

Interactive comment on “Patterns in Woody Vegetation Structure across African Savannas” by Christoffer R. Axelsson and Niall P. Hanan

Christoffer R. Axelsson and Niall P. Hanan

christoffe@hotmail.com

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We thank Elizabeth Hanlon for comments on the Introduction and Conclusion sections:

Introduction

1. On line 35 the authors state “climate, both rainfall patterns and temperatures, could change in many parts of Africa” and then the reference. It would benefit the reader if some of these changes, as they are relevant to your research, were stated and the effect that these changes could have on vegetation.

Response: We chose not to delve deeper into describing climate change scenarios because it is not a focus of this paper.

2. The use of words like ‘these’ and ‘those’ should be avoided to remove any ambiguity

C1

about the subject of the statement.

Response: We have updated the manuscript but several occurrences of “these” remain. We do not see any reason for ambiguity among the remaining cases.

3. The end sentence in the second introduction paragraph (beginning line 51) could be improved to reduce vagueness; how do we learn about the impacts of the underlying ecosystem processes?

Response: We have re-written and re-arranged this part of the Introduction. The sentence on line 51 was removed.

4. Aggregation is discussed a lot but there is relatively little introduction to it. The relationship between woody plants and aggregation should be given some context.

Response: We have added a few sentences to give aggregation and PVPs more context.

5. A diagram of the spotted, labyrinthine, or gapped patterns of PVPs would be useful for readers less familiar with PVPs.

Response: We added a figure with images of PVPs.

6. The last paragraph of the introduction seems out of place, and would be better suited for the methods section. A smaller summary of your work would be appropriate for the introduction, and Figure 1 would definitely be better placed in the method section.

Response: We have modified the last paragraph and removed two sentences that described the methodology. Figure 1 is in the Methods section.

7. It would be better to end the introduction with a research question, or the aim of your experiment. A lack of clear hypotheses made it hard to read the results and judge whether the experiment was successful or not. A clear research question helps the reader know what you are trying to achieve.

C2

Response: The research question “how do woody cover, crown size, crown density and the spatial pattern of trees vary with environmental gradients” is stated in the beginning of the last paragraph of the Introduction.

Conclusion

1. The conclusion was more of a summary of your results, rather than a rounding up of the issue explored. Ideas for future work could be given, and the importance of the work restated.

2. The phrase “possible difference maker” is a clumsy end to the paper.

Response: We made some minor modifications to the Conclusion section to try to improve it. We changed “possible difference maker between” to “possible difference between”.

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