

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

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Received and published: 1 February 2017

As part of a course in Critical Thinking at The University of Edinburgh, myself and colleagues chose to review your paper, each taking sections to critique. We would like to thank you for this opportunity to comment and we hope that our input will be beneficial to your work.

The following comments relate to the Discussion section of the paper.

1. In Discussion, the relationship between woody cover, crown size and crown density is introduced (Line 225), yet seems not to be mentioned in any section before – perhaps it would be fitting to highlight this relationship in an earlier section.
2. In line 228, the term ‘woody density’ is used, causing the reader some confusion, as

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previously the distinction was made between woody cover and woody density. Is this new term intentional?

3. We had some queries surrounding the focus on sites with rainfall seasonality above 0.8 (Line 245) - what is the justification for this focus? Is this where a sensitivity lies in terms of woody density response, and is this a causative relationship? Some more detail here would benefit the discussion.

4. On line 243, ‘previous literature’ is mentioned but no references are given immediately. Although individual associations are then explained and cited, the opening sentence omitting these references could be improved by restructuring this paragraph.

5. The use of the word ‘So’ to open line 268 does engage the reader, but seems inconsistent with the more formal writing style in the rest of the paper.

General comments on the study Ecosystem services is mentioned near the beginning of the paper but is not revisited in discussion – how relevant are ecosystem services to this study? ‘Processes’ seem like a more accurate description of relationships mentioned. Although the effects of primary variables were investigated, no interaction effects investigated. Are there any coupling effects of say, rainfall and slope on woody density?

Interactive comment on Biogeosciences Discuss., doi:10.5194/bg-2017-7, 2017.

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