

The global financial crisis and the Congo basin's forests: adaptation and sustainability to climate change

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ABSTRACT:

The climate is changing and many are agreed that climate change may be one of the greatest threats facing the planet. With global warming on the increase and species and their habitats on the decrease, chances for ecosystems to adapt naturally are diminishing. There is no doubt about the importance of forests for biodiversity conservation, climate and water regulation, and carbon sequestration in the Congo Basin, the world's second largest rainforest, that are recognized for their unique and diverse biota and hydrologically important forest vegetation. They are one of the most valuable ecosystems in the world, containing over 60% of the world's biodiversity. These forests play a vital role in the energy balance of the planet and the fight against climate change. They are particularly vital assets for the six countries in the basin offering economic, social and environmental benefits for both local communities and national economies. This research scrutinized forest resources exploitation and (the lack of) reforms through political economy lenses with an aim to outline the various economic actors and other interests in the exploitation. Several causes explained the continued destruction of the forests but there is clear evidence that the timber trade is the biggest threat to biodiversity richness. Unsustainable management practices have fuelled this destruction. These causes are usually interrelated and complex. Timber resources are over-exploited, degraded and further production prospects are questionable and of concern to forest management. The forests are subject to a growing number of international agreements and conventions. Nevertheless, despite several ongoing initiatives, assessing, monitoring and reporting forest governance is challenging. Several theoretical, methodological and practical problems in targeting the assessment and monitoring results, developing evaluation criteria and indicators, collecting related data and reporting them, setting proper toolkits (Remote Sensing techniques) for practitioners and policy-makers have to be resolved yet.