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## Real governance of the COVID-19 crisis in the Great Lakes region of Africa

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### ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 crisis in Africa, several contradictory discourses have tried to predict how the continent will experience the pandemic. Based on a qualitative approach, this article goes beyond generalized and arbitrary predictions and analyzes how three countries in the Great Lakes region of Africa have managed the pandemic. We first analyze which measures the respective governments of the three countries – and their decentralized authorities – have taken. We also analyze up to which extent international prescriptions – as propagated by the World Health Organization – have influenced their choices. Second, we analyze how government measures have transformed throughout implementation and interacted with the specific circumstances of each context. Authorities, on the one hand, navigated between rigid and more flexible interpretation of national prescriptions, entering into practical arrangements or adopting force. Populations on the other hand have resorted to acceptance, circumvention, contestation or resistance. Our research ultimately points to the way in which political dynamics, resistance, violence, and local redefine both national policies and their international reference frames. In this way, the governance dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic in the African Great Lakes region provide a lens through which we can complexify our understandings of real governance in Africa.