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***“Faith that Rebuilds”*: Unfolding the Hybrid Governance of the Catholic and Protestant Church as informal political institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

Despite its tremendous wealth in terms of natural resources, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is labelled as a “fragile” state according to the United Nations Development Program index (UNDP, 2020). In the midst of these socio-political realities, the Catholic and Protestant Church emerged as ‘informal political institutions’ to fill gaps in state capacity. This paper unfolds, 1) the hybridity of governance between religious institutions and the State at a theoretical stance, 2) the role played by religious communities in educational and health realms looking at how they participated in these two major sectors. An emphasis is also made on the functional overlapping and clashing between the Catholic and Protestant Church and the State in public services’ delivery across the DRC’s contemporary history, and then, 3) how local religious communities have contributed to post-conflict reconstruction debates, processes and practices alongside a critical appraisal of their prospects for the country’s sustainable development in line with the 2030 Development Agenda. Drawing from empirical groundings, this paper supports the ‘Weberian’ central argument that religion constitutes a “force for social change” and a driver of development in contexts where individual and collective activities are driven by religious ideas and ideals (Gifford, 2015; Haynes 2020; Weber, 1905). In sum, this paper displays how the Catholic and Protestant Church in the DRC became ‘religious entrepreneurs’ in replacement and sometimes, in complement with the State in the education and public health sectors.

Keywords: faith, hybrid governance, informal political institutions, sustainable development, Catholic Church, Protestant Church, Democratic Republic of Congo