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Local elites' extraversion and repositioning: continuities and changes in Congo's mineral production networks

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Abstract

This article calls for a historical and spatial approach to studying the role of local elites in mineral production networks, paying attention to how they operate across scales and how they navigate structural constraints over time. Using empirical data from different mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it conceptualizes local elites as those who access and control (exclude others from) the factors of production (land, labour and capital). It argues they are able to do so because they operate across scales (extraversion) and adapt to changes in the political economy (repositioning). The article highlights their role as labour mediators, (land/mineral) rent appropriators, capital accumulators and illuminates how coercion and redistribution may work together to achieve control.

Keywords: mining; local elites; extraversion; access control; Democratic Republic of Congo.

1. Introduction

Mineral production networks connect underground deposits and mineral-bearing land in specific places to trading houses, smelters and manufacturers operating at a global level. The global production network approach (GPN) has sensitized us to the importance of incorporating 'horizontal' relationships into the analysis of global networks, which had been neglected in the global commodity chains (GCC) and global value chains (GVC) literature (most clearly articulated by Bair 2005). It emphasizes the 'territoriality' of networks and pays attention to actors who are not directly involved in production and trade, but play an important role in governing – that is, setting the conditions under which others must operate (Henderson et al 2002). The GPN lense has only recently been used to study extractives (Bridge 2008) and artisanal mining in particular (Geenen 2018, McQuilken 2018, McQuilken & Hilson 2018). We adopt it here not to describe the network as a whole, but to zoom in on one particular actor occupying a central position in such networks: *local elites* controlling mining rents and labour at the production level. Their power is not only based on economic resources, nor solely on a political mandate, a social network, a religious or customary position, but rather on a combination of these. Their qualification as 'local' may be misleading as they make use of their networks to operate at supra-local levels, connecting different nodes in the mineral production network. We use insights from Bayart (2000; 2010) to account for this 'extraversion', but at the same time we are interested in the relationship between these elites and the local labour force. For this reason, we focus on local-level practices of controlling land, labour and capital, drawing on access theory as developed by Ribot & Peluso (2003). This leads to a focus on two empirical questions: how do local elites benefit from mineral production, and how are they able to exclude others from these benefits? We examine these questions over time and across different case studies in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

While research in different mineral-rich countries has highlighted the crucial role of local elites as mediators, owners or rent-seekers (see among others Werthmann 2003; Fisher 2007; Verbrugge 2015), attempts to compare across cases and time periods have been limited. Our contribution can therefore be read as a call for a historical and spatial approach, paying attention to how local elites operate across scales and how they navigate structural constraints over time. More concretely, we unravel continuities and changes in the roles local elites have taken up in different production modes that have historically occurred – and coincided - in the DRC. These production modes are rather artificially separated here (in more or less chronological order) for the sake of readability. Yet the use of the term 'mineral production network' also leaves more room to see connections and overlap between different production modes.

Our theoretical argument speaks to the literature on brokerage (Lewis & Mosse 2006; Stovel & Shaw 2012), big men (Sahlins 1963; Daloz 2003; Utas 2012), patronage (Wolf, 1966) and elite capture (Platteau 2004), which will be outlined in section two. It states that local elites' ability to access and control (exclude others from) land, labour and capital is defined by them 1) operating across scales ('extraversion') and 2) adapting to changes in the political economy ('repositioning'). The empirical analysis presented in section three highlights their role as labour mediators, (land/mineral) rent appropriators and capital accumulators, and shows how coercion and redistribution may work together to achieve this. It is informed by - data collected in Congo's South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga provinces during field research both authors have periodically carried out between 2005 and 2015. Data include hundreds of qualitative interviews, documents such as letters, statements and legal documents, and participant observation. We also rely on secondary data, more particularly academic publications and reports as well as archival sources.

2. Local elites, extraversion and repositioning

In his classic book on the state in Africa, Jean-François Bayart (2000) argued that there is a long history of African elites trying to make up for the insufficiencies of their domestic economies by repeatedly entering into (unequal) relationships with outside actors, in the hope that such relationships provide them with the necessary resources to consolidate their power position at home. By applying these 'strategies of extraversion', "Africans (…) have been active agents in the *mise en dépendance* of their societies, sometimes opposing it and at other times joining it" (2010: 24). They play a role as brokers, "connecting actors in systems of social, economic, or political relations in order to facilitate access to valued resources" (Stovel & Shaw, 2012: 141). But this role is schizophrenic, on the one hand "easing social interaction, enhancing economic activity, and facilitating political development"; on the other hand, nurturing exploitation, personal enrichment and corruption (idem). In the case of development aid, for example, Platteau (2004) has demonstrated that development brokers tend to capture aid resources for private use, a process that has been named 'elite capture'.

While it is true that elites "may defend their own interests and that they continuously seek to acquire ever-increasing resources by all available means", including predatory and violent ones (coercion), they also strategically redistribute part of these resources (Daloz, 2003). This dimension has been apprehended in the literature on 'big men', applying Sahlin's (1963) concept to the case of African political elites (Utas 2012). In the words of Daloz (2003: 280), “the Big Man accumulates wealth in order to redistribute it to gain political support. This political capital, in turn, allows him to extract more economic resources”. Big men draw on different sources of authority, as is exemplified by Lentz’s (1998) study of ‘the chief, the mine captain and the politician’ in Northern Ghana. In the case of eastern DRC, Vogel (2018) draws on the literature on patronage (Wolf, 1966; Scott, 1972) to characterize such figures as ‘incontournables’, navigating multiple (political, customary, economic and military) networks at the local, national and international level.

By focusing on the factors of production (land, labour, capital) in Congo’s mineral production networks, we aim to shed more light on *how* local elites benefit from mineral production and trade, and how they are able to exclude others from these benefits. For this purpose, we combine Bayart’s (2000: 254) ‘formalities of action’ with Ribot and Peluso’s (2003) ‘access mechanisms’. According to Bayart, African elites have, in the course of the twentieth century, developed six major repertoires of action in their dealings with powerful players from outside the continent such as trading partners, missionary societies, colonial administrations, and foreign companies. These are (i) the use of coercion, (ii) trickery (strategies to mislead or deceive foreign masters), (iii) flight (avoiding or escaping foreign control), (iv) mediation (strategically brokering between outside actors and local populations), (v) appropriation (adopting foreign discourses but also elements of foreign material cultures), and, finally, (vi) rejection (the opposite of appropriation). As will become clear in the rest of the article, these repertoires of action are very helpful in describing the extraverted nature of Congo’s mining economy and in making sense of the strategies of African elites to safeguard and strengthen their positions in the face of constant changes in the global economy (see also Marysse & Tshimanga 2013). However, Bayart’s concepts do not help us very much in explaining how these (vertical) networks relate to the local political economic context in terms of who controls the means of production.

Therefore, we also aim to draw on Ribot & Peluso’s access theory, which is inspired by a Marxist tradition in political economy that differentiates between those who possess the means of production (the ruling bourgeoisie in capitalism) and those who labour with other people’s capital or means of production (the proletariat). According to Ribot & Peluso, this translates into a distinction between ‘access maintenance’ (the ability to keep your own resource access open) and ‘access control’ (the ability to facilitate or exclude other people’s access). The ways in which individuals maintain or control access have been categorized as access mechanisms. However, “the ability to benefit is never absolute or definitive, but the outcome of a continuous bargaining process and the product of a changing political-economic context” (Geenen, 2014: 264). Paying attention to elites’ agency – in combination with the more structural local and supra-local trends that define their ability to benefit - thus allows to see how they ‘reposition’ themselves so as to keep control over land, labour and capital. In doing so, they combine coercion with redistribution in seemingly schizophrenic ways.

Critical readers might argue that our account bears strong resemblance to dependency theory, which constituted an influential and popular theoretical framework for the analysis of (under)development from the 1960s to the 1980s (Mahoney & Rodriguez-Franco 2016). Among scholars in the North, dependency theory has become most closely identified with the work of André Gunder Frank and his followers (Palma 1978; Fischer 2015), who have been criticized for putting too much emphasis on external factors in explaining development outcomes. Amongst other things, they asserted that mineral-rich developing countries were prevented from benefiting from their mineral wealth due to highly unequal power relationships between countries in the center of the capitalist world and those in the periphery, with the latter merely serving as the suppliers of raw materials. According to these authors, (neo-)colonial elites facilitated foreign exploitation by misusing their role as intermediaries between local producers and foreign buyers (see e.g. Frank 1974: 5).

We would like to emphasize that our argument is, in two important respects, different from the approach taken by the Frank school in dependency theory. First of all, we make a deliberate choice to highlight the agency of local elites in Congo's mineral production networks. Rather than presenting them as passive tools of foreign capitalist players, we follow Bayart's example in documenting and rendering visible the elites' remarkable capacity to combine different registers of power, to reposition themselves in view of changing political and economic conditions, and to bend the presence of outside actors in their own advantage. Second, we show that local elites did not only develop strategies to protect their own interests or those of their foreign allies, but that there are also several examples of elites offering protection and support to their followers as well as redistributing part of their wealth.

That being said, the preceding should not be taken to imply that, in our opinion, dependency theory as a whole needs to be discarded. In fact, as Fischer (2015) has aptly pointed out, there have been other (predominantly Latin American) approaches in dependency theory that did recognize the importance of Southern agency and internal dynamics. Scholars like Cardoso & Faletto (1977: 10-11, cited in Palma 1978: 910), for instance, sought to explain the development of relationships of dependency through a thorough examination of the interplay between internal and external forces:

> "We conceive the relationship between external and internal forces as forming a complex whose structural links are not based on mere external forms of exploitation and coercion, but are rooted in coincidences of interests between local dominant classes and international ones, and, on the other side, are challenged by local dominated groups and classes. In some circumstances, the networks of coincident or reconciliated interests might expand to include segments of the middle class, if not even alienated parts of working classes. In other circumstances, segments of dominant classes might seek internal alliance with middle classes, working classes, and even peasants, aiming to protect themselves from foreign penetration that contradicts their interests".

Approaches like these, which examine the active and widely varied roles dominant classes can play in processes of dependency, correspond closely with the perspective we adopt in this paper.

In what follows we analyse elites' extraversion and repositioning in view of some structural trends characterizing pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial artisanal and industrial, militarized, neoliberal and small-scale mining in the DRC (see table 1). For the sake of readability this overview is presented in a chronological way, although in reality demarcations between the different time periods/production modes are obviously unclear and messy. Inevitably, this overview will also gloss over some of the nuances and peculiarities of each case study. Finally, the vignettes presented here should be considered as *illustrative* of continuities and changes in Congo's mineral production networks, not as an exhaustive and representative overview. Despite these limitations, we believe this article's contribution lies in its explicit historical and scalar perspective, which may lay the basis for more comparative work and a more comprehensive understanding of local elites' positions in mineral production networks.

Table 1. Overview of continuities and changes in Congo's mineral production networks

Changes	Dominant production mode with rough time indication	Continuities	Empirical examples presented in the article
Expansion of copper market	Precolonial mining 19th- early 20th century		Sacred kings Labour contractors
Transformation of traditional authority & access to land	Colonial mining 1920s-1960		Chiefs Labour contractors

<table>
<tr><td>Capitalist mode of production</td><td></td><td rowspan="6">Labour mediators

Rent appropriators

Capital accumulators

Coercion & redistribution</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Nationalization
Commodity prices down
Informal production</td><td>Postcolonial industrial mining
1960s-1990s</td><td>President's clients
Traders & comptoirs</td></tr>
<tr><td>Transformation of access to land
Commodification
Informal production</td><td>Artisanal mining
1970s-2010s</td><td>Big men
Traders & comptoirs</td></tr>
<tr><td>Transformation of economic & social structures
Violence</td><td>Militarized mining
1990s-2000s</td><td>Big men
Militarized networks</td></tr>
<tr><td>Attracting FDI
Commodity prices up</td><td>Neoliberal industrial mining
2000s-2010s</td><td>Big men
Chiefs
Labour contractors</td></tr>
<tr><td>New technology and investment</td><td>Small-scale mining
2010s</td><td>Big men
Traders & comptoirs</td></tr>
</table>

3. Continuities and changes in Congo's mineral production networks

3.1. Precolonial mining

Congo's mining history did not start with the arrival of Belgian colonialism. The former province of Katanga, situated in the south-eastern part of the country, has a long tradition of copper mining that underwent some structural changes in the precolonial period. In this section we illustrate the expansion of the copper production network in Katanga, in other words, the increasing integration of copper production in regional trade and economies.

In precolonial Katanga, a distinction existed between 'sacred kings', who ruled over people and who were believed to possess supernatural powers, and 'chiefs of the earth' or land/clan chiefs, who were considered the legitimate custodians of the fertility of the land and its inhabitants. The 'sacred kings' extracted rents from their subjects in the form of tribute payments, which they subsequently used to participate in the regional trade and accumulate capital. In doing so, they were able to acquire precious goods from elsewhere, increase their personal wealth and redistribute resources to their clients. The sacred kings applied a strategy of extraversion and made skilful use of their position as intermediaries between local producers living under their rule, and the regional economic system. The land chiefs, for their part, only benefited from precolonial mining through their authority to manage what Wolf (1966) has called the 'ceremonial fund': that part of the surplus production that was used to organize mining-related rituals and ceremonies (for instance asking the ancestors for help in avoiding accidents and increasing production).

In Sanga territory, a copper-rich area in Katanga, the ultimate control over the mines was in the hands of Mpande, the paramount chief and sacred king. People coming from outside were allowed to mine and keep the ores they had dug up, but only on the condition that they handed over part of their production as a tribute. In some cases, Mpande would delegate the division of labour and technical control over the mining process to a specialized labour contractor. In the case of iron production, for instance, the person overseeing the mining activities was a man called *kaburura,* who gave tasks to the groups of furnace builders, smelters, black smiths, ordinary workers, apprentices and slaves. At the end of the metallurgical activities, all the participants in the production process –

with the exception of the apprentices and the slaves – were paid with iron and copper products, while Mpande claimed part of the production as a tribute (Munanga 1986: 263-269).

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Yeke, a group from the north-western part of what is today known as Tanzania, started developing trading relationships with Katangese copper producers. In 1856, the son of one of these traders, who would later become the ruler of the Yeke empire, moved to Katanga with a group of followers, marrying into local royalty and establishing a good relationship with Mpande. Initially, these immigrants were only allowed to work as traders and were excluded from participation in mining and smelting because they lacked the necessary ritual and technological skills, which were jealously protected by families of Sanga master smelters (Legros 1996; Herbert 1984: 44-75). It was not until the military occupation of Katanga by the Yeke that Yeke smelters, who were already familiar with the working of iron in their homeland, were given the opportunity to become initiated in the techniques of copper working of the indigenous Sanga smelters. After being initiated, the Yeke, who formed guilds that also incorporated their former Sanga masters, came to dominate the copper production network. The Yeke conquest created a new copper market and gave a strong impetus to production. Metal exports in the form of copper wire were especially directed towards the West, where the Yeke found outlets among the Lwena, various groups in Angola, and Portuguese traders (de Hemptinne 1926: 372). Once the Yeke ruler had managed to consolidate his political dominance in Katanga, he started altering customary rights of access to mineral resources, imposing a levy on output, introducing a system of forced labour (though not in a generalized manner), and enforcing a monopoly on the trade in minerals. These innovations enabled the Yeke ruler to appropriate a larger share of the mining rents, which, in turn, made it possible for him to buy guns to uphold his military dominance in the area until the Belgian colonial conquest in 1891 (Herbert 1984: 160).

There are good reasons to argue that the first ruler of the Yeke was, in many respects, a classic big man. Unlike the aforementioned sacred kings, he was not someone who succeeded to, or was installed in an existing position of leadership, but an ambitious and successful entrepreneur who came to power through a series of impressive performances in the economic arena. Once he had established his rule in Katanga, the Yeke sovereign held a monopoly on all the goods destined for long-distance trade (mainly ivory and slaves), while he also managed to lay his hands on a considerable part of the goods circulating on the domestic Katangese market. As far as copper was concerned, 10 per cent had to be handed over to the sovereign by way of tribute (Legros 1996: 108-119). This made him a successful appropriator of rents and accumulator of capital goods. Control over labour was established through the creation of guilds (dominated by Yeke but benefiting from Sanga technical knowledge) and the introduction of forced labour.

3.2. Colonial mining

The role of African elites in controlling land, labour and capital changed considerably during colonial times. Although several factors help to account for this, the most important ones are the transformation – and partial destruction – of traditional authority structures and institutions by the Belgians, the eclipse of artisanal production as a result of the emergence of industrial mining dominated by foreign capitalist interests, and the introduction of a capitalist mode of production in different sectors of the economy[1].

[1] Of course, the emergence of capitalist modes of production went hand in hand with the introduction of 'state' or 'national' currencies by the Belgian colonial authorities. For a short overview of Congo's currency, see Walker 2017: 291-292.

The Belgian colonizers developed various strategies to destabilize the indigenous agrarian economy and to ensure Africans' participation in the colonial wage labour economy in general, and the mining industry in particular. They first of all abolished several of the larger chieftaincies and developed their own system of indirect rule, co-opting chiefs into the colonial administration and setting quotas for the amount of goods, labour and taxes chiefs were expected to furnish (Beke 1999). Second, they replaced the traditional system of tribute payments with a system of head taxes that forced people – especially men - to leave their rural homes and work for wages in the mines or on plantations (Seibert 2011: 384). Members of the customary elite thus lost control over a significant part of the mining rents. Third, in view of growing concerns about the 'dangers' associated with Africans' migration to the urban areas, new measures were taken to restrict the mobility of the indigenous population, including the introduction of pass laws (requiring rural Africans to carry documents authorizing their presence in urban areas) and the imposition of mobility taxes (Hunt 1991: 482-483). Fourth, a number of measures were taken to bring the land system more in line with the requirements of a capitalist economy. The measures were meant to promote private land ownership and had the effect of curtailing the control of African traditional elites over the process of land distribution. Prior to Belgian colonial rule, private land property did not exist. Land was held in common by groups defined along ethnic, lineage or clan lines. Individual members of these groups only held use rights over land. Their leaders, who acted as the custodians of customary land on behalf of the ancestors, were responsible for the allocation of land rights. The Belgian colonial administration provoked the gradual erosion of this customary system of land distribution by declaring all unoccupied land property of the state, by demarcating the boundaries of chiefdoms (thus preventing the expansion of customary lands), by introducing a system of land registration and private ownership, and by confiscating considerable portions of land for the creation of national parks and anti-erosion forests (Van Acker 2005, Henriet 2015; Vlassenroot & Huggins 2005).

Despite all these efforts to create the necessary conditions for a flourishing colonial wage labour economy, the threat of labour shortages did not disappear. The colonial administration called in the help of private and semi-public labour recruitment agencies. The *Bourse du Travail du Kata*nga (BTK), a parastatal agency, had the reputation of having the capacity to supply cheap labour thanks to the use of coercion and the payment of low wages. Private agencies such as Tanganyika Concessions Ltd and Correa Frères offered higher wages and sometimes recruited workers beyond the borders of the Belgian Congo. Very interesting for the purposes of this article is that the private recruitment agencies did not only work with Greek, Italian and Portuguese staff members (mostly people with a military background), but that they also had a number of Africans on their payroll as contractors and recruiters. Higginson points out that the latter were just as ruthless as their white colleagues and certainly did not refrain from the use of violence and coercion to make people join the ranks of the colonial labour force (Higginson 1989).

Chiefs were expected to help meet the labour requirements of the colonial wage labour economy. When push came to shove, however, there was considerable variation in the way customary authorities reacted to these requests. In some cases, chiefs were happy to collaborate with the labour recruiters visiting their villages. In exchange for cash payments and personal gifts they encouraged young boys and men to register for employment (Cuvelier 2011: 82-83). One could argue that these replaced the tribute payments of the precolonial era and thus formed a new type of mining rents. These chiefs were strongly aware of their position as labour mediators. They sometimes strategically exaggerated the difficulties they had in finding enough recruits in order to receive higher bonuses from the recruitment agencies. In other cases, customary authorities were much more reluctant or even refused to support the colonial wage labour economy. Not only were these chiefs unwilling to report on African deserters (i.e. men who had fled their work sites and had returned to their home areas without asking permission from their employer), they also declined to encourage their subjects to work for one of the colonial companies (Higginson 1989).

3.3. Post-colonial industrial mining

In the first period of post-colonial industrial mining, roughly between 1960 and 1990, two major changes affected mineral production and the position of local elites therein. First, the new regime's nationalization policies initially created opportunities for rent seeking and capital accumulation on the part of 'new' elites, but eventually produced a major crisis in industrial mining. Second, falling international commodity prices (copper in 1975, tin in 1985) further deepened the crisis in the formal economy and triggered the shift towards informal production of mainly gold and diamonds, creating new opportunities for ('new' and 'old') local elites.

The position of customary chiefs was further weakened in the early 1970s by attempts to integrate them in the regional administration and to set eligibility criteria (such as a minimum level of education), but these attempts never fully succeeded (Young & Turner 1985). Other policies, however, created opportunities for new elites to accumulate capital, appropriate rents and control labour. The 'Zairianisation' process for example nationalized firms and plantations in two waves: in 1973 and 1975 (Gould 1979: 98). In the mining sector, these measures targeted the regime's 'cash cows' in copper and cobalt production as well as some large gold and diamond producers, for which management was handed over to the president's political allies . Mobutu's position heavily relied on patronage, appropriating state resources on a massive scale and distributing them through clientelist networks in order to ensure loyalty (Young & Turner 1985). Local big men thus managed to "consolidate virtually autonomous fiefdoms organized around commerce in diamonds, gold, coffee, timber, cobalt and arms" (Reno 1997: 40). But these politics diverted resources that were crucial for developing and maintaining the country's productive capacity. Public infrastructure was neglected, services like health and education were no longer provided, and the means of production entered the hands of incapable owners and managers. After the 1975 fall of the copper prices, Gécamines' (the nationalized copper producing company) production, which previously accounted for 60 to 66 percent of total exports, dwindled, plunging the country into a deep crisis (Gran 1979).

These changes in the broader political economic context affected and reshaped mineral production networks, as we illustrate with an example from the *Compagnie Minière des Grands Lacs Africains* (MGL), which had started producing gold, cassiterite, beryl and wolfram in the Kivus and Maniema in the 1920s[2]. Although this company has never been nationalized, it did take some steps towards the 'Africanization' of lower and middle management positions[3]. In March 1961, a European MGL agent reported that "the administrative director and his assistant are exerting absolute power, despite being completely incompetent, and are reducing the European agents' positions to those of mere advisers"; they are behaving "in an arrogant and threatening way"[4]. While Africanization created opportunities for new, politically well-connected elites, it also sparked new divisions. In the case of MGL for example, different ethnic groups started to fight over key management positions and to make legitimacy claims[5].

[2] MGL was never nationalized, but after some restructurings and mergers it was succeeded by Sominki (*Société Minière et Industrielle du Kivu*, since 1976), which was 28% state-owned.
[3] Report in MGL archives, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, 25/01/1968.
[4] Report in MGL archives, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, 08/03/1961.
[5] *Note for Mr. Burnotte from Mr. Galliez and Mr. Malengreaux*, 25/05/1961, MGL archives KMMA. *Letter by Safiannikof,* 9/2/1962, MGL archives KMMA.

MGL and its successor Sominki had an ambivalent relationship with local chiefs and politicians. On the one hand, complaints about their 'arrogant', 'corrupt' and 'demanding' attitudes were legion[6]. Local chiefs were reportedly complicit in protecting 'illegal miners' [stealing gold from the company's deposits and factory] and receiving the rents of illegal gold in return[7]. Provincial politicians were said to be protecting small companies mining on the outskirts of the concession[8]. On the other hand, the security forces and local elites were strategic partners in the stabilisation of tense relations. Chief Longangi of Wamuzimu chiefdom, for example, actively recruited people to work for the company and prohibited his subjects to mine artisanally[9]. In return, he expected (material) favours from the company[10].

When industrial productivity declined and international (copper and tin) prices fell, much of the formal production shifted to informal networks. This also accounted for the emergence of new elite groups around the 'illegal' extraction and smuggling of gold. This can be illustrated by the case of the *Ninja* in Kamituga (Bulambo 2002, Dupriez 1987, Geenen 2015). *Ninja* miners intruded in Sominki's tunnels and sold the extracted ore to traders operating above-ground and smuggling the gold to Bukavu or across the border. In return these traders sponsored the *Ninja*, some of whom stayed underground for weeks in a row, by providing them with food and equipment. Some of these traders, who were able to accumulate capital, expand their business and invest, emerged into what MacGaffey (1987) has labelled a class of 'indigenous capitalists'. By the late 1980s this 'parallel' gold production network was firmly established and key actors from outside the network sought to control it and extract some rents. The Mining Police – which was officially mandated with securing Sominki's production - set up a system of 'entrance permits', meaning that illegal miners had to pay a fixed contribution to be allowed in the pits. Sominki team leaders (*capita*) followed this example and started levying a tax on the *Ninja* as well as on their own team members. This way the ''illegal' network became fully incorporated into the system of industrial production. Traders got involved in smuggling, *capita* played a double role as Sominki team leaders and *Ninja* gatekeepers, and police commanders supervised a gold theft system.

This blurs the lines between what we call here postcolonial industrial mining and artisanal mining, between legal and illegal. It evidences how boom and bust cycles create opportunities for new elites to accumulate capital (e.g. the managers of nationalized companies, the traders/smugglers), appropriate rents (e.g. the Mining Police) and control labour (e.g. the *capita*). But it also illustrates how 'old' elites (e.g. chief Longangi) use extraversion strategies (making alliances with the foreign company) and reposition themselves (substituting tribute payments from his subjects for material incentives from the company – or collect both).

3.4. Artisanal mining

As argued above, artisanal mining (re)emerged in the wake of the structural economic crisis that was caused by internal as well as external factors. The role of local elites in artisanal mineral production can be linked to two main changes. First, there were changes in access to land, related to legal ambiguities and increasing commodification. Second, informal production deepened and informal trade networks expanded in the relative absence of corporate and government enforcement mechanisms.

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[6] Reports in MGL archives, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren*,* 09/06/1965 and 13/09/1967.

[7] Memorandum in MGL archives, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren*,* 04/09/1963.

[8] Idem.

[9] Interview with old man, Luhwindja, 01/2011; interview with Serge Lammens, 05/09/2008; personal archives Serge Lammens.

[10] Letter in MGL archives, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, 08/07/1962.

In the eastern provinces, illegal *comptoirs* (export offices) smuggled minerals to neighbouring countries, especially Uganda, Burundi and Kenya. *Au fond* this pattern did not change much from the 1970s until now, despite the fact that in the late 1990s and early 2000s these mining sites and trade routes became integrated in a regional war economy, as will be illustrated later. Although the 2002 Mining Code provided a legal framework for artisanal mining, very few zones have been demarcated as artisanal mining zones, leaving most of the miners to work in areas covered by companies' research or exploitation permits. The extent to which the former are facing repression or are tolerated by such companies, depends on the stage the mining project is in, on corporate practices, and on local socio-political realities (Geenen & Verweijen, 2017). Here local elites play a crucial role as they control access to the mines in the relative absence of corporate and government enforcement. This is illustrated with examples from Luhwindja and Kalimbi, two mines in South Kivu province.

In South Kivu's Bushi area, where Luhwindja's gold mines are situated, land was traditionally both a community good and a community responsibility (Sosner 1979). The most common form of customary contract was the *kalinzi*, a kind of usufruct right that was granted by the king (*mwami*) in exchange for a symbolic payment (cattle and banana beer) and that created a relationship between the king and his subjects, rather than a proprietor relationship with the land. The colonial administration introduced a division between 'state land' and 'indigenous land' governed by customary law. This duality persisted until the introduction of the General Property Law in 1973, which proclaimed all land state property and introduced the possibility of giving out concessions. Although de jure customary chiefs lost their control over the allocation of the land, de facto the dual system persisted, which has resulted in high levels of ambiguity regarding the land's legal status, user rights and governing authorities (Utshudi & Ansoms 2011). At the same time the nature of the *kalinzi* system has changed, increasingly resembling a commercial transaction granting full ownership rights to those who have paid for it. Nevertheless, neo-traditional practices are still disguised as 'traditional', which helps the customary chiefs to retain their legitimacy, extract rents and control labour. This system for land governance was transposed to gold mining operations, for which miners need to ask the chief's (*mwami*) permission (Geenen 2015). Miners pay a monthly tribute called *citore* (value of 1 gramme of gold), and in periods of high production, may have to make ad hoc contributions amounting to 10 to 50 percent of total production. In some areas that are formally situated inside industrial concessions but practically abandoned, the company allows and even encourages this, since they have an interest in maintaining good relationships with customary power. For the *mwami* it is an opportunity to extend control over land rights to the underground and to substantially benefit from its yields. Some members of the royal family have used these rents to invest in business, and hence accumulate financial capital.

Kalimbi, a cassiterite mine in Buhavu chieftaincy, Kalehe territory, has been under control of big man Placide Chirimwami since the early 1990s (Cuvelier 2010, 2013). Chirimwami is a successful businessman who not only owns large stretches of land in the area, but who also has kinship ties with the head of the Buhavu chieftaincy as well as excellent connections with a wide range of politicians and administrators thanks to his longstanding involvement in local and regional politics. As a result of this network of contacts in different spheres and levels of society, he has been able to control access to the mine, to appropriate mining rents, and to adapt to changing political-economic realities. From his deceased brother, Chirimwami acquired the mining permits of *Société Minière de Goma* (SDMG), a French industrial mining company that operated the Kalimbi mine between 1980 and 1984. Presenting himself as the new 'owner' of Kalimbi, and backing up his ownership claim with official documents that he had managed to obtain thanks to his good connections, Chirimwami initially faced one major difficulty: he was unable to evict the artisanal miners who had started working there after the departure of SDMG. In an attempt to win their sympathy, he created an organisation called COOMBECKA (*Coopérative du Bien-être de Kalehe*), which, in 1993, was officially recognised as a cooperative by the provincial authorities. In his capacity of chairman of the cooperative and gatekeeper to the mine, Chirimwami appropriated part of the mining rents, demanding 10 percent of all cassiterite produced in the mine, and used coercion to force artisanal miners into compliance with his rules. When around 2007 the Canadian mining company Shamika Resources started exploration in the area, Chirimwani presented himself as the protector of the artisanal miners fearing eviction, and managed to negotiate a deal in which Shamika would financially compensate him. In doing so, he not only displayed the typical attitude of a big man who rewards the loyalty of his followers with support and protection, but he also demonstrated his capacity for extraversion, trying to derive personal financial benefit from the arrival of a powerful external player. Shamika's project, however, never materialised, and in the years after Chirimwami's position was undermined by competing big men and cooperatives.

Recent regulatory changes (since 2011) have created new opportunities for elite capture. One example is the mandatory grouping of individual miners in cooperatives, which must be seen as part of a broader formalization strategy with a strong legalist bias. However, case-studies have demonstrated that the compulsory regrouping in cooperatives has provided a very fertile ground for elite capture, such as in Ngweshe in South Kivu (De Haan &Geenen 2016) and in northern Katanga (Iguma 2017). Another example is the introduction of 'conflict-free' mineral supply chains. According to Vogel's (2008) analysis, these have "encouraged 'illegal' wartime *incontournables* to morph into 'legal' ones". The following section goes a bit back in time to analyse 'militarized mining'.

3.5. Militarized mining

Although militarized mining is not strictly confined in time (and some mines are still militarized today), the period of the second Congo war (1998-2003) should offer a starting point to understand the profound transformations as well as the continuities in mineral extraction and trade. During this war, Uganda and Rwanda were directly involved in the plundering of Congo's resources (Marysse 2005, Vlassenroot & Perrot 2012) and control over the mining sites and trade routes became an important incentive for fighting. The increasing fragmentation of public authority boosted the emergence of "clandestine and intersecting networks that appropriate elements of public and legal commercial dynamics and absorb them into privatized interaction" (Vogel, 2008). At the local level, the war situation created "new local complexes of power, profit and protection", disrupting traditional social and economic structures and leading to social transformation (Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers 2004: 40). Local labour markets were altered as insecurity affected petty trade, agricultural production and cattle-ranching and rural populations were massively displaced to urban centres. Mining sites became especially attractive after the coltan price peak in the early 2000s. According to Jackson (2002) the rush into the mines provoked profound changes in local livelihoods, the three main ones being the dollarization of rural economies (replacing the *Congolese franc* for the dollar), growing food insecurity as people abandoned agriculture, and the reversal of traditional agricultural trading patterns.

At the same time researchers have illuminated continuities with respect to the functioning of politico-military networks and to governance systems in place before, during and after the war. Writing about mining governance in Bisie mines, Garrett et al. (2009: 1) asserted that "mechanisms of exploitation that have been instituted during the war can largely survive in peacetime conditions". This is thanks to the continued privatization of public authority, the "growing militarisation of economic life and the survival of wartime networks and their *incontournable* kingpins" (Vogel 2008, see also De Koning 2012). Vlassenroot & Perrot (2012: 44) show that Uganda's military presence in eastern DRC was based on deals with local elites which comprised territorial control as well as private business deals. They explain how these new deals restructured existing networks, although Ugandan commanders were never able to *fully* control local power networks.

Appropriation of mining rents happened through direct or indirect control: forced labour (commonly called *salongo*, a term that normally refers to compulsory community work as introduced by Mobutu), entrance permits, flat taxes, confiscation and roadblocks. Human Rights Watch (2005: 33) described cases of forced labour around Mongbwalu gold mine in Ituri:

> "the FNI [F*ront Nationalisé et Intégratif*] combatants come every morning door-to-door. They split up to find young people and they take about sixty of them to the Agula River to find the gold. They are guarded by the military and are not paid. They are forced to work. If the authorities try to intervene they are beaten. The chief has tried to stop this by reasoning with them, but they don't like this."

Interesting in this quote is the reference to the chief who tried to resist such coercive practices. But just like in the colonial period, some chiefs condoned, if not actively encouraged, *salongo* for military men. In Mukungwe in South Kivu, for example, the *chef de groupement* himself mobilized an armed group (M40) that was notoriously violent and financed by local gold production (Geenen & Claessens 2016). Garrett et al (2009) documented the case of Bisie mine in North Kivu. In December 2004 (so after the 2003 peace agreement) this mine was taken over by former Mai-Mai soldiers, by then operating as the national army's 85th brigade. The 85th brigade installed a *salongo* system whereby production was confiscated by the soldiers at irregular times; in some cases up to 3 days of production per week[11]. In return, armed groups offered protection and a (relative) stability in some of these mining centers, which again illustrates the schizophrenic coincidence of coercive and redistributive measures.

3.6. Neoliberal industrial mining

Since the official end of the war in 2003 the government's strategy to attract foreign direct investment in large-scale mining, combined with changes in global commodity markets (booming demand for cobalt, spike in gold price) provoked changes in Congo's mineral production. Large-scale mining expanded in Katanga province (copper and cobalt), while the firm establishment of industrial companies was more difficult in the eastern provinces, given the security and logistical challenges. The repositioning of local elites will be illustrated by the cases of Banro Corporation, currently the only large-scale gold producer in South Kivu and Maniema province, and Tenke Fungurume Mining (TFM)[12], the biggest copper and cobalt mining project in Katanga.

First of all, transnational companies tend to rely on local labour hire companies for a flexible supply of cheap casual labour. These labour companies are owned or managed by local elites (chiefs, politicians, businesspeople). For the transnational companies, outsourcing to local firms is not only cost-reducing; it also allows them to comply with local content requirements imposed by the government[13], to win legitimacy at the local level, and to offer local elites something in return for the rent-seeking possibilities that have disappeared with the curtailed artisanal mining activities. An interviewee in Banro's Human Resources department explained for instance that service and labour hire contracts are preferably granted to local elites, not because they offer the highest quality

[11] The interpretation of what 'forced labour' is, is not always straightforward: see Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers 2004.

[12] The TFM project is currently run by a consortium composed of China Molybdenum Co Ltd (56%), the Chinese private equity firm BHR Partners (24%) and the Congolese state company Gécamines (20%)

[13] On February 8th 2017, a new law on subcontracting was promulgated, requiring companies in the sector to be headquartered in the DRC, to work with Congolese capital, and to be run by Congolese nationals.

services, but to keep them satisfied[14]. For local elites it creates new rent-seeking opportunities as they attempt to lower the labour costs so as to increase their own profits. Moreover, it perpetuates their ability to control labour by giving jobs to members of their clientelistic network and hence consolidating their own power position. Another way in which local elites control the labour market, is through recruitment committees acting as mediators between the transnational company and the unskilled labour force. In many cases, including in the Banro and TFM concessions, quota systems determine how many labourers each village may propose. In the Memorandum of Understanding Banro signed with BB Salamabila community in the Namoya concession, it is agreed that "the company as well as its subcontractors give priority to local manpower and will do its best to distribute jobs fairly among the different towns and villages"[15]. Such a fair distribution should be overseen by a committee operating under the 'Community Forum', whose task it is, among others, to determine who is 'local', and in which customary chiefs have a dominant voice. Yet the lack of clarity around who is considered to be 'local' opens the door for corruption. In exchange for a bribe, the committee frequently endorses files from immigrants, as was stated by numerous interviewees. Similarly, in the TFM concession, attempts were made to give priority to 'local' job seekers (Custers & Nordbrand 2008: 36), but the limited number of jobs created sparked popular discontent. On 14 January 2008 for example, 3000 to 5000 protesters took the streets of Fungurume. The matter is further complicated by the fact that thousands of people have migrated to Fungurume in search of a job opportunity: the population grew spectacularly from 40.000 people in 2006 to 150.000 in 2014 (Masele 2014: 6).

Protest against the lack of job opportunities in Katanga has also been expressed through other channels and with active involvement of local elites. In 2009, Lwanzo Lwa Mikuba, an urban socio-cultural association claiming to represent all the Sanga in Katanga, started pressuring TFM's management to increase the number of Sanga employed by 50 per cent (Gobbers 2016: 234, footnote 27). The association claimed that the "autochthonous" population (i.e. the Sanga) suffered from systematic discrimination by TFM, and accused the company of giving most of the jobs away to "*non-originaires*" or foreigners.[16] Being considered as the protectors of 'traditional' norms and values and as the moral leaders of their communities, certain customary chiefs in the TFM concession area collaborated with Lwanzo to mobilize their subjects for actions in defence of the interests of their ethnic group (Gobbers 2016: 222).

Local elites have thus skilfully adapted to a changing political economic landscape, in which the DRC became (again) increasingly attractive for foreign investors. Most rents from large-scale mining in the DRC do not flow back to the local level (Marysse and Tshimanga 2013). Instead, elites have (re)positioned themselves as labour mediators.

3.7. Small-scale mining

The 2002 Mining Code distinguishes between industrial, artisanal and small-scale mining. Whereas historically small-scale mining has not been widespread in the DRC, the semi-industrial production mode is now expanding. This is mainly due to two phenomena: the increasing presence of foreign investors and technology transfers, and the government policy encouraging mechanization and the transition from artisanal to small-scale mining. In the Ministry of Mine's vision (2010) and in line with

[14] Interview, Bukavu, 09/2015.
[15] Protocole d'Accord signé entre la société Namoya Mining Sarl et le Secteur de Bangubangu Salamabila, 2014.
[16] Interview with a high-level employee of Sanga origin working at TFM's social affairs department in Lubumbashi, 7 July 2017.

international policy thinking, this 'transition' is embraced as one of the main goals. It is believed to pull people out of poverty and contribute to the "emergence of a Congolese middle class"[17]. So far there is scarce evidence on the use of dredges for gold production by a Chinese company in Shabunda (Mushagalusa 2017), the introduction of crushing mills in South Kivu's mining sites (Bulambo et al forthcoming), or the presence of cyanide processing plants in Ituri and northern Katanga[18]. The presence of the dredges (in Shabunda) and crushing mills (in Kamituga) has already created conflicts over access to the gold mines. On the other hand, such semi-industrial operations offer clear opportunities for capital accumulation as they increase productivity and lower the labour cost. It remains to be seen what role different groups of local elites will take up in this emerging production mode. Research in Katanga (Iguma 2017, Diemel 2018) has demonstrated that the introduction of 'conflict-free' initiatives has concentrated power in the hands of a few large players, such as private *comptoirs* (export houses). They have increased their presence in the mining sites themselves and have, for example, installed semi-industrial washing facilities in Bukama territory.

4. Conclusion

Our historical vignettes have highlighted continuities and changes in Congo's mineral production network. Boom and bust cycles in industrial and artisanal mining have been triggered by external trends (commodity prices and demand) as well as the internal political economy. The location of local elites as mediators between such global, national and local dynamics allows and encourages them to (re)position themselves in view of changing political-economic circumstances. As our analysis demonstrates, their ability to benefit from mineral production, and exclude others from these benefits, not only derives from their position in the mineral production network, but also from historical continuities as well as changes in the political economic context.

Mediation has taken many different shapes in the course of Congo's mining history, ranging from customary chiefs assisting labour recruitment agencies in finding workers for the colonial mining industry, over local elites enabling large-scale mining corporations to continue their operations after Congolese independence, to businessmen concluding arrangements with foreign occupying forces and their Congolese allies, and cooperative leaders with foreign investors. Yet, what all these forms of mediation appear to have in common is that they always involve a strategic form of brokerage. Contrary to what the sociological literature on brokerage suggests, these brokers are not just 'connecting the dots'. Drawing on multiple sources of authority and capitalising on their position as intermediaries between the global and the local, elites have been able to sustain patron-client relationships, offering protection and assistance to their followers in exchange for the latter's loyalty and various types of material rewards, while at the same time also acting as gatekeepers, granting or facilitating outsiders' access to Congo's mineral riches in exchange for part of the mining rents.

Our analysis has demonstrated the persistent importance of (material and financial) appropriation by local elites. Whether in the form of tribute payments, financial compensations from external labour contractors, salaries and gifts from (colonial) governments and large-scale mining corporations, taxes paid by artisanal miners, or members' contributions in cooperatives, elites have always managed to derive material benefits from mineral production and trade. Congo's mining history is filled with examples of local strongmen taking advantage of the continuously high global demand for raw materials to obtain resources for themselves and to consolidate their dominant position at the

[17] Ministère des Mines, Termes de référence de la mission de service d'évaluation des mesures d'accompagnement de la décision de suspension des activités minières à effectuer dans les provinces du Nord-Kivu, Sud-Kivu et Maniema.
[18] Personal communication, 05/10/2018.

domestic level. In applying such 'strategies of extraversion', however, they have contributed to what Bayart has described as the *mise-en-dépendance* of their own societies.

Coercion has proven to be a frequently used and highly effective tool for capturing rents and mobilising labour in different phases of Congo's mining history. Pre-colonial rulers like the head of the Yeke empire introduced a system of forced labour in the artisanal mines under his control, recruiters working for the colonial mining industry frequently resorted to the use of violence to make people join the ranks of the wage labour force, and state and non-state armed groups organized systems of *salongo* in the war-affected areas of eastern DRC. In the course of Congo's mining history, labour shortages have thus repeatedly been solved with coercive tactics. At the same time, local elites strategically redistribute resources to their 'clients' in view of consolidating their own position, which makes their behaviour seemingly schizophrenic, but certainly strategic (or Janus-faced, after Schatzberg 1986).

Being aware of the risk to make sweeping generalizations, we have intentionally focused on structural continuities as we believe the current literature on elites' positions in mining is too fragmented and segmented between, say, artisanal mining and large-scale mining (Arnaldi di Balme & Lanzano 2013; Fisher 2007; Geenen 2015; Grätz, 2002; Verbrugge 2015; Werthmann 2003). Despite the fact that labour regimes in artisanal, small-scale mining and large-scale industrial mining are very different in terms of skills, management and organization, our analysis has shown that local elites have historically used strikingly similar mechanisms to control access to resources. Moreover, it has become evident that the access control of these elites has to a significant degree been shaped by their capacity to operate across different scales and the ability of some groups to adapt to changes in the political economy.

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