DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCES AND
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

Potential Natural Vegetation of Eastern Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia)

Volume 8. Atlas and Tree Species Composition for Kenya

R. Kindt, P. van Breugel, J-P.B. Lillesø, F. Gachathi,
W. Omondi, R. Jamnadass and L. Graudal

IGN Report

May 2014

DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCES AND
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

Potential Natural Vegetation of Eastern Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia)

Volume 8. Atlas and Tree Species Composition for Kenya

R. Kindt, P. van Breugel, J-P.B. Lillesø, F. Gachathi,

W. Omondi, R. Jamnadass and L. Graudal

Title
Potential natural vegetation of eastern Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia)
Volume 8. Atlas and Tree Species Composition for Kenya

Authors
Kindt, R.[2], van Breugel, P.[1], Lillesø, J-P.B.[1], Gachathi, F.[3], Omondi, W.[3], Jamnadass, R.[2], and Graudal, L.[1]

Collaborating Partners
[1] Forest and Landscape
[2] World Agroforestry Centre
[3] Kenya Forestry Research Institute

Publisher
Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management
University of Copenhagen
Phone: +45-33351500
http://ign.ku.dk/english/

ISBN
ISBN 978-87-7903-616-1 (paper)
ISBN 978-87-7903-615-4 (digital)

Layout
Melita Jørgensen

Citation
Kindt, R., van Breugel, P., Lillesø, J-P.B., Gachathi, F., Omondi, W., Jamnadass, R. and Graudal, L. 2014: Potential natural vegetation of eastern Africa. Volume 8. Atlas and tree species composition for Kenya. Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management University of Copenhagen.

Forest & Landscape Denmark
National centre for research, education and advisory services within the fields of forest and forest products, landscape architecture and landscape management, urban planning and urban design.

The report is available electronically from
www.ign.ku.dk

Introduction

This book represents **Volume 8** in a eleven-volume series that documents the potential natural vegetation map that was developed by the VECEA (Vegetation and Climate change in East Africa) project. The VECEA map was developed as a collaborative effort that included partners from each of the seven VECEA countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia).

- In **Volume 1**, we present the potential natural vegetation map that we developed for seven countries in eastern Africa. In Volume 1, we also introduce the concept of potential natural vegetation and give an overview of different application domains of the VECEA map.
- **Volumes 2** to **5** describe potential natural vegetation types, also including lists of the "useful tree species" that are expected to naturally occur in each vegetation type – and therefore also expected to be adapted to the environmental conditions where the vegetation types are depicted to occur on the map. **Volume 2** focuses on forest and scrub forest vegetation types. **Volume 3** focuses on woodland and wooded grassland vegetation types. **Volume 4** focuses on bushland and thicket vegetation types. In **Volume 5**, information is given for vegetation types that did not feature in Volumes 2 to 4.
- **Volume 6** gives details about the process that we followed in making the VECEA map.
- **Volume 7** shows the results of modelling the distribution of potential natural vegetation types for six potential future climates.
- **Volumes 8 to 11** provide a national atlas for four of the seven VECEA countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda). We also provide a summary of the descriptions and species composition of potential natural vegetation types that occur in the species country.

We strongly encourage users of the VECEA map to get familiarized with all volumes. For example, as Volume 6 provides a detailed account of the process that we followed in creating the VECEA map, we have not repeated these details in the volumes that provide the national atlases.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the Rockefeller Foundation for having funded most of the work that has led to the development and publication of the VECEA map and its accompanying documentation.

We also greatly appreciate the comments and suggestions that were made by Paul Smith and Jonathan Timberlake (both of Royal Botanic Gardens Kew) when they reviewed early drafts of volumes 2, 3, 4 & 5.

Thanks to anybody in our institutions who contributed directly or indirectly to the completion of the VECEA vegetation map and its associated documentation. We especially appreciate the assistance by Nelly Mutio (as for organizing logistics for the regional workshop that we organized in 2009 and for assisting in administrative issues), Melita Jørgensen (for desktop publishing), and of Jeanette van der Steeg for helping with the final preparation of the maps for Volume 1.

Thanks to Ann Verdoodt and Eric Van Ranst (both from the University of Ghent) for compiling and sharing thematic soil maps that were derived from the soil of Rwanda (Birasa, E.C., Bizimana, I., Bouckaert, W., Gallez, A., Maesschalck, G., and Vercruysse, J. (1992). Carte Pédologique du Rwanda. Echelle: 1/250.000. Réalisée dans le cadre du projet "Carte Pédologique du Rwanda" (AGCD, CTB). AGCD (Belgique) et MINAGRI, Kigali).

Thanks to Eugene Kayijamahe, Center for Geographic Information System and Remote Sensing at National University of Rwanda for sharing the digital map "Vegetation of Volcanoes National Park" that allowed us to classify in greater detail this part of the VECEA map.

Thanks to UNEP-GEF for funding the Carbon Benefits Project (CBP) through which information was compiled on indicator and characteristic species for The Vegetation Map of Africa (White 1983). (This work led to the publication in 2011 of an Africa-wide tree species selection tool that is available from: *http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/our_products/databases/ useful-tree-species-africa)* Thanks to BMZ for funding the ReACCT project in Tanzania through which funding was made available for field verification of the VECEA map around Morogoro (this was essential in preparing the VECEA map as the base map for Tanzania was essentially a physiognomic map.

We are grateful for the assistance provided by Meshack Nyabenge (ICRAF) and Jane Wanjara (ICRAF) for digitization of maps.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full
A	Afroalpine vegetation
B	Afromontane bamboo
Bd	Somalia-Masai *Acacia-Commiphora* deciduous bushland and thicket
Be	Evergreen and semi-evergreen bushland and thicket
bi (no capital)	Itigi thicket (edaphic vegetation type)
br (no capital)	Riverine thicket (edaphic vegetation type, mapped together with riverine forest and woodland)
C	In species composition tables: we have information that this species is a characteristic (typical) species in a national manifestation of the vegetation type
D	Desert
DBH	diameter at breast height (1.3 m)
E	Montane *Ericaceous* belt (easily identifiable type)
f (no capital)	In species composition tables: since this species is present in the focal country and since it was documented to occur in the same vegetation type in some other VECEA countries, this species potentially occurs in the national manifestation of the vegetation type
Fa	Afromontane rain forest
Fb	Afromontane undifferentiated forest (Fbu) mapped together with Afromontane single-dominant *Juniperus procera* forest (Fbj)
Fc	Afromontane single-dominant *Widdringtonia whytei* forest
fc (no capital)	Zanzibar-Inhambane scrub forest on coral rag (fc, edaphic forest type)
Fd	Afromontane single-dominant *Hagenia abyssinica* forest
Fe	Afromontane moist transitional forest
fe (no capital)	Lake Victoria *Euphorbia dawei* scrub forest (fe, edaphic forest type mapped together with evergreen and semi-evergreen bushland and thicket)
FeE	distinct subtype of Afromontane moist transitional forest in Ethiopia
FeK	distinct subtype of Afromontane moist transitional forest in Kenya
Ff	Lake Victoria transitional rain forest
Fg	Zanzibar-Inhambane transitional rain forest
Fh	Afromontane dry transitional forest
Fi	Lake Victoria drier peripheral semi-evergreen Guineo-Congolian rain forest
FLD	Forest & Landscape (URL *http://sl.life.ku.dk/English.aspx)*
Fm	Zambezian dry evergreen forest
Fn	Zambezian dry deciduous forest and scrub forest
Fo	Zanzibar-Inhambane lowland rain forest
Fp	Zanzibar-Inhambane undifferentiated forest
Fq	Zanzibar-Inhambane scrub forest
fr (no capital)	Riverine forests (fr, edaphic forest type mapped together with riverine woodland and thicket)
Fs	Somalia-Masai scrub forest (Fs, mapped together with evergreen and semi-evergreen bushland and thicket)
fs (no capital)	Swamp forest (fs, edaphic forest type)
G	Grassland (excluding semi-desert grassland and edaphic grassland, G)
g (no capital)	Edaphic grassland on drainage-impeded or seasonally flooded soils (edaphic vegetation type, g)
GCM	General Circulation Models
GHG	greenhouse gas
gv	Edaphic grassland on volcanic soils (edaphic subtype, gv)
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre (URL *http://www.worldagroforestry.org/*)
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
L	Lowland bamboo
M	Mangrove

P	Palm wooded grassland (physiognomically easily recognized type)
PROTA	Plant Resources of Tropical Africa (URL *http://www.prota.org/*)
S	Somalia-Masai semi-desert grassland and shrubland
PNV	Potential Natural Vegetation
s (no capital)	Vegetation of sands (edaphic type)
SRES	Special Report on Emissions Scenarios
T	*Termitaria* vegetation (easily identifiable and edaphic type, including bush groups around *termitaria* within grassy drainage zones)
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme (URL *http://www.unep.org/*)
VECEA	Vegetation and Climate Change in Eastern Africa project (funded by the Rockefeller Foundation)
Wb	*Vitellaria* wooded grassland
Wc	*Combretum* wooded grassland
Wcd	dry *Combretum* wooded grassland subtype
Wcm	moist *Combretum* wooded grassland subtype
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre (URL *http://www.unep-wcmc.org/*)
wd (no capital)	Edaphic wooded grassland on drainage-impeded or seasonally flooded soils (edaphic vegetation type)
We	Biotic *Acacia* wooded grassland
Wk	Kalahari woodland
Wm	Miombo woodland
Wmd	Drier miombo woodland subtype
Wmr	Miombo on hills and rocky outcrops subtype
Wmw	Wetter miombo woodland subtype
Wn	north Zambezian undifferentiated woodland and wooded grassland (abbreviation: undifferentiated woodland)
Wo	Mopane woodland and scrub woodland
wr (no capital)	Riverine woodland (edaphic vegetation type, mapped together with riverine forest and thicket)
Wt	*Terminalia sericea* woodland
Wvs	*Vitex - Phyllanthus - Shikariopsis (Sapium) - Terminalia* woodland (not described regionally)
Wvt	*Terminalia glaucescens* woodland (not described regionally)
Wy	Chipya woodland and wooded grassland
X	Fresh-water swamp
x (no capital)	In species composition tables: we have information that this species is present in a national manifestation of the vegetation type
Z	Halophytic vegetation
ZI	Zanzibar-Inhambane coastal mosaic (Kenya and Tanzania coast)

Contents

1. The rationale of the VECEA map

The VECEA map of eastern and southern Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zambia) is the product of a project funded by The Rockefeller Foundation and implemented by Forest and Landscape Denmark, World Agroforestry Centre, Nairobi, and botanical experts in the seven countries. The project also benefited from previous support to botanists at the relevant departments at the universities of Makerere/Dar es Salaam by an ENRECA programme provided by Danida and previous support to Ethiopian Flora Project provided by SIDA/SAREC and through grants from the Carlsberg Foundation.

The documentation of the VECEA vegetation map consists of seven volumes. In this volume 1, we present the map, and we briefly discuss the important concepts utilised and applied in the map. In volumes 2 to 5, we provide a detailed documentation and discussion of the five major physiognomic vegetation categories and their variation in vegetation types as well as distribution of tree species in this framework. In volume 6, we describe the original maps that we have utilised for each country and we document and discuss the modelling procedures and processes. In volume 7, we model how vegetation types may develop under different climate change scenarios.

So why did we chose to make a regional vegetation map when similar maps have already been developed (Olson *et al.*, 2001; Whittaker *et al*, 2005)? The most recent is the ecoregional approach developed by World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Nature Conservancy, and Conservation International. In WWF's terrestrial ecoregion scheme[(1)], White's vegetation map (and memoir) of Africa (White, 1983) - henceforth called the White map - serve as the basis for the ecoregions of the Afrotropics (Olson *et al*; 2001; Burgess *et al.* 2004). In this process the ecoregions map has mainly become a simplified version of the White map. A major objective of the White map is to provide a framework on a continental scale within which more detailed local studies can be conducted and compared and as such the map is suitable as a basis for describing the terrestrial ecoregions of Africa by capturing the broad-scale patterns of biological diversity and the ecological processes that sustain them.

We have taken the opposite approach of WWF's terrestrial ecoregion scheme by deconstructing[(2)] the White map into its more detailed parts. We have done this by utilising the same smaller maps as those that White utilised and to a large extent described in his text without directly mapping them. The VECEA map thus differs in terms of the spatial resolution, which allows us to break down the landscape into more well defined mapping units.

So why do we think that a higher resolution of the map is important? It is in the nature of the scale of the White map (1:5,000,000) that vegetation units on the map are heterogeneous in character and only broadly delineated and thus it is not possible to utilise the White map for a more detailed understanding of vegetation dynamics and species distributions, which is an

1: See also *http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/ecoregion-conservation.html*

2: Our method can best be described by paraphrasing the term deconstruction (Derrida, 1967). The White map is an interpretation of reality and we explain it and provide a higher resolution map by revisiting the maps and botanical research that he used to make his map. The VECEA map is thus also an interpretation of reality, but at a higher resolution.

understanding that is required if a map should be of importance for field implementation (see below for the intended uses of the VECEA map). Furthermore for practically all indigenous species in the region there is insufficient point location data available to make good estimates of their actual and potential distributions across landscapes. A higher resolution of maps and consequently more detailed predictions of species distribution, however, opens up a new discussion of how to interpret vegetation dynamics at the community level (see below for our discussion of Potential Natural Vegetation), but this discussion is unavoidable and necessary for successful field implementation. The great advantage of mapping at a higher resolution is that the interpretation of community dynamics becomes publicly available and can be disputed and tested. This is in contrast to ecoregion maps where managers of restoration projects and tree planters must make their own guesses based on very generalised recommendations.

In comparison with White, we have had the advantage of computer based technologies that has enabled us to provide a higher resolution for a very large geographic area. Based on our analysis, we are in overall agreement with White's methodology and approach and we will provide a detailed discussion of the VECEA map in a number of peer reviewed papers. The process of elaborating the regional map has been iterative. Almost all available relevant vegetation information for the VECEA countries from early 20th century and onwards were collated and digitised. The botanists prepared national maps based on their interpretation of available vegetation maps and botanical information. The preparation of the regional map was a process of harmonisation of nomenclature and interpretation of vegetation types in an interaction between the team members.

The main objective for preparing the map is utilitarian and closely related to the requirement for a more detailed understanding of the indigenous tree species in the region – to improve the productivity of smallholder tree growers utilising the species in agroforestry systems. The utility of the map, however, goes beyond understanding the productivity of indigenous tree species and encompasses a more general understanding of agricultural productivity and conservation of fauna and flora in ecosystems.

In summary, the utility of the VECEA vegetation map, complemented with additional information on vegetation development and other environmental data layers, is that it:

(i) provides an integrated interpretation of landscapes and indicates the position of transitions between areas with significantly different environmental conditions, conditions which are most likely to be important determinative factors for agricultural potential;
(ii) predicts potential distributions of indigenous plant species in the agricultural landscapes and predicts possible genetic variation across distributional ranges;
(iii) can be a tool for predicting potential distributions of species of terrestrial animals, birds, reptiles, and invertebrates in remaining natural vegetation;

(iii) can be a user friendly extension tool for improving the potential options (both from indigenous and exotic species) available to farmers in their quest for improving livelihoods and income generation;
(iv) provides for possible forecasts of changes in agricultural potential resulting from climate change;
(v) provides a management tool for interpretation of historical, current, and future distribution of ecosystems and ecoregions, including alternative stable states;
(vi) provides a tool for ecological restoration and protection of ecosystems.

2. Definition of forest, woodland, wooded grassland, bushland and thicket

Forests are continuous stands of trees at least 10 m tall with interlocking crowns (White 1983 p. 46). White (1983 p. 46) distinguishes **scrub forests** that are intermediate in structure between forest and bushland (and thicket). They are usually 10 - 15 m high. Trees (woody plants with well-defined and upright boles) are usually present but do not form a closed canopy. Smaller woody plants (principally bushes and shrubs) contribute at least as much as the trees to the appearance of the vegetation and its phytomass.

Woodlands are open stands of trees of at least 8 m tall with a canopy cover of 40 percent or more, but never with interlocking crowns and usually with a field layer of heliophilous ('sun-loving') grasses. Woodlands have similar height as **forests**, but woodlands never have densely interlocking crowns (although the crowns can be in contact). White (1983 p. 46) distinguishes **scrub woodlands** that are intermediate in structure between woodland and bushland, being stunted variants (< 8 m) of main woodland vegetation types (i.e. containing the same dominant tree species).

Bushlands are open stands of bushes (usually between 3 and 7 m tall) with a canopy cover of 40 percent or more. **Thickets** are closed stands of bushes (usually between 3 and 7 m tall) where the bushes are so densely interlaced that they are impenetrable - except along tracks made by animals. Bushlands and thickets are taller than **shrublands** defined as open or closed stands of shrubs up to 2 m tall (White 1983 p. 46).

Wooded grasslands are lands covered with grasses and other herbs with woody plants (trees [≥ 7 m tall], bushes [3 - 7 m], dwarf trees, palm trees or shrubs [≤ 2 m]) covering between 10 and 40 percent of the ground. Woody plants nearly always occur scattered (White 1983 pp. 46, 47 and 52).

Grasslands are defined as lands covered with grasses and other herbs and where woody plants do not cover more than 10% of the ground (White 1983 p. 46).

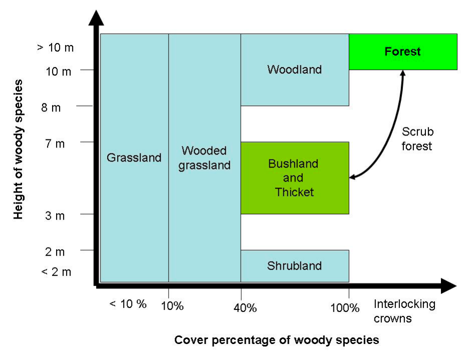

Figure 1. Height and cover percentage limits for major physiognomic types. Scrub forest is defined as a physiognomic mosaic of forest and bushland and thicket

3. What is potential natural vegetation?

We will here attempt to clarify how we interpret and implement terms utilised in the classification of vegetation. The central concept "Potential Natural Vegetation" in the VECEA map can be seen as the pivot around which a whole range of contested assumptions circle. These unavoidable assumptions are concerned with the distribution and dynamics of species and vegetation. While it is indisputable that plants are not randomly distributed geographically and in time, there is an ongoing debate about at what scale patterns can be discerned and whether plant species form assemblies that follow similar distribution patterns.

Friis (1998) in his review of the development of chorology explains that one of the earliest disputes in botany was about classifying plant distributions (plant chorology). In the beginning of the 19th century J.F. Schouw divided the globe into areas with more or less defined floras. Some of the most important criteria were based on presence or absence of characteristic species and without making assumptions about the historical development of the flora. Some twenty years later in a large work on plant geography A. de Candolle completely rejected a natural classification of the world into phytochoria because. (i) the plant world was too poorly known, and (ii) scientists did not apply sufficiently logical criteria. During the following century many scholars further contributed to the understanding of plant chorology in Africa and there is now a general consensus on chorology as a useful tool to describe plant species distributions in Africa - contrary to the situation in Europe (Friis, 1998). Frank White has been a major contributor and chorological patterns are an important integral part of White's vegetation map. Although logical, the criteria utilised are still not completely objective in the strictest sense. As Friis points out, White more than once stated that "there is no *a priori* reasons why the pattern lines on a vegetation map based on physiognomy of vegetation should coincide closely with those of a chorological map based on the coinciding distributional limits of species." But the results of his work with the vegetation map of Africa showed that if the chorological map of Africa was based on chorological data alone, rather than on transferring pattern lines from a detailed vegetation map, the pattern lines would not have been significantly different" (Friis, 1998 p. 37).

Early concepts concerned with the definition of community patterns in space are the biome[3], that was introduced to plant ecology by Clements in the first half of the 20th century and ecoregion that was introduced by Crowley, and Bailey in the second half of the same century (see discussion in Pennington *et al.*, 2004). The concepts are largely overlapping and assume that one can discern broad scale patterns in the distribution of ecological communities, which are defined by similar climax plant formations and environmental conditions. A major difference is that an ecoregion is never discontinuous, while a biome is in principle always coincident with the climax vegetation and therefore can consist of disjunct areas (Bailey, 2005). Biomes

3: Biome, also called major life zone, the largest geographic biotic unit, a major community of plants and animals with similar life forms and environmental conditions. It includes various communities and is named for the dominant type of vegetation, such as grassland or coniferous forest. Several similar biomes constitute a biome type - for example, the temperate deciduous forest biome type includes the deciduous forest biomes of Asia, Europe, and North America. "Major life zone" is the European phrase for the North American biome concept (*http://www.britannica.com*, accessed November 14, 2011).

and ecoregions define very large scale patterns, thus allowing for analysis at a continental or global scale, and are widely used by conservation agencies.

During the first part of the 20th century Clement and later Tansley[(4)] envisaged that in a given area, the assemblage of plant species would compete and replace each other such that eventually the dominant species would coexist in a stable climax (equilibrium/balance of nature), which would vary with the biotic and abiotic environment including the prevailing climate. This climax concept was soon after contested by Gleason who saw vegetation development as a stochastic process rather than as development as an organism, with communities composed of species with individual adaptations to the biotic and abiotic environment and thus with individual distributions. During the almost one hundred years since these ideas were conceived an enormous amount of studies and theoretical developments have modified our understanding of vegetation dynamics and it is unlikely that any scholar today would understand the term 'climax vegetation' in the same way as Clement and Tansley did. Already Whittaker (1962) in a review of the field of vegetation classification largely corroborated Gleason's view. This concept of the flux of nature led to interest in theories where disturbance is seen as a permanent feature of vegetation such as patch dynamics and patterns and processes in forest (Cadenasso *et al.*, 2003, Whitmore, 1982, van der Maarel, 1996). However, a non-equilibrium view does not preclude that there can be patterns of coinciding distribution of species, such that vegetation types can still be identified (Walker & Del Moral, 2003; Chadzon, 2008).

The concept of Potential Natural Vegetation (PNV) is part of this development of vegetation science. A widely accepted definition of PNV is: Potential natural vegetation has been defined as the vegetation structure that would become established if all successional sequences were completed without interference by man under the present climatic and edaphic conditions, including those created by man (van der Maarel, 2005). The term was coined by Tüxen in the middle of the 20th century (Tüxen, 1956) and has been applied in many parts of the world to categorise plant communities. The concept is closely related to the schools of phytosociology, which originated in Europe and elaborated methods for vegetation analysis and detailed and often hierarchical systems of classification of vegetation by floristic and physiognomic characteristics (see reviews by van der Maarel, 2005; Whittaker, 1980). We do not consider the reintroduction of the PNV concept as a statement about the degree of niche assembly of ecological communities versus a stochastic neutral theory (sensu Hubbell, 2008) but as a tangible hypothesis about species distributions.

We believe that there is truth in the concepts of climax and PNV as well as in the critique and that for practical conservation and management of vegetation and species this discussion should not only be a theoretical discussion, but should be lead to a more informed interpretation of 'real' landscapes. The dichotomy between the continuum concept and the concept of communities as co-occurring species can in principle be solved by considering the two concepts as two different and complementary ways of look-

4: Ecosystem, the complex of living organisms, their physical environment, and all their interrelationships in a particular unit of space. The concept of ecosystems, introduced by Tansley, not only considers the complex of living organisms and their physical environment, but also all their relationships in a particular unit of space (*http://www.britannica.com*, accessed November 14, 2011).

ing at the same landscape (after Austin, 2005, pp. 66-67): The continuum concept applies to an abstract environmental space, not necessarily to any geographical distance on the ground or to any indirect environmental gradient. The abstract concept of community of co-occurring species can only be relevant to a particular landscape and its pattern of environmental variables, community is a property of the landscape. Such a community concept is compatible with the different concepts of a continuum. The PNV map thus offers a useful tool in lieu of missing environmental relationships. For the forests we have been careful not to map the detailed variation of the forest types, but have kept the physiognomic and chorological classification of White (1983). As pointed out by Langdale Brown and Omaston "The forests are characterised by a great variety of species and communities. Sometimes edaphic or seral relationships between these types are clear, but we cannot yet account for all the differences. Indeed these tropical forests are such complex and longlived communities that in many cases it is not yet possible to be sure what is the climax; even the very nature and constancy of the climax is in doubt." (Langdale Brown & Omaston, 1964 p. 36).

The 'Clementian' traits of interpreting PNVs are in particular (i) the use of rigid hierarchical systems of classification together with a rigid prescription of species composition, and (ii) a static view that there can be only one endpoint to succession. We suggest that the PNV concept should not be interpreted in terms of a static 'Clementian' paradigm and we have been helped in this by the non-hierarchical classification utilised by White. The largest part of the VECEA region is covered by dry vegetation where fire and large browsers (megaherbivores) have profound influence on vegetation development (Bond *et al.*, 2005, Owen-Smith, 1987) and there may in most cases be more than one stable state for the vegetation of a particular area. The use of PNV can thus be an aid in interpreting the dynamics of vegetation and likely alternative stable states. In the Serengeti-Mara area the possibility of alternative stable states has been convincingly documented (Sinclair *et al.*, 2007, McNaughton *et al.*, 1988, Dublin *et al.*, 1990) and the VECEA map could be a tool for identifying alternative stable states in other areas.

With the VECEA vegetation map we suggest that the interpretation of landscapes is done at such a resolution that the implications of analyses can be transferred directly to the landscapes. In making a map with this level of detail we have entered the domain of the contested concepts (climax, continuum, species assembly rules, non-equilibrium communities, etc), which may otherwise be avoided at the biome/ecoregional level of analysis (but not in the implementation and management of patterns and processes in actual landscapes). We do not claim that we have completely solved the conundrum with our map, but we trust that we have created a tool that can be an aid in biogeographical analyses.

When the concepts, biome, plant community, and PNV are defined very loosely (as they are often used in practice) they are almost interchangeable in the sense that they all attempt to describe the variation in vegetation that can be experienced as one moves through a landscape. The use of the two first concepts is rarely questioned - because of the underlying objectives and the scale at which they are used – as they are rarely utilised in a context where they need to be applied in a particular landscape. PNV on the other hand, by nature of its use to describe plant communities on large scale, immediately invokes an interpretation of pattern and process. Like the concept of chorology, the concept of PNV is logical, but the criteria utilised can not be completely objective in the strictest sense. This is to us an acceptable compromise, since nature includes a large degree of history and chance and we suggest that the PNVs are tested and corroborated through empirical tests as well as modelling.

The PNV concept offers a tool that can be utilised in analysing the pattern and processes in landscapes including the biotic and abiotic interrelationships that govern these ecosystem aspects. As such it complements and can be used as an input to modelling of ecosystems and individual species. Although we are confident that the VECEA map provides a realistic picture of where particular vegetation types occur, the map still is a hypothesis about what the actual vegetation type will be. This is an inherent consequence of trying to map anything.