

Public Abstract

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Title:Decolonizing Conservation: Co-management of natural resources in Bushbuckridge Nature Reserve, South Africa

South Africa's government earnestly challenges its colonial past, as constitutional changes have allowed for freedom of speech and the creation of unions, embraced the integration of multiple official languages (there are eleven), and ceded jobs and representation of the black majority into Parliament and other high government positions. A process has begun to compensate those dispossessed of land to address economic and social inequalities in the form of land restitution, distribution, and reform. Following the Land of Restitution Act (1994), dispossessed individuals had until 1998 to file a claim which would potentially transfer land back to its original owners. The land claim in question, Bushbuckridge Nature Reserve (BBR NR), reflects this aim of ameliorating the racially unjust past through a co-management agreement between provincial and national conservation agencies and rural communities. To what degree are these agreements empowering, democratic, and fair? And what has this meant in terms of decolonizing conservation?