

Abstract

The diverse region of southern Africa is affected by several changes of the natural environment. This thesis characterizes the region of southern Africa and evaluates the state and development of these natural conditions and environmental problems in four main categories of physical geography – climate, vegetation, soils and water. A literature review is compiled and processed focusing on studies by field experts, which describe the main issues in these categories. Particular problems which the region encounters are described on a global, regional and local scale. The main problems are: changes in temperature and precipitation, land cover change, deforestation, desertification, threats to biodiversity, soil erosion and water availability. Overall, changes of the natural environment in southern Africa are caused by climate change and anthropogenic activity. However, human activities cause a greater impact as a result of their “indirect influence” on climate conditions and “direct influence” on vegetation conditions.

Key words: Africa, southern Africa, natural environment, climate, vegetation, soils, water