

IFPM5 Panel – 1.5 Forest land use, forest owners and land conflicts

Armed conflicts in World Heritage sites and conservation effort response: the case of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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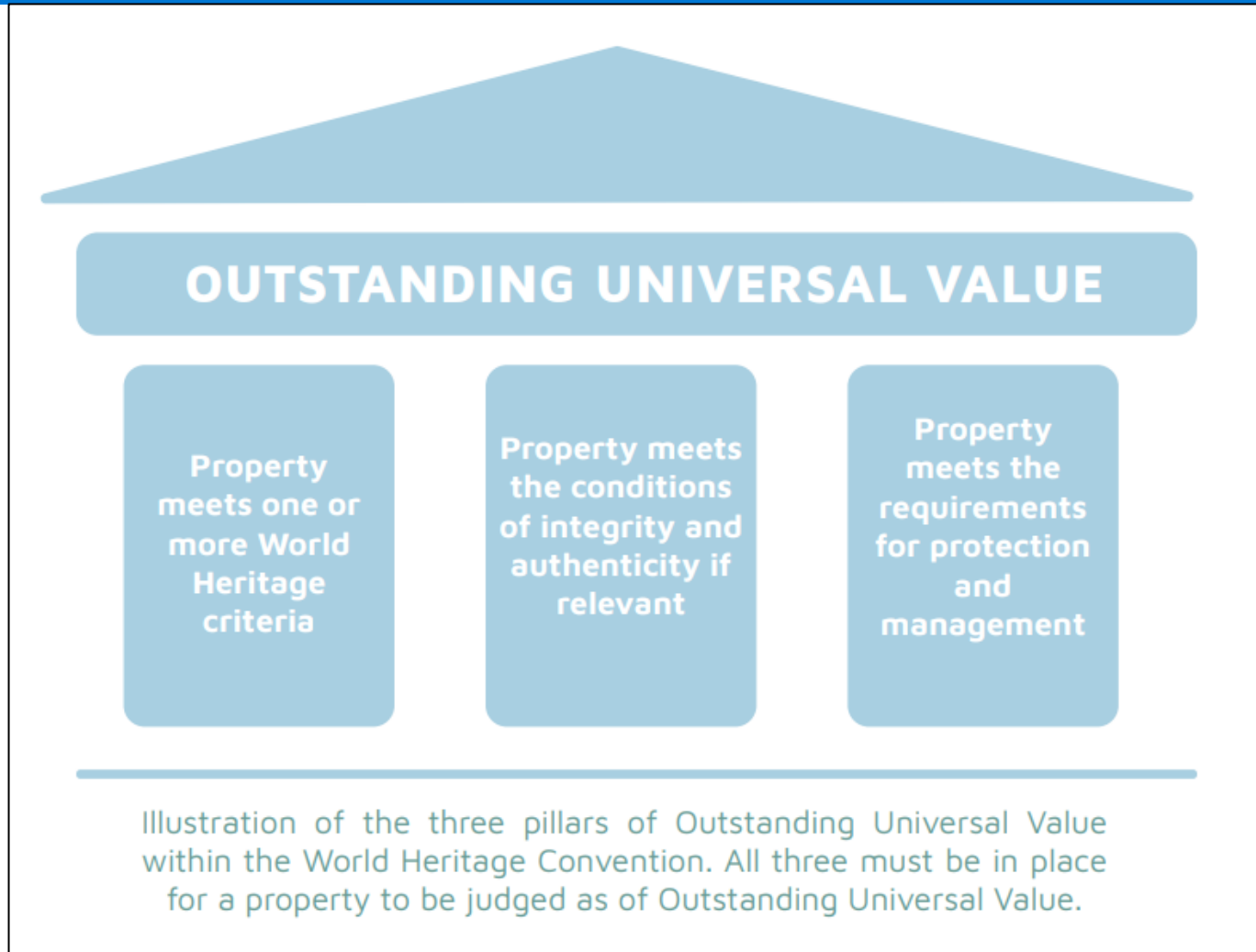
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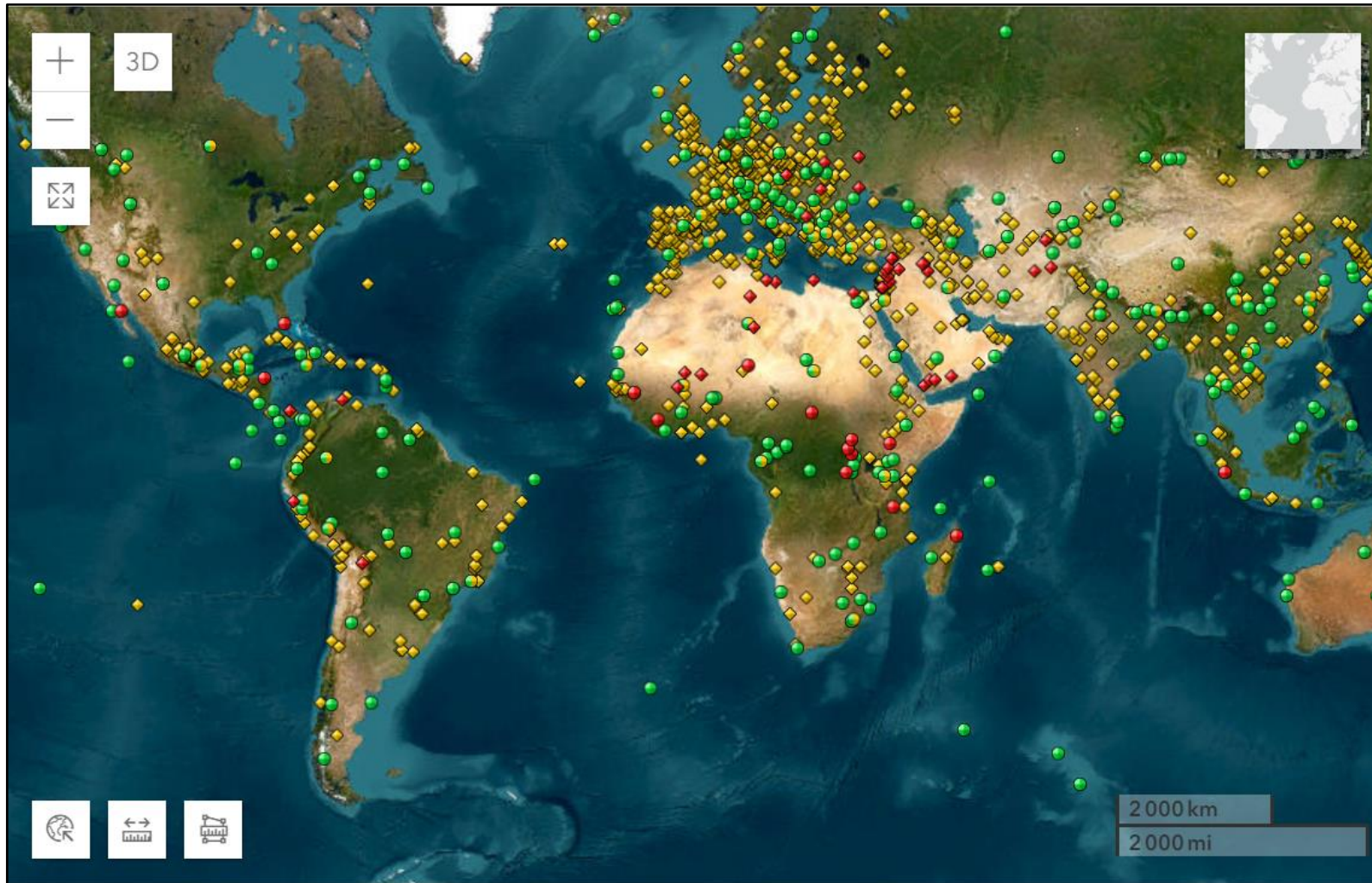
Outline

- 1. Introduction: the World Heritage concept and its land use implication (integrity of the sites)**
- 2. Conservation challenges of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve (OWR)**
- 3. Hypothesis, data collection, and main findings**
- 4. Conclusion and immediate priority actions**

1. Introduction : World Heritage concept and its land use implication (1/2)



1. Introduction : World Heritage concept and its land use implication (2/2)



1199
WHS in
168 SP
(only
9% in
Africa)

2. OWR conservation challenges from 1997- present

Approximately 14,000 km² representing 1/5 of the Ituri forest in the north-east of the DRC

Inscribed on the WHL in 1996 (Criteria X) and on the WHL in Danger in 1997 due to armed conflict

Persistence of insecurity (guards killed) and mining operations approved by the mining authorities

New Governance/management systems (ICCN/WCS) in place since 2018 for a renewable period of 10 years

3. Hypothesis, data collection and main findings

Hypothesis: in the context of weak statehood, the resource becomes a curse as the rule of law that balances the intersection between extraction and conservation is poorly enforced and violently contested.

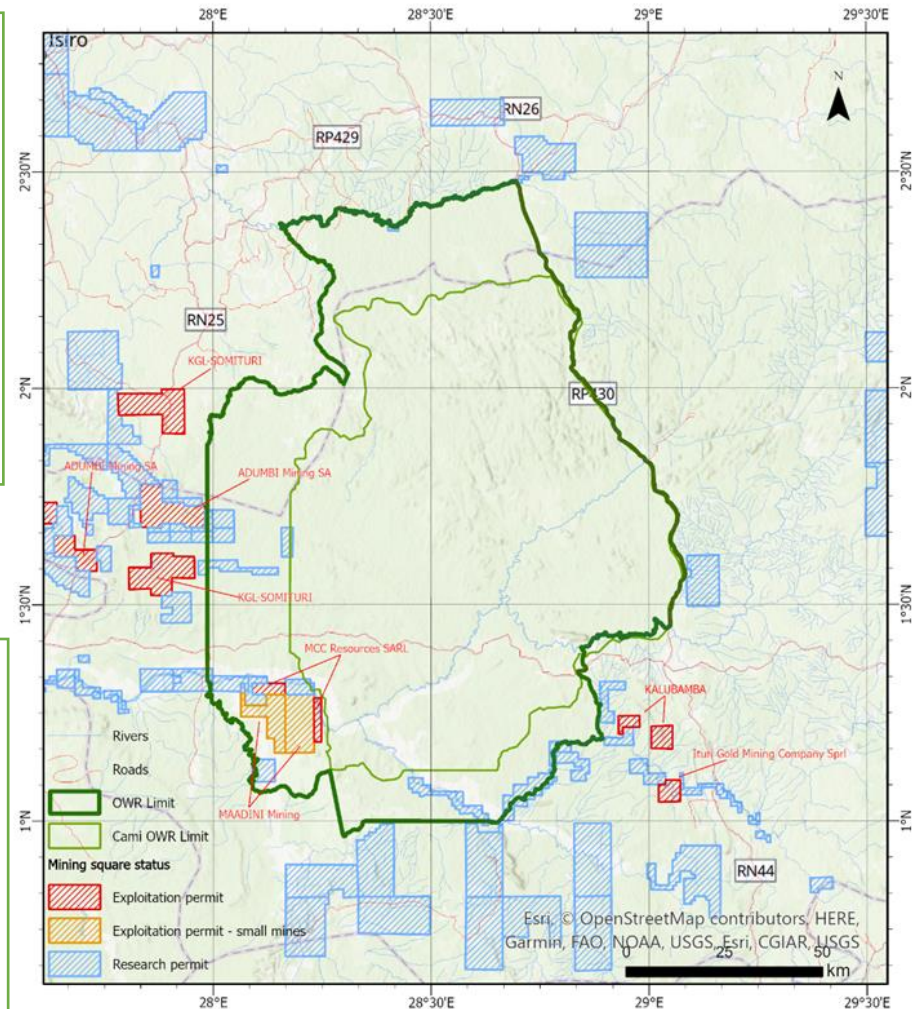
Data collection: Combining questionnaires, focus groups, and field visits resulted in over 200 responses obtained (August 2022 and December 2023 to March 2024).

3. Main findings (1/4) – boundaries discrepancies

Two maps: OWR's 1992 boundary (dark green), and CAMI's smaller boundary (light green) and mining licenses.



Demarcation issues + Illegal mining + Insecurity are devastating the forest ecosystem.



3. Main findings (2/4) – illustration

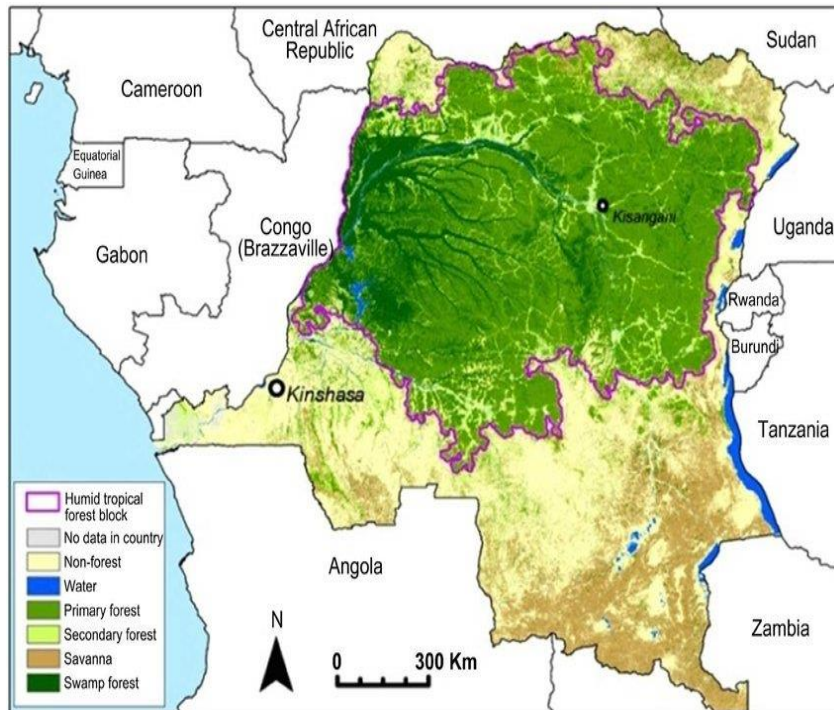


3. Main findings (3/4) - communities resilience and engagement

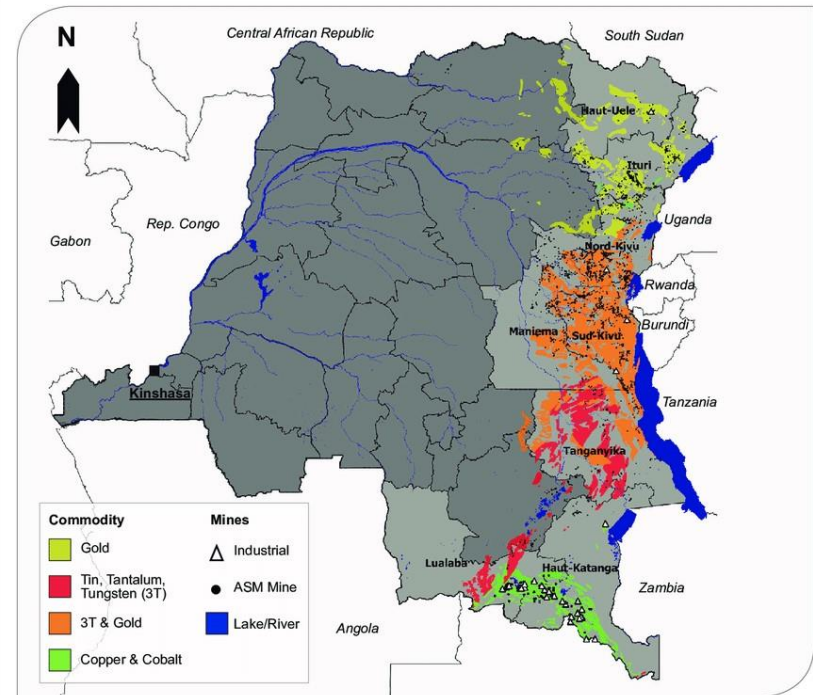
Illegal mining and insecurity have become rampant within the Reserve due to the **absence of sustainable development alternatives for the village residents.**

Unfortunately, no statistics are available on these villages, and their **weak involvement in the governance and management structure** of the landscape has only added to the problem.

3. Main findings (4/4) – Mining growing impacts



Achille, L. S, and al. (2021)



Schütte, P., & Näher, U. (2020)

4. Conclusion and immediate priority actions (1/2)

OWR conservation activities have been setback by cycles of **insecurity, and threats to its integrity.**

Illegal mining is contributing to this insecurity and deforestation in OWR. Addressing this issue requires the involvement of authorities beyond the Reserve.

Strengthening community engagement in the Reserve's management and governance structure is critical, as well as updating the OWR's Management Plan to include provisions related to subsistence zones and forestry concessions for communities.

4. Conclusion and immediate priority actions (2/2)

Forest policies should also address armed conflicts and illegal mining impacts to preserve forests and strengthen community resilience.

THANK YOU



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