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Environmental change in Bushbuckridge

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Abstract

Bushbuck Ridge is a typical cultural landscape where the interdependency of people and the environment shape the savanna ecosystem goods and services upon which many people are dependent. The forced resettlement of people in the apartheid era, together with Mozambican refugees, have resulted in high human densities. The majority of people rely heavily on the rural rangelands for a variety of natural products, and the ability of these ecosystems to continue delivering these products under conditions of climate change and land cover change is in doubt. Historical trends show that settlements are expanding, with an increasing corresponding footprint around each village, where woodland resources are depleted. People can and do adapt to environmental change, but projecting current trends in the changes that we observe, combined with increased unpredictability of rainfall, threatens to decouple the age-old interdependencies in the this cultural landscape, and present inhabitants with conditions beyond their adaptation capacity.