certain roads in popular neighborhoods, and so on). They were operated by AFDL soldiers and their allies, mainly the Rwandan army. In this new post-war context, the objective of these roadblocks was essentially security-related. The Rwandan army wanted to reassure itself that the threat posed by the *ex-Forces Armées Rwandaise* (ex-FAR, Rwandan Armed Forces) and *Interahamwe* militiamen that had settled in eastern Congo, was definitely neutralized. The new regime, for its part, wanted to reassure itself that the conquered areas were completely under control. This joint effort between allies did not last long.

On 8 August 1998, Laurent-Désiré Kabila broke with his Rwandan allies (Kabamba et Lanotte 1999). They immediately backed a new rebellion against Kinshasa: the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD, Rally for Congolese Democracy). This rebellion was largely seen as a foreign proxy by the Congolese and was quickly met with popular resistance. In rural areas, this resistance was armed. This period coincided with the

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[10] From Lingala (the language of the army), *"Esprit ya bien"* means with a good, common-sense spirit: after stripping civilians of their possessions, the Civil Guards would force their victims to say that they had made a "heartfelt gift" to their captors.

multiplication of roadblocks, and their functions as well as the consolidation in the transport infrastructure (Schouten, Murairi and Kubuya 2017). Numerous local and foreign militias put up roadblocks and checkpoints to collect taxes – so-called "war efforts" – to support their fight with rival groups and to control population movement (Hoffmann and Vlassenroot 2014; Hoffmann, Vlassenroot and Marchais 2016; Morvan 2005). Several roadblocks held by armed actors can be traced back to this period. Similarly, Congolese army units put up roadblocks both to control population movement, to provide security, and to generate income, especially in rural areas. As a civil society actor affirms:

> The Bitale roadblock was erected to regulate vehicle traffic. [...] The other FARDC roadblocks were built in the context of conflict and violence. At each location where a robbery was committed, the FARDC erected a patrol post to provide security for road users. Later, at the patrol post, FARDC elements would ask for "a little something" to encourage soldiers. Gradually, this little something became mandatory. [11]

These robberies have often been attributed to "non-identified armed men in military uniforms." This term is a catch-all phrase that includes not only armed groups active in the region since the early 1990s, but also elements of community militias, armed bandits, and even disguised elements of the FARDC and PNC. Indeed, all of these actors put up roadblocks, ambushes, and illegal taxation. In the context of the "stable instability" (Verweijen 2016) of eastern DRC roadblocks are at the intersection of several political, economic, security, and other dynamics.

The widespread phenomenon of roadblocks in eastern DRC must be understood in the context of the long legacy of violent conflict, fragmentation of political authority, and inability or unwillingness of the state authorities to provide its officials with a decent living wage. The phenomenon, however, is not limited to eastern DRC. Roadblocks can also be found in secure zones. For example, the Kinshasa-Matadi-Moanda road axis, the main axis linking Kinshasa to the ports of Matadi and Moanda, is dotted with roadblocks.

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[11] Interview no.15 with a civil society actor from Bunyakiri and transporter, Bitale, February 2019.

Similarly, civil society groups in Kwilu Province often denounce the proliferation of roadblocks on the roads and feeder roads in Kwilu Province, which are created by officials of the *Direction générale des migrations* (DGM, General directorate for migration) officials, the PNC and government transport agencies. Roadblocks provide an opportunity for the officials of these public institutions to "top up their salaries." Roadblock users are then forced to "live with it," and to interact with all actors involved in roadblock governance, including armed non-state actors. They have no option but to "reinvent everyday life" (Morvan 2005).

5 |
Actors and interactions around roadblocks

The following chapter provides an analysis of actors and interactions at roadblock. Drawing on the research conducted for this report, the chapter demonstrates the existence of a multiplicity of interests and strategies, as well as different logics of cooperation and competition around roadblocks.

5.1. A constellation of actors

A diverse group of actors interact at roadblocks. These actors include state agents, road users, and circumstantial actors (state and non-state, but not directly associated with the roadblock), as well as indirect actors, primarily those living in the immediate vicinity of the roadblocks.

Summary of roadblock actors and their attributions

	SERVICES	ATTRIBUTIONS AND/OR MOTIVATIONS
	Services politico-administratifs	
STATE ACTORS	Provincial department for transport and transportation routes	Check vehicle loads Check traffic permits
	Provincial department for tourism and environment and sustainable development	Collecting taxes on flora products (boards, wood and embers)
	General Directorate of Migration	Control of the movement of foreigners (especially in border areas such as the Uvira-Fizi axis)
	The Department of Agriculture-Environment and National forestry fund	Tax of forest products
	Anti-Fraud Squad/Governorate	Control of all products on board to check whether they are prohibited by law
	Department of tourism	Fight against trafficking of rare animal and plant species from protected areas

	SERVICES	ATTRIBUTIONS AND/OR MOTIVATIONS
	Security services	
STATE ACTORS	Traffic police	Ensuring road safety
		Control of vehicle documents (driver's license, road tax, insurance, technical inspection and pink card)
	PNC	Protecting people and their property
	National Intelligence Agency	Gathering information related to security
	FARDC/Bureau 2 (Intelligence department	Controlling the movement and trafficking of weapons
		Monitor the movements of elements of armed groups
ACTEURS NON-ETATIQUES	Armed groups	Control of entry and exit within their respective areas of authority
		Control of access to mining sites
		Collection of taxes (especially on market days)
		Collect on provisions
	The volunteers,[12] Rasta and local development association members.	Securing of their villages
		Ensure community work
		Collection of contributions according to circumstances
		Protest
ACTEURS CIRCONSTANCIELS	Students	Expression of demands
	Motorcyclists and tri-cyclists	Solidarity with a member of the Association in case of an accident
	Youth	Challenge an authority or an unpopular decision
	Civil society	Demonstrate
	Political party supporters	Raise funds for acts of solidarity in the neighborhood
		Raise funds for the repair of a section of road
ACTEURS INDIRECTES	Shopkeepers, drugstores, restaurants, bistros and motels around roadblocks.	Take advantage of economic opportunities resulting from interactions at roadblocks.
	Residents around roadblocks.	
	Prostitutes (linked to roadblock agents).	

There are several types of circumstantial and indirect actors around road-blocks. The reasons for their presence are diverse and complex and include: tax collectors from transport associations, the *parkingiés* (who can be recognized by their green vests, which are sometimes similar to those of the

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[12] The term "volunteer" is a catch-all. It refers to any person or organization that provides services to society that are not part of their job description. The person or organization fills the gap caused by the absence of competent people or organizations. In particular, the term refers to self-proclaimed youth groups that create informal professional spaces within the framework of *Article 15*.

government tax collectors), volunteers, representatives of youth associations (even if their presence at the roadblocks is not permanent), restaurant owners, barkeepers, small businesses, etc. These types of actors are not directly linked to the roadblocks, as it will be illustrated below, like state actors. Rather, for them are spaces of opportunity (Schouten, Murairi and Kubuya 2017).

5.2. Complex interactions

We observed three types of interactions between actors at roadblocks. The first type of interaction is between roadblock agents. The second type involves roadblock agents and road users. The third type involves the actors from the first two types of interactions and indirect actors around roadblocks.

5.2.1 STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS' INTERACTIONS AT ROADBLOCKS

At this point, it is necessary to distinguish between the interactions among agents of the various government departments assigned to roadblocks from the interactions between the latter and non-state actors.

a) Interactions among agents of different state services

Several state services operate at roadblocks. However, very few of them erect their own roadblocks. In rural areas, it is generally the *Fonds d'entretien routier* (FONER, National Road Maintenance Fund) that put up roadblocks.[13] These roadblocks are collection points for the *péage route* (road toll) for this agency.[14] Since road users must stop at these collection points, other government agencies join the FONER roadblocks. Each government agency handles the taxes that fall within its jurisdiction. Government agencies are also present at certain permanent roadblocks such as those maintained by the Kahuzi-Biega National Park (PNKB). The Park has three roadblocks that

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[13] Interview no. 82 with a FONER agent, Makobola, February 2019.
[14] Explanatory memorandum to Law n°08/006-A of July 7, 2008 creating the National Road Maintenance Fund "FONER", Kinshasa, 200, http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/ Droit%20Public/Divers/Loi.08.006.7.7.2008.htm. For the record, FONER was created by Law n°08/006-A of July 7, 2008 with specific goals: first, to establish taxes for using the road (in accordance with the Constitution), second to promote the contribution to public expenses of all people living in the DRC; third, to broaden the tax base; and fourth to maximize national revenues in order to meet development needs.

are about 50 years old: Tshivanga, Kahuzi and Kasirusiru. These roadblocks are among the best organized and most secure in the sense that roadblock agents are safe there. In urban areas, the agencies that collect taxes operate mainly at "parking space-roadblocks" and borders. Only the *Direction Générale des Douanes et Accises* (DGDA, General directory of customs and excises) and the *Office Congolais de Contrôle* (OCC, Congolese control office) are authorized to operate at the border posts. However, data collected in Bukavu shows that multiple other government agencies are present at the border posts. As one informant stated:

> Several agencies operate here at the border […] But here, where we are, there are only five: ACCO [*Association des Chauffeurs du Congo*] taxes all vehicles passing through; CNPR [*Commission Nationale de Prévention Routière*] handles the tax on road traffic and loading; TRANSCOM [*Transport et voies de communication*] is in charge of the tax on loading and unloading […]. The City Council collects taxes on loading and unloading […] on parking lots. The PCR regulates traffic at the border and charges 1000 FC.[15]

In general, interactions between the various state agents assigned to the roadblocks are characterized by competition over the rights to collect taxes and other types of fees from road users. This competition has two dimensions. First, there is confusion about who is responsible for taxing which objects. Very often two different agencies may come forward to tax the same product. This is the case, for example, of the agents of the *Division de l'agriculture-environnment et fond forestier national* (Department of Agriculture-Environment and National Forestry Fund Division) and those of the *Division du tourisme et conservation de la nature* (Department of tourism and nature conservation), who are all interested in forest products, or those of the *Division des transports et communications* (TRANSCOM, Department of transport and communications) who often collude with those of the Traffic Police.[16]

Sometimes services that normally should not be in competition with each other are in a tug-of-war at roadblocks. This is often observed between FARDC

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[15] Interview no. 39 with CNPR agent, Bukavu, November 9, 2020.
[16] Interview no. 83 with an agent from the anti-fraud service, Kalehe, February 2019.

soldiers and *éco-gardes* (rangers) deployed at roadblocks in the PNKB. These roadblocks are put up by the park rangers. The FARDC are there to check that road users do not hide weapons in their luggage. Meanwhile, the park rangers are licensed to check the same luggage to ensure that they do not contain illegal forest products that are. However, very often the military exclude the park rangers from the work:

> This roadblock was created in 1981. In 1982, I was deployed here in Kasirusiru. At the beginning of the AFDL war, the park rangers surrendered their weapons and the military moved in. We were forced to collaborate with them [...] But *"kifukutu ilishaka gangiya mwenye nyumba!"* [The heat has already driven the owner out of the house!] They bother people too much at this roadblock: people are forced to give money (300 FC).[17]

Competition at roadblocks also occurs among agents within the same agency when several agents are deployed at the same roadblock. As the number of agents increases, competition among them becomes more intense and conflicts increase. An agent assigned to a roadblock in Mahema-Mamba chiefdom made the following remark:

> We get into a lot of conflict over this position. It hasn't even been two months since my suspension was lifted because my friends accused me of embezzlement. They became bitter when they heard that I got organized and bought a chicken! We receive 5% of the amount levied at the roadblock. Yet, we are there with 4 people.

There are many similar stories. The four people are obliged to reach an agreement to share the 5% they retain from tax collection. The boss who assigns people to roadblocks chooses agents who are loyal to him and who will not embezzle the levies collected per day. Yet, such negotiation creates a cacophony in the overall roadblock governance. As a result, roadblock agents are not accountable to the relevant local services, and certainly not to the populations around roadblocks. They work to "report" back to their superiors and to "*se retrouver*"[18] as well.

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[17] Focus group no. 10 with rangers, Kasirusiru, February 2019.
[18] Literally, "*se retrouver*" means "find yourself". However, in the vernacular of state agents in Congo it refers to "gain something".

The verbs to "report" and "*se retrouver*" are very common at roadblocks. The first, "report" means that the roadblock agent must do his or her best to collect a certain sum of money, which he or she must hand over to his or her superiors on a daily or weekly basis. This sum depends on the negotiation between the agents at the roadblocks and their bosses. The second depends on how far the roadblock is from Bukavu where the offices of the agencies are situated. For rural roadblocks, "reports" are made on a weekly basis because agents can stay there longer. For urban roadblocks "reports" are often made on a daily basis.

In the vernacular in eastern Congo, the second term "find oneself", can best be translated as to "gain something". It refers to the money that is left after the "report" has been delivered to their bosses, which they can keep for themselves and their families. In this sense, the term "*se retrouver*" is a particular way of expressing the social practice of known as "*débrouillardise*" (resourcefulness) in Congo, which captures the various creative ways in which the Congolese manage to get by in the face of difficult living conditions.

In fact, for newly appointed agents, being assigned to a roadblock represents an opportunity to break with their dependence on senior family members. Meanwhile, other government officials can take advantage of their positions to supplement their salaries through "retro-commissions" and other practical norms.

The second dimension of interactions involves collaboration based on informal norms that diminish competition at roadblocks. Dynamics around the Civanga roadblock, at the entry to the PNKB illustrates the nature of such collaboration well. Several government agencies are represented at this roadblock: *Agence nationale des renseignements* (ANR, National Intelligence Agency), the park rangers of the *Institut Congolais de Conservation de la Nature* (ICCN, Congolese institute for the conservation of nature), the anti-fraud agencies, the FARDC, and the Presidential Guard. The park rangers check the luggage of passengers to ensure that they are not carrying smoked bushmeat from the park. The anti-fraud agencies do the same thing, but they check if the carry minerals originating in areas controlled by armed groups. Officially, the FARDC is there as part of their mission to track down armed

groups in rural areas and prevent them from reaching the city. In practice, however, they act as a substitute and enforcers for the park rangers and the anti-fraud agencies. The Presidential Guard has no official mandate. They appear to be there simply to "gain something."

Respect for the attributions of each agency is at the core of their collaboration. They work together to ensure that each agency is satisfied with the role it plays. In order to avoid mutual suspicion and accusations of cheating, the agencies tax the same person at the same time. Each department collects the tax that falls within its jurisdiction. Also, information is shared between the agencies. Such practices are not part of the legal framework. Thus, in case of the seizure of an illegal good, the agency responsible for that type of good, writes a report on the seizure, confiscates the product and forwards it to the competent offices in town along with a sum of money corresponding to value of the fine. At least in theory. However, several informants claimed that confiscated goods often disappear on their way to the office of the relevant agency in town.

b) Interactions between state agents and non-state actors

Interactions between government agencies operating at roadblocks and non-state actors follow a win-win logic. In this regard roadblock constitute spaces of collaboration. In urban areas, we focus on three categories of non-state actors at parking space-roadblocks. These are the "tax collectors" of the *Association des transporteurs par tricycle au Kivu* (ATTK, Association of tricycle transporters in Kivu), the *Association des chauffeurs du Congo* (ACCO, Association of drivers in Kivu), and the *parkingiés*. These three categories are not directly involved in the management of these parking space-roadblocks. They are able to profit nonetheless. They collect specific fees to their associa-tions, and they have also managed to turn them into workspaces. The ATTK and the ACCO are occupational syndicates, bringing together urban trans-porters in the private sector. The objective of the organizations is more social than professional. They offer assistance to members for joyous events, such as births and marriages, as well as unhappy ones, such as illnesses, death and mourning.[19] Membership is conditional on a monthly instalment, which fills

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[19] Interview no. 73 with an inspector/driver, Bukavu, November 13, 2020.

the association's fund. Since it is difficult to reach all of its members, ATTK and ACCO deploy "collectors" at parking space-roadblocks. While the collection procedure is similar to that used by public tax services, the money collected remains a contribution made by the association's members to their common fund for mutual aid. For ATTK, the people in charge of collection at roadblocks are mainly women. They do not have to be transporters. They are recruited in the neighborhoods around the parking area where they collect a form of "contribution tax" from the tricycle drivers. For the ACCO, the collectors are called "inspectors". Similar to ATTK, they are not necessarily drivers. They are recruited by the association's leaders, preferably in the neighborhood close to the parking space-roadblock, where they will be working.

The *parkingiés* are unemployed youth living near the parking area. They perform three important tasks for which transporters have agreed to pay an additional fee each time they enter or leave the parking lot. The first task is to register the entries and exits of the parking area. The second is to collect the tax that goes to the organization of the *parkingiés*. The third tax involves the loading and unloading of vehicles. Taxes imposed on vehicles vary according to their tonnage and passenger carrying capacity. An ACCO agent provided the following testimony:

> Any TOYOTA vehicle with five passenger seats pays between 4000 FC and 6000 FC before leaving the parking lot. A bus with 18 passenger seats pays between 10,000 FC and 15,000 FC. But to get this money back, several transporters just take more passengers. Thus, a bus with 18 seats often carries up to 25 passengers and a car with 5 seats carries up to 9 passengers.[20]

The presence of non-state actors at roadblocks in no way hinders the work of the state agencies deployed there. On the contrary, it is common for the *parkingiés* to collaborate with state actors in the collection of taxes that fall within their attributions. In fact, no vehicle is supposed to leave the parking space without authorization from the *parkingiés*. This authorization is conditioned by a verification of all taxes. However, it should be noted that transporters always find ways to avoid paying certain taxes.

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[20] Interview no. 68 with an ACCO agent, Bukavu, November 11, 2020.

In rural areas, collaboration between state agents and non-state actors follows almost the same rules as in the city. However, negotiations between them are not always easy. Whether it is the "volunteers" or the *parkingiés*, non-state actors are obliged to interact not only with state agencies, but also with armed actors. In some cases, transporters may be trapped in an area controlled by an armed group and need help from volunteers and *parkingiés* for repair. The latter often seek protection from FARDC units to get to the repair site.

Finally, whether state or non-state actors are involved, competition between actors at roadblocks is hard to avoid since they earn commissions proportional to the resources they collect. Depending on the specific arrangements between actors, roadblock agents are entitled to roughly 5% of the funds they collect. This percentage may vary from one roadblock to another and from one service to another. The remainder of the money collected is passed on to the competent heads of services. Thus, for example, the sums collected by the agents of TRANSCOM are sent directly to the head of the department. Similarly, a portion of the money raised by volunteers and *parkingiés* is transferred to the association's fund, while another portion is pocketed by the person who raised the money. There is no fixed distribution key for the money collected. Everything is done through informal arrangements.

5.2.2 ROAD USERS' INTERACTIONS WITH ROADBLOCK AGENTS

Road users sometimes attempt to resist or negotiate paying fees and taxes at roadblocks. Yet, forms of solidarity and collaboration also exists in these encounters. Thus, while roadblocks are part of *the corruption complex* (Olivier de Sardan 1999) logics of mutual support and recognition are also present.

a) From resistance to taxation

In rural areas, travelers are often traders and miners. They are required to pay several types of taxes. In addition to the "right of passage" which is a mandatory tax at all roadblocks, the the amount to be paid depends on the number of services operating at a roadblock. The more agencies at a roadblock, the more taxes road users have to pay. On average, we identified approximately ten agencies at each roadblock. However, these services are not all present at the same time, except in the case of parking space-roadblocks operating

in the city. In addition to these state agencies there are also the "volunteers". In rural areas "village committees" may also partake in operating roadblocks. With regards to the "volunteers" in particular, it should be noted that their role and the need for their presence at roadblocks are highly controversial. For some road users, volunteers offer useful services, insofar as they can provide solutions to some of the difficulties they face, such as when trucks get stuck due to the dilapidated state of the road. For others, the volunteers are merely predators. This explains the resistance of some truck drivers to pay irregular roadblock taxes.

Two important factors explain these ambivalent attitudes towards volunteers. The first relates to their fluid identity. The second relates to the fact that "volunteerism" itself is a way to "gain something". Now, there are two main types of youth at the roadblocks. The first type is composed of demobilized or self-demobilized former militiamen. Even though they have left their militia they exhibit similar behavior as militiamen; that is to say they have a tendency to use violence and rob people. The second type is composed of unemployed youth. Both of these groups are in need of a livelihood and the roadblock provides that opportunity. Therefore, "volunteering" is not an act of charity. The intention to give free service to the community quickly takes a back seat to the search for resources to cover basic needs. These factors imply that road users see the levies demanded by these groups as illegitimate harassment, which in turn leads to resistance.

Truck drivers, motorcyclists and tri-cyclists are the main targets of tax collectors. The first condition for passing a roadblock is to pay the right of way. Even if the owner of the vehicle or motorcycle has all the necessary documents, he or she, must still pay the right of passage.[21] For example, for a truck driver, FONER agents charge the equivalent of 11$. TRANSCOM charges up to 51,000 FC (25$). However, the tax paid to FONER, for example, only pays for using the road in the territory where it was collected. If the road user crosses the border to another territory, she must pay the same tax again. For example, on the stretch of road between Uvira and Fizi (about 125 kilometers), truck drivers can pay up to 350,000 francs, which is roughly the equivalent of 175$.

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[21] Interview no. 74 with a driver, Bukavu, November 13, 2020.

Road users that try to resist taxes imposed by FONER and TRANSCOM justify it by the fact that while the taxes are meant for road maintenance, in reality, nothing is done to maintain the road. In effect, roads are not maintained and are increasingly impassable in many places in rural South Kivu. The agency responsible for road restoration, does not operate there. When vehicles are stuck in big potholes, or on defective bridges, it is the "volunteers" who intervene. Paid by truck drivers and other road users, they push stuck vehicles free, repair defective bridges, or plug the potholes using makeshift materials.

Therefore, the tax levied by FONER is among those most fiercely resisted by road users. It should be noted, however, that FONER is among the most powerful institutions on the road network. It is almost impossible to bypass a roadblock held by FONER. This is why many of the tax collectors from other state agencies prefer to be stationed adjacent to a roadblock put up by FONER. Nevertheless, in some places, village committee and local civil society organizations often organize resistance against FONER roadblocks by calling for fiscal disobedience. For example, in Miti, wich is situated 25 km north of Bukavu, several roadblocks operated by FONER were attacked and dislodged by the population after President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi's first State of the Nation address on 13 December 2019. In it he declared that: "there are even many roadblocks on all roads of national interest as well as on agricultural feeder roads. All these roadblocks must be removed immediately."[22] However, many of the roadblocks have survived his appeal.

b) Tax negotiations

Roadblocks are not closed spaces. Regardless of the amount charged, taxes are negotiable. Negotiations around taxes are linked to the fact that there is not a singular national destination of taxes DRC. Taxes are collected on the road by state agents, who in turn will transfer them to their respective departments. This opens up the possibility for negotiating the "price" of the taxes and fees. For example, when road user's documents are not in order, they are often forced to do a "financial greeting" (Mukulu Nduku 2019). Also called

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[22] "DRC: President of the Republic's 2019 State of the Nation Address" Zoomeco (News site), 13 December 2019. https://zoom-eco.net/developpement/rdc-discours-du-president-de-la-republique-sur-letat-de-la-nation-en-2019-integral/.

"massage," a "financial greeting" refers to when a truck driver discreetly slips a few banknotes into the hand of the roadblock agent, simulating a greeting. The truck driver can then pass the roadblock and look for the papers later. Financial greeting is nowadays considered normal by road users, especially when road users do not have the required documents to their vehicle. In this regard, a tricycle driver stated:

> With or without the right documents, we pay [to PCR agents] to pass through certain check-points. [...] If you don't have the documents, you run the risk of being fined a large sum. [...] If they [the PCR] find the documents, they invent other infractions. That is why each of our drivers is asked to give 500 Congolese francs per day to each PCR station on the road they are using.[23]

However, the "financial greeting" is a recurrent and unpredictable tax. The truck driver is obliged to make a "financial greeting" every time he stops at a roadblock. Sometimes, he ends up paying more in comparison to someone who pays his taxes normally. One truck driver stated that:

> If you negotiate a tax, you will not be given a receipt and you will be charged the same amount at the next roadblock that you did not want to pay. Only the "report" of policemen can be negotiated. It happens that some luggage is left at the roadblock when you don't have the money to pay.[24]

Where truck drivers have the option to make "financial greeting," passengers are obliged to pay their right of passage. The amount to be paid varies according to the type of roadblock. In many cases, truck drivers work together with roadblock agents to facilitate the collection of money. Both parties benefit from this collaboration. For truck drivers, it saves time and avoids problems with agents. For passengers, this practice may allow them to negotiate a discount. In other words, this method of payment, can help cover for passengers who do not have enough money, or who do not have any money at all, and probably also for those who carry packages with prohibited products. In addition to this collaboration on taxes, there are times when roadblock agents and road users do each other favors. For example, roadblock agents

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[23] Interview no. 59 with a driver, Bukavu, November 2020.
[24] Interview no. 78 with a truck driver, Uvira, February 2019.

occasionally ask truck drivers to deliver their own packages, or those of their relatives, to their destination for free. Also, in the case of the breakdown of their vehicles, truck drivers can receive assistance from roadblock agents and volunteers. These are among the rare moments of conviviality between actors on and around roadblocks.[25]

However, there is a limit to the collaboration between roadblock agents and road users. In the long run, this collaboration creates a familiarity that is conducive to all kinds of influence peddling, which also contributes to reproducing the corruption complex. Furthermore, road users and roadblock agents sometimes argue violently with each other. In most cases, these disputes are caused by the refusal to pay taxes or the right of passage. There are no formal mechanisms for managing conflicts. When these disputes arise, other agencies intervene in order to reconcile the two parties. Occasionally, local authorities in the area get involved to find an amicable solution.

c) The corruption complex

Road users are determined to minimize the taxes they pay for the "right of passage", and for the goods they carry. As mentioned above, each side tries to maximize their own benefit from the negotiation process. However, while negotiating, roadblock agents must not lose sight of the interests of their superiors. The corruption complex is thus linked to the principle of mandatory reporting to the boss. On many roadblocks, agents are required to report a predefined amount of money agreed upon with their superiors. Thus, they work very hard and multiply levies to exceed the required amount. The following testimony by the wife of a soldier illustrates this practice:

> The amount paid at the roadblock can be as much as 50,000 francs (25$) per week, but soldiers at the roadblock can collect twice that amount, up to 100,000 francs (50§) or more. They keep the surplus for themselves [...]. Some soldiers involved in roadblock management have invested. They have bought motorcycles to take passengers to Bukavu and elsewhere [...]. Without counting my husband's salary, we managed to buy 5 goats, thanks to the income from roadblocks for only 5 months; we bought metal sheets, planks, and built our house [...]. The roadblock is a plantation that can never fail or have losses because it produces every day.[26]

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[25] Focus group no. 3 with sellers and travelers, Rambo, February 2019.
[26] Interview no. 25 with a housewife, Kabare, February, 2019.

This comparison between the roadblock and a "plantation" succinctly sums up, not only the trivialization of corruption and levies, but also the perception that indirect actors around roadblocks have of these spaces: "a necessary evil." In short, roadblocks are spaces that generate money, just like plantations.

5.3. Roadblocks as social spaces

Interactions between roadblock agents and indirect actors are characterized by a certain mutuality. Roadblocks are part of the social universe of the road-block and its surrounding area. It is in their interest not to ruin the relationship with the people living there. Thus, while roadblocks are contested by the population, less conflictive social dynamics also unfold there. Indeed, whether urban or rural, roadblocks attract a number of actors who are not directly linked to them. These actors take advantage of the economic opportunities afforded by the presence of the roadblock. They include itinerant traders and small markets open at night, restaurant owners, bars, hostels, etc.

5.3.1 IN RURAL AREAS

The Mboko and Makobola roadblocks in Fizi territory best illustrate this reality in our research. In urban areas, we will focus on certain roadblocks that are put up "volunteers" and are operational at night.

The Makobola-Ihamba roadblock

The Makobola-Ihamba roadblock is located in the Tanganyika sector in Babungwe-Nord grouping in the locality of Makobola-Ihamba, also known as Makobola II. It is not by chance that this roadblock is put up just after a bridge over a river that separates the locality of Makobola II (Fizi territory) and Makobola I (Uvira territory). Indeed, this bridge is a strategic point as the road is wedged between the mountains on one side and Lake Tanganyika on the other. Road-users cannot avoid it.

The town of Makobola has a troubled past. Between 30 December 1998 and 2 January 1999, elements from the RCD and the Rwandan and Burundian armies killed more than 800 people in the villages of Makobola II, Bangwe, Katuta, Mikunga and Kashekezi in the Fizi region (OHCHR 2010: 178–79). Since then, the spectre of insecurity has haunted the twin towns. After the

massacre, people deserted their homes. Since then, young people have been trying to organize themselves into self-help structures. To bring back hope to the town. Furthermore, a modern hospital was built there by Joseph Kabila, the former president of the DRC, with his "own funds." However, even the hospital has not been able to attract a large population to the town.

Why is there a roadblock in this troubled area? In fact roadblocks have been put up in this periodically, by the Balala rondo – a vigilante self-defense group that is very active in Uvira (Verweijen, Thill and Hendriks 2019; Verweijen 2015). The roadblock was erected for security reasons, as Makobola-Ihamba offers an ideal entry point for armed groups who are based in the mountains above the town. Also, the ANR has often reported infiltrations of armed units from Burundi via Tanganyika Lake.

The Makobola-Ihamba roadblock is an official one. It was put up by FONER. This is in accordance with the mandate of FONER which is authorized to put up tax collection points at the borders between cities and territories and between territories. Agents can thus tax vehicles entering and leaving the territory, or city, at the same time. The collected funds are supposed to contribute to financing road maintenance and refurbishment projects. However, neither road maintenance nor refurbishments occur.

Initially, the roadblock was only staffed FONER agents. Very quickly, though, it attracted other government services due to its location. These include the DGM, which tries to control migration into Congolese territory via the Lake Tanganyika; the Agriculture-Environment and National Forestry Fund, which controls and taxes forest products (charcoal, bushmeat, etc.); tax agents from customary authorities; FARDC and ANR elements, which are there for "security reasons"; the anti-fraud squad; the Department of tourism; the *Commission nationale de contrôle des armes légères et petits calibres et reduction de la violence armée* (CNC-ALPC, National commission for light weapons control and reduction of armed violence), and more.[27] From an administrative standpoint, they operate in an intermediate zone between the legal and illegal frameworks.

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[27] Interview no. 86 with a grouping chief, Makobola, February 2019.

Since there is not one single destination to send collected taxes in DRC, each service collects what it is due on an *ad hoc* basis and controls the objects which falls within its domain. This very often leads to competition between the agencies over the right to levy the right of passage and taxes. For example, the behavior of the Anti-Fraud squad often provokes conflict. According to multiple sources, this agency, which is licensed to combat organized crime, excels in the embezzlement of non-registered taxes. Yet, it still claims the right to control the taxes levied by other agencies.

Despite the cacophony created by its agents, the Makobola II-Ihamba roadblock blends in smoothly with the town's social environment. Most of the people interviewed described the roadblock as a "necessary evil." A nurse interviewed in Makobola II made it clear:

> This roadblock has restored our town, despite the occasional harassments […]. As you can see, the small businesses that provide for families here are organized around it: restaurants, stores, drugstores, rental houses for roadblock agents, etc. Prior to the erection of this roadblock, everything was dead here. The only thing that attracted people here was the commemoration of the Makobola massacres.[28]

A good part of the people interviewed shared this view. However, several also complained about the fact that all the roadblocks agents come from elsewhere:

> This roadblock has brought Makobola back to life, despite the harassments. Unfortunately, it only benefits foreigners, in other words, non-natives. None of our children from Makobola II have been hired by the state services here! However, some of our children have studied and can also take advantage of this opportunity to organize themselves and shape their future.[29]

Similarly, there is discontent among some authorities about the management of roadblocks, which is located in their entities, but which they have no authority over. A chief expressed is their anger as follows:

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[28] Interview no. 92 with a non-state actor, Mboko, February 2019.
[29] Interview no. 89 with a restaurant owner/military wife, Makobola, February 2019.

Provincial authorities do not follow the correct procedures in the management of their road-blocks. Normally, these people [the agents] should report to us. In turn, we should report back to the relevant provincial authorities. But when we ask them, they tell us that they do not have to report to us. So, we wonder why they have come to live with us? In addition to that, it is only when they have problems that their bosses come to us for assistance. This is not acceptable.[30]

According to local customary chiefs, roadblock agents based in Makobola-Ihamba excel in tax embezzlement. Agents who have settled in the area arouse the jealousy of some locals. Their job gives them status, and the money they earn through "commissions" enable them to support their families. Additionally, it allows them to them to support their relatives and friends.

Indeed, the roadblock is not just about taxes. Some agents have developed extra-professional relationships with truck drivers. These contributes to widening the scope for granting each other mutual favors such as transport of people and goods in return for tax exemptions, mutual security arrangements and so on.

The Mboko roadblock
In Mboko, there is an atypical roadblock. It is situated on *route nationale n 5* (national road nr. 5) at the exit of the town of Makobola in direction of Uvira. None of the specialist branches present at the other roadblocks are there: no FONER, no DGM, no Anti-fraud squad, no TRANSCOM, and so on. Instead, it is set up by FARDC units. In fact, nothing indicates the presence of a roadblock. It is a virtual roadblock (Schouten, Murairi, and Kubuya 2017, 10). But people know the roadblock exists and that it is managed by FARDC soldiers. This roadblock is operational from 6 p.m. and is intended to pre-vent motorized vehicles from traveling at night. At certain moments, the roadblock materializes in the form of a rope attached to two small wooden poles fixed on either side of the road. But, the rope is not needed, since all road users know that they cannot travel from Makobola to Uvira or Baraka after 6 p.m. Curiously, this measure only applies to vehicles traveling in the direction of Uvira, not in the opposite direction so travelers coming from Uvira are not forced to spend the night in Mboko. Mboko thus becomes a one-way "roadblock-town" that opersates all night long.

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[30] Interview no. 86 with a grouping chief, Makobola, February 2019.

Three categories of actors are involved in this roadblock: i) FARDC soldiers; ii) soldiers' wives who run open-air restaurants; and iii) restaurant customers. Truck drivers and their passengers are the most frequent customers. When they that arrive after 6 p.m. they are more or less obliged to spend money on accommodation and food. For a town like Mboko, the roadblock is a boon, because of the economic opportunities it generates. Travelers, mostly traders and gold smugglers from Misisi (Fizi), can spend money there before they go to Uvira. The restaurant owners and their families hope that more and more people will spend the night in Mboko. The roadblock is an important business for them. Initially run by military wives, the restaurants and bistros have attracted many other inhabitants of Mboko.

Interactions between different actors around this roadblock are mainly of a commercial nature and the survival of many families depend on it. The soldiers' wives and/or concubines, the soldiers themselves, and the truck drivers have created a routine that structures the town's social life. During the day, the soldiers' wives and other restaurant owners stock up on drinks and prepare food for the night. Meanwhile the soldiers take care of the roadblock and truck drivers try to reach Mboko late in the evening. There is a slight disturbance in this arrangement when the military units change. But the new units are always informed of the roadblock's routine and perpetuate it. The social life of the Mboko roadblock appeals to many people. The roadblock is the only place in the village where there is light. The youth of the town meet there to enjoy the warm atmosphere. Those who stay temporarily in Mboko (humanitarians, researchers…), have no other place to eat and drink, than the roadblock. As a result, the roadblock is supported and tolerated by everyone. One interviewee in Mboko said that

> Whoever decides to remove this roadblock, will also make the town of Mboko go backwards, and be responsible for the misery our families. We live thanks to this roadblock. The military depend on us and we depend on them. We all depend on truck drivers and their passengers.[31]

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[31] Interview no. 90 with a roadblock agent, Kabumbe, February 2019.

The social dynamics of the Mboko roadblock are reminiscent of the "garrison-entrepot" phenomenon in Central Africa explored by Roitman. This military-commercial site is a hub of wealth creation through violence and is home to powerful regulatory authority figures. However, it is also, at the same time, a context of redistribution and certain forms of social protection (Roitman 1998: 297).

5.3.2 IN URBAN AREAS

The study focuses on two categories of roadblocks in urban areas. The first category are roadblocks put up for security reasons. The second category are roadblocks put up for reasons of solidarity. The roadblock erected by the so-called *Jeunes Volontaires* (Young Volunteers) at the *Place Gendarmerie* (Police square) is an example of the first category. The many sporadic and circumstantial roadblocks erected by young people in the city are examples of the second category.

The Place Gendarmerie night roadblock

"Place Gendarmerie" is located in Cimpunda, a popular neighborhood situated in the municipality of Kadutu in Bukavu. It was given this name because there is a police station there, which used to house the *gendarmerie* (police force) during the Mobutu regime. It is a busy place frequented both by merchants from rural areas (Walungu and Kabare, in particular) and by an ever-growing urban population. Since the start of 2020, the area, like the entire city, has experienced a sharp rise in insecurity: armed robberies, banditry during the night, and other forms of violence. Units from the Military Police (MP) were deployed in the area to combat the rising insecurity. However, this has failed to put an end to the insecurity. Moreover, even when bandits are identified, a special unit of the PNC, the *Groupe mobile d'Intervention* (Mobile intervention group) tasked with intervening in such cases, has been very limited in its deployment. The PNC's inefficiency prompted young people to take charge themselves. On 1 November 2020, they decided to create a roadblock there. This road-block at "Place Gendarmerie" is unique in as much as it is operated by the Young Volunteers of the neighborhood who created it. However, the youth are supported by the PNC. The objectives of the roadblock is to check all

late entries into the neighborhood[32] in order to capture bandits, and subsequently hand them over to the police. One PNC officer explained how the roadblock works:

> Road users must show their ID card to pass at the roadblock. But after 11pm, no one is allowed to cross the roadblock because at that time, passengers are considered "suspects". Those who come after 11pm are arrested and kept overnight at the police station. They are then released the next morning and must pay a fine of five hundred Congolese francs. No one is exempt from this rule.[33]

The roadblock at the "Place Gendarmerie" is thus a crucial site for security provision. The Young Volunteers working at the roadblock have the full support from the civilian leaders of the neighborhood.[34] The roadblock, as well as its mode of operation, are broadly accepted. This is indicated by the following testimony:

> We have a good relationship with the youth and the police. There is no military on this roadblock. I think the youth and the police are the right people for this roadblock. They are better positioned because at least they know some of the people responsible for the insecurity in the neighborhood and they try to control them through different actions.[35]

The collaboration between the Young Volunteers and the police is not always easy though. Often, these young people accuse the police of harassing the population during patrols. On the other hand, the police accuse the youth of wanting to replace the police.[36] These frictions primarily concern the issue of the sharing of money collected at the roadblock from fines. However, it also stems from the fact that the youth have to deal with the mood swings of the police whenever the old unit is replaced by a new one. The newcomers have to adapt to the philosophy of the Young Volunteers.

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[32] Interview no. 32 with a "young volunteer," Bukavu, November 2020.
[33] Interview no. 30 with a PNC agent, Bukavu, November 2020.
[34] This type of arrangement among neighborhood youth, security services, and political actors in the governance of security is widespread in eastern Congo. For an instructive analysis of such arrangements in Goma, see Hendriks (2018; 2019).
[35] Interview no. 31 with a non-state actor, Bukavu, November 2020.
[36] Hoffmann, Vlassenroot, and Büscher note similar tensions and dynamics in Bunia, Ituri Province (2018).

Sporadic and circumstantial roadblocks

Sporadic roadblocks are common in Bukavu. They are described as sporadic because they are linked to particular circumstances: student demonstrations, government officials' demands, road tax controls, robberies and murders, etc. However, it is necessary to mention that l there are two overlapping phenomena that are difficult to distinguish: the roadblock and the protest. When a person dies in the neighborhood, for example, a roadblock can be sporadically created in order to collect voluntary contributions to help the family of the deceased. Meanwhile, students sometimes put up roadblocks on the roads leading to their university campus in order to protest unpopular measures or decisions taken by authorities. It is a way to send a message to certain administrative or political authorities. Such roadblocks are accompanied by a demand of some sort. Some sporadic roadblocks therefore are part of a logic of protest.

The roadblocks put up by the Young Volunteers of "Camp Mweze" in Cimpunda and Kamagema (Panzi) are created for reasons of solidarity. For example, in Cimpunda, a certain "Prince" took the initiative to create a roadblock on the road that leads to "Place Gendarmerie". The purpose of the roadblock was to collect contributions when residents in the neighborhood suffer unhappy events, especially the death of relatives. Contributions collected at such roadblocks are almost mandatory. In order to pass these "social roadblocks", pedestrians donate 100 FC each. A part of the amount collected is given to the family in need, another part goes to the Young Volunteers' fund.

5.4. Embracing or rejecting roadblocks?

There is a common denominator to all these interactions: mutual economic interests (Schouten, Murairi and Kubuya 2017: 10). However, this logic of "predation" has several dimensions, in particular, political, social and security-related dimensions. As such the "logic" of predation is part of what the Congolese people have come to call the "rhythm of the country" ("au rythme du pays"). A similar pattern can be observed throughout the Congolese public administration.

In spite of harassment: Twende tu[37]

Several symbolic as well as physical roadblocks have been erected by agents who systematically monetize the services that fall within their normal duties (Titeca and de Herdt 2011; De Herdt and Titeca 2019; Thill 2019a; Eriksson Baaz, Olsson and Verweijen 2018; Solhjell 2019; Trefon 2009b). As an example, a bailiff does not hesitate to ask for the costs for "transporting the file" *(tindika dossier)*[38] to get it to the table of his immediate boss. The file thus encounters several virtual barriers at the entrance to each office before reaching its final destination. This form of corruption is called "motivation." It is translated by several euphemisms: *madesu ya bana, chupa ya maji, unités*, and so on.[39] Thus, a file for which "motivation" has not been paid will never reach its final destination. Indeed, practices of corruption are justified and normalized by their similarity to and intermixing with common social practices. In this way, words and discourses, such as "*motivation*" and "*au rythme du pays*" contribute to trivializing resource appropriation (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2001). Predatory and corrupt practices are in fact framed by a vocabulary that "normalizes" and "legitimizes" them. This semiology of corruption varies from one roadblock to another. It contributes to the consolidation of "the rhythm of the country". Thus, state agents constantly navigate between three sets of norms with blurred boundaries, all of which are deeply rooted in Congolese society: the professional-legal norms, the norms of *article 15*, and norms of solidarity. As the chief of Kalima grouping in the Kalehe territory put it perceptively:

> We are in a conflict zone with residual armed groups. As a result, we agreed in a meeting with the army on where to position of their posts. Unfortunately, since they are poorly paid and without food supplies, they put up roadblocks to collect money. In addition, tax collectors are not doing their job well because they are not paid either. Surprisingly, they dress well, so they are embezzling money.[40]

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[37] *"Twende tu"* is a Kiswahili phrase from Bukavu that can be translated into English as "let's make do with it," meaning "let's move to the rhythm of the country" or "let's go along with the realities of the country."

[38] *Kotindika dossier* translates into English as "to make the file get sent", to make the file progress.

[39] *Madesu ya bana* translates into English as "beans for the children"; *chupa ya maji,* translates into English as "bottle of water." For similar discourses, see Wakenge (2020).

[40] Interview No. 14 with a grouping secretary, February 2019.

Indeed, the norms of *Article 15* embody the principle of *débrouillardise* (resourcefulness). This principle opens up the possibility of embezzlement to everyone, so that no one has the right to limit access to others. As a result, roadblocks become vague and very open meeting places. For example, certain roadblocks enable small-scale businesses such as restaurant owners, drugstores, and motels to take advantage of the norms of *Article 15* and turn the roadblock into an economic opportunity. Commission agents also turn the roadblock into an economic opportunity. They direct clients to a particular vehicle or restaurant. Such agents, commonly known as *parkingiés* or *chargeurs de vehicules*, have managed to turn the roadblock into a site for accumulating economic and social capital, in the sense that they can both earn a living and develop relationships with actors that are better-off than themselves (Bourdieu 1997).

"Twende tu..." and then?

While roadblocks provide livelihood for many families, they remain places where an economy of predation and a logic of domination take place. Thus, there are mixed opinions on the need to maintain them on the road network. We encountered two main opinions in the field. The first opinion is that roadblocks, regardless of the reasons for their creation, are all sites of ransom and unnecessary harassment. Therefore, they should simply be removed from the road network. The second trend suggests that, despite their predatory nature, some roadblocks (especially those erected in places considered to be dangerous) should be maintained as long as insecurity prevails in the area. It is worth commenting on these two trends before concluding this report.

The arguments for maintaining roadblocks are very mixed. In some villages with chronic insecurity, roadblocks are seen as a "necessary evil." The military roadblock in Bututa, a small village three kilometers from Bulambika (in Bunyakiri, Kalehe Territory), illustrates this ambiguity. The roadblock was created by FARDC elements in 2014 when the area was beleaguered by multiple robberies allegedly committed by Raia Mutomboki elements.[41] At first, the

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[41] Raia Mutomboki (angry citizens) is a Swahili term for several militias operating in eastern DRC. These groups claim to be fighting to protect their ancestral lands from foreign invaders (Hoffmann and Vlassenroot 2014; Vogel 2014; Stearns 2013).

roadblock reduced the incursions of perpetrators. Bututa became an island of security in an area afflicted by all kinds of violence. A bit of business life emerged, and transporters registered the village among their transit points. The following testimony clearly illustrates this point:

> We set up our business here (on this roadblock) for two reasons: first, because no one can attack us here with the presence of the military. Second, because this roadblock is next to a school and is a busy place for passengers.[42]

However, over time, the Bututa roadblock has been invaded by other agencies that have multiplied the taxes levied at it. An agent of the Anti-Fraud squad explains:

> Earlier, the military only collected their money (100 FC) while fraudulent things were happening here. So, the government decided to add the Anti-Fraud agency to this roadblock [...] *Bitu bibaya bingali Mingi sana uku, ma bunduki hata na ma groupes armés* (there are still too many bad things going on around here, hidden weapons, armed groups, etc.) [43]

This has happened to almost all roadblocks operated by FARDC in areas where armed groups are active. The inhabitants are forced to choose between two evils. And, of course, they choose the lesser evil, which for the most part is the military.[44] The military deployed at roadblocks in rural areas are not necessarily from South Kivu. Often, they are obliged to maintain a reasonably good relationship with the populations living around the roadblocks. Therefore, they would rather tax people in transit than the ones that host them. As a result, the local population often prefers the taxes of the FARDC to the exactions of armed groups. However, this depends on the context. In some places, the local population and customary authorities accept the taxes collected at roadblocks by armed groups. This is the case with the Mai-Mai Kifuafua in Walikale, because they are considered to be a local security force protecting the community from harm (Vlassenroot, Mudinga and Hoffmann 2016: 35).

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42 Interview no. 96 with a road user, Rubanga, February 2019.
43 Interview no. 17 with an anti-fraud brigade agent, interviewed in Kalehe, February 2019.
44 See also the work of Judith Verweijen (2013).

In general, people opposed to having roadblocks in their areas denounce the taxes levied at roadblocks as harassment. Roadblocks operated by FARDC elements are the most harsly criticized because of the ambivalence of the way they operate. While providing security, some soldiers harass the population and even participate in looting people passing by. As an example, during a group discussion, inhabitants of Kambale locality (Bunyakiri, Kalehe Territory) claimed that the multiplication of military roadblocks in their locality since 2014 intended to counter the incursions of militiamen, had only increased the insecurity, as the soldiers deployed at these roadblocks were working with certain village chiefs to ransom the population.

Soldiers' behavior at roadblocks is largely conditioned by the fact that they do not receive food rations. In addition, they receive irregular pay that does not allow them to make ends meet. They have to be "resourceful" to survive. The only possibility is to tax the populations. In a group discussion, some inhabitants of Kitchanga locality (Kalima grouping, Buhavu chiefdom, Kalehe territory) said they were afraid to go to their fields because of the many FARDC roadblocks. According to them, everything is taxed! Even to get fish from their ponds, they have to collect several authorizations from the chiefdom, the ANR, the department of the environment, and so on. All of these authorizations must be paid for. Villagers are thus harassed either by militiamen, law enforcement agents, as well as local authorities.

The FONER roadblocks are also worth mentioning. This agency collects road taxes and license-fees on oil and fuel. But nothing has been done on the ground to improve the quality of the roads, much less to meet the development needs as defined by the legislation. The above-mentioned reasons have led several civil society actors to call for the removal of FONER roadblocks. An economic operator summarized the position of civil society by stating that it is not by multiplying roadblocks that state agencies will control fraud. Nor will the presence of the military at roadblocks put an end to insecurity. What is needed is an effective strategy to tackle this issue. For example, to some extent, the establishment of a singular destination to collect all taxes could mitigate predation. Moreover, the army must play its role of securing the national territory. Indeed, fraud does not only take place inside the country, but also at the borders where the security system must be enhanced.

6 |
Conclusion

This study aimed to understand and document the social relations that develop around roadblocks. We concluded that despite the fact that they were initially created for administrative reasons (mainly to control the mobility of people and goods) and were portrayed, over time, as points of harassment and *road looting*, the roadblocks have come to generate several dynamics of their own.

Regardless of the motivations and objectives that led to their creation they are characterized by three interrelated norms. The first is the norm of the *Article 15*. Indeed, while state actors involved in roadblocks find an "additional salary" to cover their family needs, non-state actors and indirect actors are deployed in the roadblocks as if they were in a professional space that allows them to live at the "rhythm of the country".

Roadblocks have gradually become part of the social landscape of the areas in which they are located and have even become central points in social and economic dynamics. This is in line with the main argument of this study. However, their embedding is influenced by the perception people have of

roadblocks with regards to the motivations behind their installation and their impact on their daily lives.

Their embedding also depends on security dynamics. Even if there are mixed opinions on whether or not roadblocks should be maintained, they are an inescapable part of the road network. Roadblocks operated by the *Sens-Unique Association* (for urban areas) and those of Mboko and Makobola-Ihamba (for rural areas) provide a good illustration of this reality.

Roadblocks remain sites of extraction and harassment, even though they are now part of the social landscape and contribute to the survival of some families. Nevertheless, roadblocks are a boon for state and non-state agents and populations that have economic activities around them

For roadblock users, such as truck drivers, motorcyclists and their passengers, roadblocks are places where people are robbed. For the roadblock agents, roadblocks are a source of income for their families. In short, they are road-blocks "au rythme du pays."

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