

BOOK REVIEW

Jessica Steinberg. *Mines, Communities, and States: The Local Politics of Natural Resource Extraction in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xi + 282 pp. Appendices. Bibliography. Index. \$99.99. Cloth. ISBN: 978-1108476935.


Mines, Communities, and States by Jessica Steinberg is a truly remarkable book, invigorating in its scholarly excellence, and intellectually challenging in its theoretical aspirations and accomplishments. Two parts of the introduction immediately caught my attention. First, the clearly expressed concern of the book to answer these questions: “Why do some regions of natural resource extraction experience protest and others do not? And what forces shape how governments respond to them?” (2). Second, the poorly reproduced but still very important “map of mines and social conflict in Africa,” which demonstrates clearly the proliferation and linkage of mining and social conflict in every country in Africa (7). These are important questions and a powerful graphic; exactly what a reader hopes for but too rarely finds.

While the focus of the book is on the period between 1990 and 2014, anyone familiar with the history of mining extraction in Africa, especially in Central and Southern Africa, will find some remarkable similarities between the recent past and developments that took place a hundred and more years ago. Foreign investment in the continent, for example, only USD3.2 billion in 1989, had risen to USD54 billion annually by 2014, with much of that associated with mining. This finding agrees closely with the analysis of S. Herbert Frankel, who in his classic study of *Capital Investment in Africa* (OUP, 1938) showed that in the period between 1870 and 1936, almost 80 percent of the approximately one and a quarter billion British pounds invested in Africa went to British territories in which almost all private capital was invested in mining, mostly in South Africa. Steinberg’s emphasis on the hugely important role that the African continent plays today with at least “30 percent of the world’s known reserves of non-renewable natural resources,” and in her estimation likely higher, calls to mind Leith, Furness, and Lewis’s study, *World Minerals and World Peace* (Brookings Institution, 1938), which demonstrated the inevitable superiority of the Allied powers in war materiel compared to that of the Axis powers, largely because of their control of minerals in Africa. And for those aware of the disreputable role of Tiny

Rowlands and his Conzinc Rio Tinto in the Zimbabwean struggle for independence in the 1960s and 1970s, it is fascinating to read about the continued role of the company in its new iteration as the Australian-headquartered Rio Tinto, still operating in Southern Africa.

But what is new and exciting about Steinberg's work is how she shows, through a combination of case studies and theoretical contributions, why and how things have changed: how, for instance, Conzinc Rio Tinto has gone from being an arm of repressive colonial capitalism to a company that now, in Mozambique at least, accommodates the concerns of local communities rather than attempting, like some of its competitors, to resist them.

The book is divided into three parts: Part I, "The Local Politics of Natural Resource Extraction: A Theory"; Part II, "Local Politics on the Ground," with case studies from Mozambique, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Part III, "Beyond Mozambique, Zambia, and the DRC," which generalizes the theory developed (too complex to easily summarize in a short book review) across Africa. The case studies are based on exhaustive reading as well as extensive fieldwork (seven years in Central, Southern, and West Africa); the theoretical work on similarly exhaustive reading across scholarship from Africa, South America, and Europe (Steinberg argues that her findings can be applied any where in the world) as well as a particularly sophisticated use of mathematical models and calculations (supported by three appendices of detailed findings). This book should have a wide readership, not only among scholars of contemporary Africa, but also and especially among policy makers and government officials.

William H. Worger 

University of California, Los Angeles

Los Angeles, California, USA

billworger@gmail.com

doi:10.1017/asr.2022.47

If you enjoyed this, you may also like:

Chung, Youjin B., and Marie Gagné. 2021. "Understanding Land Deals in Limbo in Africa: A Focus on Actors, Processes, and Relationships." *African Studies Review* 64 (3): 595–604. doi:10.1017/asr.2021.73.

Fent, Ashley. 2021. "'This Mine Is for the Entire Casamance Coastline': The Politics of Scale and the Future of the Extractive Frontier in Casamance, Senegal." *African Studies Review* 64 (3): 628–52. doi:10.1017/asr.2021.54.

Geenen, Kristien. 2021. "Gnawing Away at the City: Narratives of Domestic Precarity in a Congolese Mining Town." *African Studies Review* 64 (2): 412–33. doi:10.1017/asr.2020.65.