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Inside forest and climate change cooperation politics: Actors and instruments at work in Congo Basin

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References of published articles:

Nago, M., & Krott, M. (2020). Systemic failures in north–south climate change knowledge transfer: a case study of the Congo Basin. *Climate Policy*, 1-14.

Nago, M., & Ongolo, S. (2021). Inside Forest Diplomacy: A Case Study of the Congo Basin under Global Environmental Governance. *Forests*, 12(5), 525.

Nago, M. (2021). The role of aid agencies within environmental cooperation in Congo Basin: facilitators or policy entrepreneurs? *Development Studies Research*, 8(1), 135-146.

Nago, M., Paulmann, S., Krott, M. (2021). Illusionen der europäischen Holzverordnung: Steuerungsdefizite im globalen Norden und Süden am Beispiel Deutschland und Kamerun. *Allgemeine Forst- und Jagdzeitung*, in revision.

Summary:

With a cover of 3 million km², a carbon conservation capacity of about 30 billion tones as well a rich biodiversity, Congo basin forests represent a strong asset of the global warming reduction effort. In this regard, a multitude of actions carried by both national and international actors has blossomed in the Congo Basin since the Rio summit with the intention of safeguarding the forests while promoting the development prospects of the region. Nevertheless, after more than five decades of this policy we observe deforestation grow, biodiversity-loss and poverty increase. Hence this PhD is tackling the paradox of a still growing deforestation despite an inflowing aid and multiple development policy efforts. Our approach focuses on two entry points of the analysis. First, we analyze both the formulation as well as the implementation of forest and climate change policies in Congo Basin. Second, we integrate international and national arena comprising international as well as national actors. As theories we apply behavioralist theories within a policy analysis frame. In addition, we conduct a case study based on Marxist national competitive state theory by Hirsch. Our approaches throw actor's behavior and interests at the center of the politics of forest and climate change cooperation in Congo Basin. The methodological approach follows the research concept of "going with the grain". The starting point is participatory observation in Congo Basin countries policies and in international organizations. In addition, we conduct a qualitative approach based on 50 in-depth

interviews, 18 group discussions, 180 document analyses. The results highlight that the Congo Basin Paradox marked by a flowing aid and a growing deforestation, biodiversity loss and poverty can be explained by four hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that the actors of Congo Basin 's forest diplomacy practice blame avoidance instead of coming up with effective answers to the paradox. The second hypothesis is the exclusion of Congo Basin Countries experts and expertise from the scientific elaboration of climate change knowledge. The third hypothesis formulates a strong focus of aid agencies on effectiveness at the expense of a match with local needs. The fourth hypothesis states a weakening of the steering capacity of a regulative instrument of the cooperation (EUTR) by State actors' interests in capital accumulation. Our empirical evidence from 2012 to 2018 supports our four hypotheses. Based on these results we design options for tackling the Congo Basin paradox. Key factors are stronger autonomy in financial and technical means of the Congo Basin countries. If the Congo Basin countries were to continue receiving aid from north, we recommend them to work on having a veto right on the choice and the financing of aid agencies in charge of the cooperation facilitation. For aid agencies interested in improving their practices, we suggest them to find in their actions a new balance between the effectiveness which is mostly stressed up till now and the match to local needs. In addition, we encourage a shift of the cooperation facilitation to local policy entrepreneurs. In this vein our findings can be applied in developing pragmatic small policy steps to tackle the Congo Basin Paradox more effectively.