

Contributions to biodiversity
conservation by the Indigenous
peoples and local communities of
Africa

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This talk is divided into three parts

- i. A brief explanation of how colonialism is continuing to handicap community conservation in Africa
- ii. Examples of where Indigenous peoples and local communities have decided to work actively to conserve biodiversity
- iii. Examples of where Indigenous peoples and local communities continue to live within biodiverse landscapes



Context

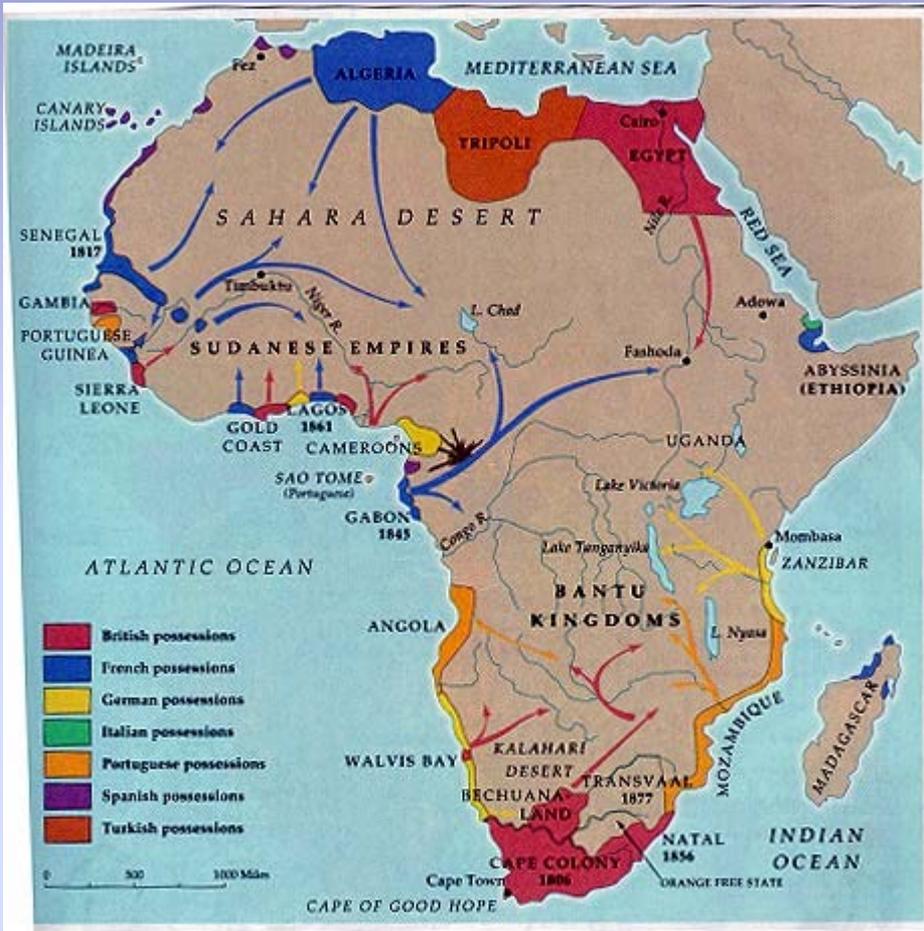
- Africa - longest occupied environment in the world
- Now wildlife needs local communities and Indigenous peoples to persist
- That the wonderful African wildlife is still with us is testament to long-standing relationships between people and the environment
- In reality, unless local communities and Indigenous peoples are empowered to decide for themselves that they want biodiversity to persist, it won't



History

Political geography c.1850

Political geography 1900



The only part of Africa not a colony of a European nation was Liberia, recolonised from America by slaves

History

- On the basis of colonial law, new states suddenly owned everything unless proved otherwise by documentation.
- Insecurity of tenure underlies much of the endemic poverty and post-colonial violence that has destroyed so much wildlife in recent decades.



Active support for conservation

Community forestry is slowly replacing failed imported models of government management, providing incentives to retain habitat previously stolen by the State rather than steal it back again



Active support for conservation

While the State invariably asserts ownership of the sea, locally managed marine areas are increasingly influential in retaining coastal biodiversity, and fish



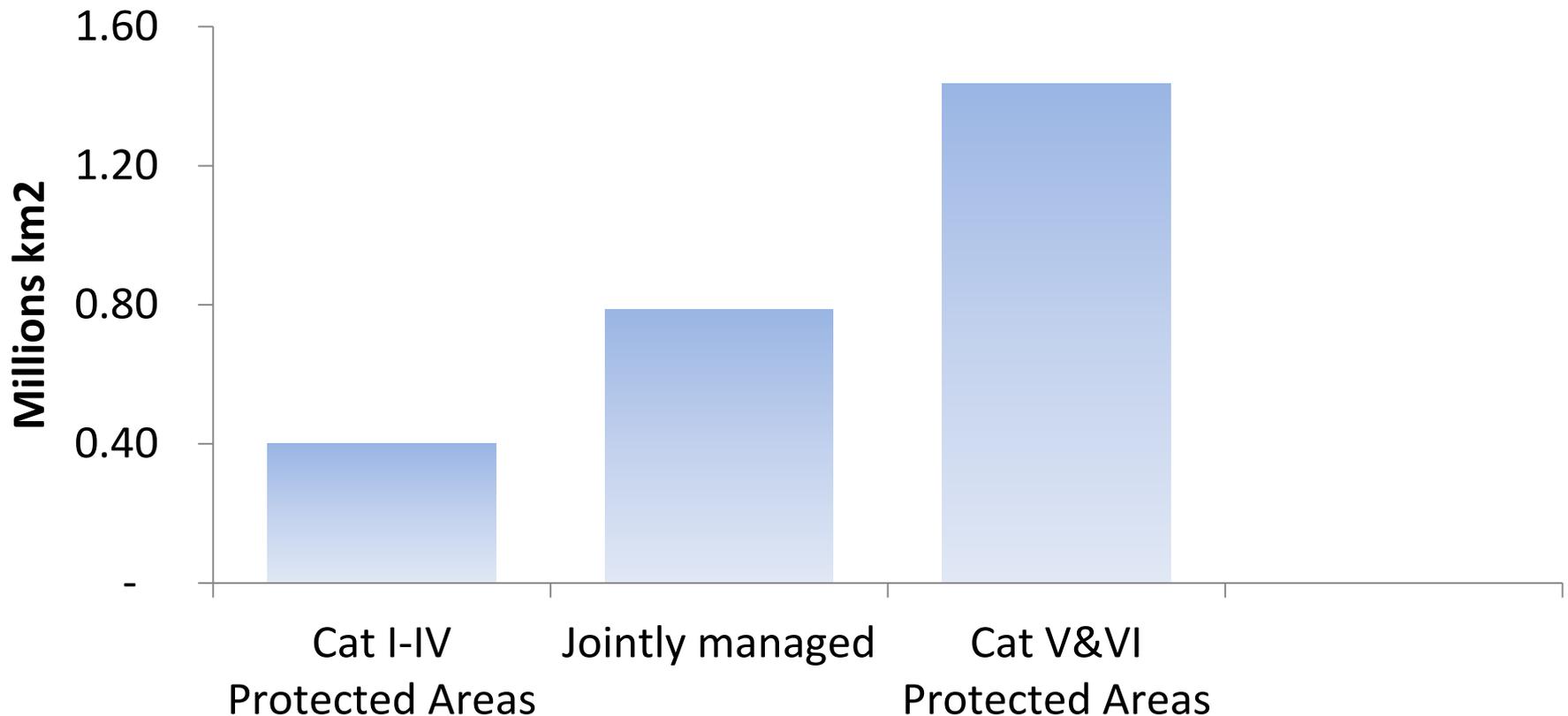
Co-existence with conservation

- Hunter-gatherers, arguably Africa's most Indigenous peoples, continue to use some country in ways little changed for millennia.
- Evicted from some parks, they are partners in others or are at least permitted legally to continue historical practice



Co-existence with conservation

- Many local community people use protected areas for their livelihoods, including both food and medicine
- In 30 African countries analysed (covering ~20 million km²) areas used by people is 5 times the area conventionally conserved



Conclusions

- Biodiversity conservation within social-ecological systems originated in Africa.
- But, as with anyone here today, personal safety and pathways out of poverty will almost always take precedence.
- As land use intensity and population both increase, such systems will persist only where there is social benefit
- Local communities and Indigenous peoples are actively conserving biodiversity when empowered to do so.
- Anything else is often unjust and tends to be temporary.