

## *Section IV: National Perspectives and Prospects for Trinational Management*

### Session Overview

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In this section, Joseph Mewondo Mengang and Urbain Ngatoua trace contemporary protected areas to a colonial past where discrete colonial territories had reserves for hunting and tourism. The authors note that these historical relationships inform today's relations of resource use at local, regional, and national levels. J. Michael Fay, however, also insists on the feasibility and relevance of new approaches to management for the present era, both in terms of territorial relations among nations and in terms of the financial approaches necessary for continued conservation.

Indeed, each of the countries considered in this volume confronts the challenge of emerging models for ecosystem approaches to resource management, and to decentralized administration of natural resource use. International conservation NGOs and private timber companies within changing local and regional communities have been influential in mediating responses to these challenges. Nevertheless, central African authors in this volume express a strong desire for more direct roles for research in environmental management.

Our mandate for this concluding section of the volume is thus two-fold: to review political and economic factors currently influencing resource use in the Sangha River region, and to assess a variety of scientific approaches to analysis of the region's evolution. For the former, Professor William Ascher draws from empirical information provided throughout the volume, placing the Sangha River region's resource use in the context of relations among varied actors and institutions through a policy sciences framework. His presentation at the conference provided a point of departure for an open roundtable discussion among all conference participants, which is presented at the conclusion of the section as a direct transcription.

The following questions and comments framed the roundtable discussion:

- Based on the sessions presented thus far about history, knowledge forms, and conservation approaches, what are the gaps in knowledge bases, international institutions, and national capacities?

EDITOR'S NOTE: The original conference proposal called for a plenary session including presentations about conservation and natural resource policy in Cameroon, Central African Republic and Congo, respectively. Unfortunately, due to civil strife in Congo in the months preceding the conference, it was not possible for our invited government representative from Congo to attend. Conservationist J. Michael Fay, however, has worked in Congo for nearly a decade and was instrumental in establishing the Congo Forest Conservation Project in that country. His presentation thus serves as a complement to the national government perspectives from Cameroon (Joseph Mewondo Mengang) and Central African Republic (Urbain Ngatoua).

- How can future transnational resource use relations be more effectively mediated and maintained as productive systems?

To further frame the papers and transcribed discussions that follow in this session, we also offer the following questions and observations, abstracted from the discussions in which they originally occurred. They seem to us, as an ensemble, to synthesize both the guiding questions and the final conclusions of the sessions:

- Do we really, as organizational representatives and researchers from natural and social science, have a common goal of conservation?
- Do we agree upon a commonly accepted level of ecological degradation? (P. Elkan, Ecology, University of Minnesota)
- How much are recent political/military conflicts in this region “African stories” and not multinational’s interests or first world” geopolitics? If they are “African stories,” what are they? How do external actors influence them in complex ways? How do African “new men” in political power seem to be responding to political change and environmental/economic planning? (W. Foltz, Political Science, Yale University)
- Are there areas within the trinational region which will, *a priori*, continue to be magnets for immigration (and thus likely targets for development and education programs) while others, less likely to attract people, which will be more likely as core protected areas? (A. Noss, WCS Bolivia and R. Ruggiero, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Given the characteristics of equatorial African states (impoverished, only recently “decentralizing”) and the distances between national capitols in this region, what can reasonably be expected from governments in terms of definition and enforcement of sustainable use or preservation practices? (V. Ferrer, World Bank)
- What are alternatives to admittedly scarce government resources, and what can be the role of the private sector and/or trusts? (A. Blom, World Wide Fund for Nature-Dzanga Sangha)
- What are the political advantages or dangers of external actors investing heavily in a fairly autonomous border region? (E. Kreike, Environmental History, Princeton University)

- What kind of institutional requirements would be necessary for a trinational zone given the history of the region? (F. Swartzendruber, USAID/CARPE)
- I'd say coca is the Peruvian equivalent of the "bushmeat" you are all invoking. There's a war on the drug and a plan to eradicate it that doesn't work. No matter how many seminars and practical opinions it'll keep coming back in different guises. So what's the real problem? How to reduce consumption at the global, national, and local level. Who is going to tell whom how to reduce consumption? As far as I can see there are three ways: persuade people themselves to stop consuming with or without substitutes, make it so expensive that people go for substitutes or stop consuming, or politically forbid it. All three potential approaches provoke reactions. If you put a fence and guard then you have a poacher and a corruptible guard; if you raise costs you create alternative ways of doing it. Perhaps there are mixes and matches of how to do this. In Latin America establishing parks with buffer zones is new; I'm sure we could learn a lot from your African experience. (E. Mayer, Department of Anthropology, Yale University)
- There seems a real need for a dynamic, neutral body to assess the impact of policy on natural and social systems in the region — not to be involved in advocating specific policy actions necessarily, but rather to analyze them critically in historical contexts and from multiple scientific perspectives. (J. Scott, Program in Agrarian Studies, Yale University)
- It sounds as if international NGOs have had a startling degree of influence here compared to the Asian contexts with which I am familiar. This leads to questions about the nature of civil society in this region, and in these nations, and the roles it can or could play in elaborating this regional-level set of practices. (M. Ashton, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University)
- One wouldn't want to lose sight of high quality scientific research about the region. The network can thus serve as a forum for review among specialists. The advantage of close connections to the academic arena is intellectual flexibility for innovative thinking about these issues beyond the "boxes" of institutional, legal, or policy frameworks. (A. Agrawal, Political Science, Yale University)

- Shouldn't any network for future research and debate about these issues include people working on or in Gabon? (S. Lahm, Institut de Recherches sur l'Écologie Tropicale, Gabon)
- If "indigenous" or locally relevant knowledge is transmitted through practices such as music, dance, and other ritual or everyday acts, how can managers and scientists understand it adequately? (M. Kisliuk, Performance Studies, University of Virginia)
- The number of people gathered for this conference facilitates an exchange about a wide variety of issues. What will be important as the network evolves is to have smaller gatherings where specific questions can be addressed with real focus for more progress. In my involvement with Latin American transnational issues we have found both these approaches necessary. (P. Pessar, Center for Global Migration Studies, Yale University)
- How can the Sangha River region provide unique opportunities for academic programs to carry out innovative research for training of future generations of scholars? (J. Bryan, Tropical Resources Institute, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies)

These are only a few questions and comments of many from the Yale conference. Most have appeared in the transcribed discussion sessions in this volume; many remain in need of answers. They illustrate the careful interrogation and constructive debate that characterizes the community of scholars and practitioners interested in conservation in the Sangha River region, and serve as an example of thinking across academic and applied boundaries. As Alison Richard warned us in the preface to this volume, many of the issues considered here are quite contentious. We couldn't be happier to know that the channels of communication are open, and becoming more organized.

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