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Transnational Figurations of Displacement

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**Dear friends of the TRAFIG project,**

In this special edition of our newsletter, we want to draw your attention to two of our new publications based on our empirical research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, focusing on protracted displacement and translocal connections of internally displaced persons.

2020 was a difficult year in many ways, but especially for people who remain stuck in protracted displacement situations with even more limited options for ensuring their safety, security and livelihood. We hope that the insights from our findings will contribute to finding solutions that are tailored to the multifaceted challenges and capacities of persons affected.

As the year comes to an end, we would like to thank all friends of the TRAFIG project who have „stayed connected“ with us this year. We look forward to staying in touch with you in 2021 - in person and/or virtually via mail, social media, webinars or other formats.

For any enquiries, comments or recommendations, please write to [contact@trafig.eu](mailto:contact@trafig.eu).

Benjamin Etzold, Maarit Thiem and Gizem Güzelant on behalf of the TRAFIG team.

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**22 December 2020**

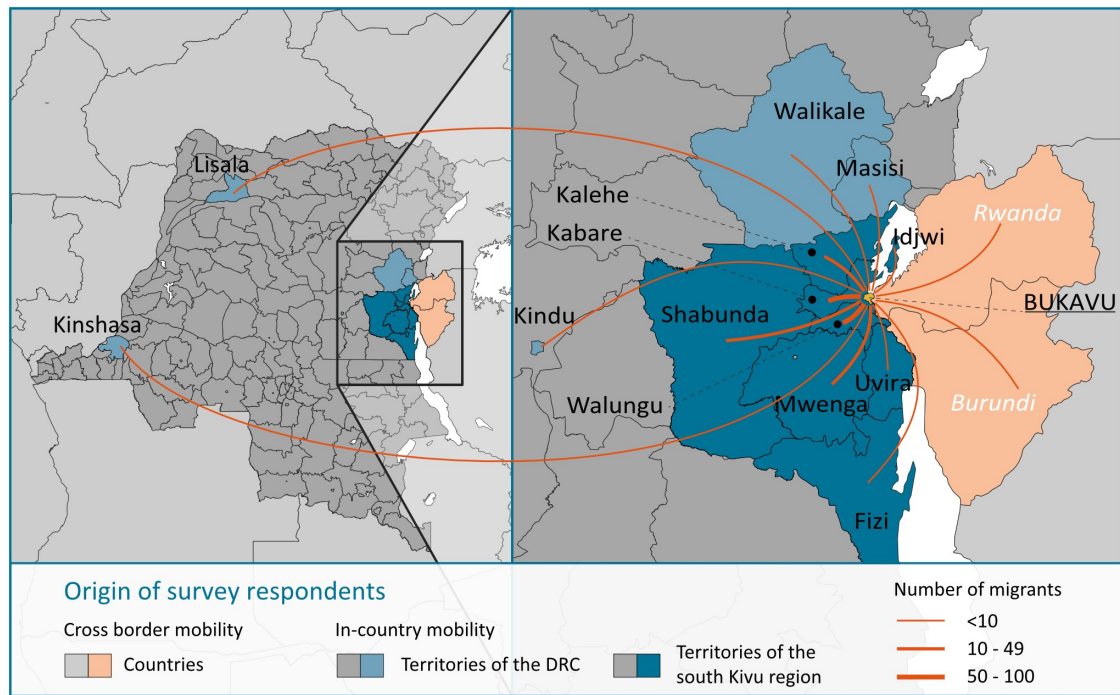
## **New TRAFIG publication \ Displaced persons' networks in the DR Congo**

The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is trapped in protracted conflict. As a result of this, many inhabitants of Bukavu have experienced displacement in their lives or have seen loved ones being forced to leave their places of origin. TRAFIG *working paper* no. 4, based on empirical findings, reflects on protracted displacement and translocal connections of Congolese IDPs.

In [TRAFIG working paper no. 4](#), six researchers from Europe and Africa, working together in the context of the EU-funded project “Transnational Figurations of Displacement” (TRAFIG), follow two connected research questions. Based on their field work in the DRC and interviews with 500 persons, they ask how protractedness, dependency and vulnerability relate to the factors of local and translocal connectivity and mobility. In turn, the authors also question how connectivity and mobility can be utilised to enhance the self-reliance and strengthen the resilience of displaced people.

The *working paper*’s findings, profoundly illustrated by quotes, case studies and figures, show that prior connections with members in the host communities are usually within the domestic sphere and are important drivers for people’s decision to flee to a specific place. **“In rebuilding their lives in displacement—and hence in their efforts to move out of protracted displacement and to become integrated— these contacts are often key to set in motion a ‘chain of connectivity’ that opens up new opportunities: One contact helps them to get in touch with the next contact”**, co-author **Carolien Jacobs**, Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Society at Leiden University, explains.

For IDPs, it is not so much the number of their connections that are important but the quality of these connections. According to co-author and team leader in the DRC **Patrick Milabyo Kyamusugulwa**, **“(a) small number of vertical connections with socio-economically more powerful and/or better-integrated contacts can sometimes be more helpful than a large number of horizontal connections with people that are in equally vulnerable positions”**. When IDPs use mobility as an asset to become integrated, this mobility is mostly used to free resources in the community of origin and to capitalise on these resources in the new environment. In this way, rural resources become part of people’s urban livelihood strategies. By introducing these resources in the city and thereby drawing on their translocal connections, IDPs enrich the local economy and, at the same time, become more accepted and better integrated.



Source: OpenStreetMap 2020, Natural Earth 2020; Origin of survey respondents and number of migrants according to TRAFIG survey (n=300); Layout: Vincent Glasow, BICC, November 2020.

The two-page TRAFIG *practice note* no. 4 “[Bolstering resilient connections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)” complements the *working paper*. It stresses that connectivity is needed for displaced persons to overcome protracted displacement, dependency, and vulnerability to external shocks. It is good practice to consider how to bolster strong connections within host communities and with those at ‘home’.

You will find **TRAFIG *working paper* no. 4 “Figurations of Displacement in the DRC”** as PDF at:

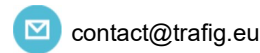
<https://trafig.eu/output/working-papers/trafig-working-paper-no-4/TRAFIGworkingpaper4.pdf>

and

**TRAFIG *practice note* no. 4 “Bolstering resilient connections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”** as PDF at

<https://trafig.eu/output/practice-notes/trafig-practice-note-no-4/D045-TPN-BolsteringResilientConnectionDRC-Jacobs-2020-v1p-2020-21-12.pdf>

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### [The TRAFIG Consortium](#)



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