



Congo's Environmental Paradox: Potential and Predation in a Land of Plenty (African Arguments)

By Theodore Trefon

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Congo has the natural resources the world needs. Its forests count in the fight against global climate change and its mining sector helps satisfy our addiction to the latest high tech gadgets. Congo's farmers could feed all of Africa's population of over a billion people. The Inga hydroelectric site has the potential to light up the entire continent. These realities are redefining the country's strategic place in a globalized world. Telling a different story about power and nature, *Congo's Environmental Paradox* examines the dynamics of this huge country's forest, mining, land, water and oil sectors in an integrated way. It connects the dots by emphasizing resource diversity, interlinkages and the complex nature of these sectors. Congo's incredible natural wealth has the potential to contribute to development in this troubled central African country—but structural problems, cultural factors, poor governance and predation remain serious challenges. Clearly written, full of environmental facts and analyses, this volume is a must-read for anyone interested in development and the political economy of natural resource management in Africa.

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Editorial Review

Review

“An invaluable contribution—a truly remarkable synthesis of the pathways to Congolese economic improvement and the many roadblocks along the way. The succinct and sparkling summation of the key elements of the political economy is most useful. The author's capacity to convey a rich treasure chest of information and acute analytical skills make this a landmark work.”

(Crawford Young, University of Wisconsin)

“This is the first-ever (successful!) attempt to take stock of emerging trends in Congo's natural resource sectors. Well-written, clearly structured and thoroughly documented, Trefon offers fresh analysis on the gap between resource potential and socio-economic development.”

(Jeroen Cuvelier, University of Ghent)

“A remarkable guide to the tangled relationships between minerals, water and other sectors of the political economy in the Congo. It goes beyond slogans such as "rich land, poor people" to explain how the rich get richer while the poor struggle to survive. Indispensable reading for humanitarians and human rights advocates, both Congolese and international”

(Tom Turner, author of *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality*)

“A fascinating read, giving a no-nonsense view of the multitude of problems besetting Congo's natural resource sectors, how they affect ordinary people's daily lives, and how well-meaning donor initiatives are often intrinsically flawed. The book puts today's problems into historical perspective and will serve as a reality-check to politicians and activists.”

(Daniel Balint-Kurti, *Global Witness*)

“This remarkable, fact-filled study will undoubtedly rank as required reading for anyone with an interest in the DRC – whether for specialists or for the general reader. Following his *Congo Masquerade*, this should confirm Trefon's standing as one of the most perceptive observers and analysts of that central African giant.”

(Edouard Bustin, *Boston University*)

“Most studies of natural resources and development delve into the details sector by sector. Linkages to violence, politics and state-building are treated separately for different resources. This eloquent and richly documented book focuses attention on the connections, and on the global forces adding complexity to these interactions and altering the political economy of possible change.”

(David Booth, *Overseas Development Institute*)

About the Author

Theodore Trefon is a senior researcher at the Belgian Royal Museum for Central Africa and a lecturer in environmental governance at ERAIFT/University of Kinshasa. He has published a number of articles and books in French and English, including *Congo Masquerade* and *Reinventing Order in the Congo*.

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