Capitalizing on nature

A Critical Discourse Study of Nature Policy concerning the Murchison Falls Conservation Area of Uganda

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This article explores discursive struggles between ideologies of nature development and nature conservation in the context of the Murchison Falls Conservation Area (MFCA) in Uganda. Based on the concepts of critical discourse moments and discourse coalitions, the article offers a nuanced perspective on nature policy in a specific, though not unique, context. The purpose of studying tensions between different positions in nature policy from a critical discourse perspective is to increase the awareness of the role of language use in the struggles. Moreover, the study aims at enhancing the understanding of different interests and thus reducing the conflict potential regarding the MFCA.

Keywords: nature policy; nature development; nature conservation; critical discourse moments; discourse coalitions;

Introduction

The Murchison Falls Conservation Area (MFCA) in northwestern Uganda is a national park managed by the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA). As it is evident from its website, murchinsonfallsnationalpark.com, the MFCA consists of the Murchison Falls National Park, Bugungu Wildlife Reserve and Karuma Falls Wildlife Reserve. In 1926, the Murchison Falls National Park was established as a game reserve, and in 1952, it became one of Uganda's first national parks; it is Uganda's largest conservation area hosting 76 species of mammals and 451 birds (Uganda Wildlife Authority 2019). Due to its long history and status as the first and largest conservation area in Uganda, the MFCA offers an interesting object of study. It has witnessed many changes over time and is currently at the centre of attention and conflicting interests in national policy-making. The key issue of conflict is the role of nature. Here, protagonists of nature conservation struggle with protagonists of nature development over the future development of the MFCA. The issues of conflict are found at the level of community interests (agriculture, family farming), national interests (e.g. extraction of oil, hydropower), national park interests(tourism), and ecological interests. Some of these interests might benefit both the nation and the community, but others cause conflicts between the different actors. Understanding these conflicting interests in more detail may contribute to a better mutual acceptance and a reduction of the conflict potential.

Recently, the park authority has attempted to incorporate the interests of those living near the boundaries of wildlife reserve into nature development, a practice which

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is referred to as 'capitalising on nature' (Barbier 2011; Inamdar, de Jode, Lindsay, and Cobb 1999). Capitalising on nature explains the efforts to overcome the financial crisis, reputation crisis and democratic deficit that have characterised protected areas in developing countries during the 1990s (Inamdar et al. 1999). In this regard, nature development, in a neoliberal sense, became a popular concept in trying to accommodate community interests, national interests, park interests and ecological interests. However, it still competes with a previous complex social reality of nature conservation. As the role of agricultural commodity has intensified, people have settled on a more permanent basis, and this may gradually influence public acceptance and local appreciation of wildlife in the agricultural field. Therefore, interaction between nature conservation and agriculture paints a very complex landscape when it comes to balancing land rights and appreciation of wildlife, for example. Indeed, the original concept of nature conservation has little appreciation of what is taking place outside the nature reserve boundary (Bere 1957, 25). Although wildlife is a government property, animals still end up in the agricultural local community field, and traditionally, there has been limited intervention to remedy this practice (Brooks and Buss 1962). Moreover, government intervention in nature conservation has been criticised as uncoordinated, incapable of managing poaching and encroachment. As part of the solution, nature development has emerged as a seemingly paradoxical neoliberal capitalisation intervention.

In this article, we analyse the discursive struggles between the two dominant ideologies of nature policymaking in the context of the MFCA; i.e. nature development vs. nature conservation. The aim of the paper is to shed light on power relations and underlying rationales of policymaking processes concerning the MFCA and their historical background. Based on the following two research questions, we will investigate these from a critical discourse analytical perspective:

(1) What is the historical background for the current conflict between nature development and nature conservation in the context of The Murchison Falls Conservation Area?

(2) Which actors and which discursive struggles can be identified and to what extent do these represent conflicting interests or common ground?

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The following section presents the theoretical and methodological framework of the study. Then follows first an analysis of the historical background and second the analysis of key features identifying nature development and nature conservation respectively. Finally, the conclusion will answer the research questions.

Critical Discourse Analysis

The theoretical and analytical framework of this study is based on the concept of discourse and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Drawing on Hajer (2003), we understand discourse as '[…] a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities' (Hajer 2003, 44). Discourse can be seen as a certain frame of interpretation of the world, 'as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)' (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 1) and it is closely related to the social practices and institutional structures in which it is embedded. To what degree discourses display coherence and regularity in the way that they are expressed depends on the domain in which they are embedded (Hajer 2003, 44). In short, discourse analysis relates to language in use to construct actions and events (Hajer 2003).

CDA covers a number of different approaches to discourse analysis seen as 'the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains' (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 61). Drawing on an overview by Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 272 ff), Jørgensen & Phillips (2002, 61ff) identify five common features that unify different approaches within CDA, which are also part of the framework applied in the present study; firstly, the aim of CDA is to uncover the linguistic-discursive (multimodal) dimension of social and cultural phenomena and processes of change (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 61; Fairclough 2003, 205). In our use of CDA, this involves analysing social structures beyond the discursive level by exploring relations between actors in specific institutions. Secondly, discourse is regarded as a form of social practice that both constitutes and is constituted by the social world, i.e. discourse finds itself in a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 61ff; Fairclough 2003, 206). Thirdly, the discourse

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analytical approaches agree that 'language use should be empirically analysed within its social context' although the focus on language varies among discourse theorists (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 62). Fourthly, discourses are seen as representations of ideology including for example power relations. Finally, CDA is characterised by being critical in the sense that it follows a research agenda of addressing social inequality by uncovering "the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of unequal power relations". CDA is thus committed to social change (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 64).

One of the most important contributors to CDA is Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995, 2013). Fairclough's CDA approach identifies actors and their semantic processes (Fairclough, 2003). In general, CDA is applicable as both theory and method for empirical analysis of the relationship between discourse and socio-cultural development, structure, and cultural practices which are partly linguistic and partly non-linguistic in nature (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 61; Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 271). This includes the creation of identity, social relations, and agents positioned in different groups, engaging in discursive struggle. In other words, 'discursive relations are sites of social struggle and conflict' (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002, 74) and the study of discourse can help explain why some understandings are conflictual and why particular understandings become dominant and authoritative while others do not.

Discursive Struggles and Discourse Coalitions

Inherent in discursive struggles is the building of discourse coalitions as actors seek support for their position. Following Hajer (1995), discourse coalitions can be understood as the ensemble of (1) a set of story lines, (2) the actors who utter those story lines, (3) and the practices in which this discursive activity is based (Hajer 1995, 62). A story line is 'a narrative on social reality through which elements from many different domains are combined and that provides actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding' (Hajer 1995, 62). Thus, the identification of story lines, actors, and practices may serve as a useful organising framework in order to assess around which issues struggling discourses compete and where they overlap and might find common ground and solve a conflict. Discourse coalitions are formed among actors who are engaged in a particular policy domain, a loose coalition, fluid networks held together not by beliefs or interests, but by

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storylines, which are necessary to achieve *discursive dominance* (Hajer 1995). In line with the idea propounded by Gramsci (1971) that 'common-sense' contains several competing elements that are the result of negotiations of meaning in which all social groups participate, discursive dominance is also seen as a result of a process of negotiations of meaning. The study of discourse and discourse coalitions is useful to explain why some understandings gain dominance over others and are regarded as authoritative while others are discredited (Hajer 1995, 44).

These ideas may be associated with the concept *order of discourse* that is a useful concept for understanding the partial fixing of meaning in a particular policy domain (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 56). The order of discourse may denote: (*i*) a means of structuring a particular domain in 'moment', where exclusion is possible; (ii) where two or more discourses, in the same domain, struggle to establish themselves. The notion draws on Gramsci's idea that 'common-sense' contains several competing elements that result from negotiations of meaning in which all social groups participate (Gramsci 1971). In this sense, meaning negotiations among social groups may result in some competing elements or discourses becoming hegemonic. Hegemony is not only dominance but also a process of negotiation out of which emerges a consensus concerning meaning.

In the analysis, storylines, actors, and practices will be identified and described in order to unveil nuances of discursive struggle and to elucidate elements of conflicting interests within two seemingly predominant discourses, viz. nature development and nature conservation. However, first we go back in history looking for so-called critical discourse moments.

Critical Discourse Moments

Reflecting on policy history is not about what happened at some point in the past, but about how something came to be what it is today. The focus is on the moves of particular actors at a moment in time (Pierson 2005). This helps explain why a particular policy has taken the form it has today. Indeed, there are periods that are critical to how nature policy has taken on specific forms and the notion of Critical Discourse Moments (CDMs) (Carvalho 2008; Chilton 1987; Gamson 1992) seems useful for explaining such policy changes. CDMs are defined by key moments, whether

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in political activity, scientific findings, or socially relevant events. By this definition, CDMs are periods where specific happenings may challenge the established positions, although these moments may be more or less regular in nature (Chilton 1987). Furthermore, these moments may be contradictory to the rights, beliefs, or values either of the speaker or hearer or both (Chilton 1987). The notion of CDMs will be applied in this study to recollect the historical background of the contemporary discursive struggles.

Data and analytical approach

The primary source for analysis is The Ugandan Nature Policy 1902-1996, but literature studies and readings of the Uganda Blue Book in the form of annual financial reports and the reporting of activities therein, published biographies of sport hunting and tourism trade have also been used. In addition, interviews with former members of the Parish Development Committee, key informants, and local leaders in Nwoya district, Purongo sub-county, Pabit Parish, were conducted between February 2016 and May 2016, and the interview data were included in the text analysis. The Pabit East parish in Purongo sub-county was selected because it is one of the most affected parishes where the communities live along a wildlife frontier of 5 to 20 kilometer and also practice agricultural activities.

[table 1]

Analysis and discussion

Our analytical approach to answering the research questions is informed by discourse analysis from the perspective of critical discourse moments and hegemonic discourse coalitions, as explained earlier. The purpose is to unpack possible causes of conflicting interests among discourse coalitions.

Analysing Critical Discourse Moments

This section shows a number of selected actions and happenings that have formed the background for the contemporary struggle between nature conservation and nature development. Using an outline of time in terms of years, the CDMs are used to depict developments and their influence in favour of either nature development or nature conservation.

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[table 2]

As it is evident from Table 2, shifts in discursive prevalence have taken place over time. However, the discourse of nature development has gained increasing prominence along with nature policymaking strategies focusing more and more on economic growth. The discourse of nature conservation came to prevail with the outbreak of sleeping sickness in 1905 and again during three decades from the beginning of the 1930s. Although the various events shown in Table 2 all are important and decisive moments that overthrow the balance of discursive hegemony, we have selected three main discourse moments that indicate turning points in the ongoing hegemonic struggle between the two discourses. These moments are categorised into the following turning points: changes in landownership, sleeping sickness and evacuation policy, and the globalisation of nature reserves.

Changes in Landownership
The mapping of the Nile Province brought changes in property rights and came to promote the nature development discourse. The communal landownership was converted into Crown land and a so-called nature reserve (Uganda Journal 1948, 82). In 1902, sport hunting brought discursive struggles between the nature conservationists on the one hand and the local population who practiced hunting parties, on the other. The conflict of interests was framed in terms of too much availability of wildlife, and elephants were blamed for destroying young trees (Wheater 1971).

The struggle over land may be seen from the perspective of Wheater (1971), who studied problems of controlling fires in Ugandan National Parks. According to Wheater (1971), and going back to the early 20thcentury "there is evidence that there had been human habitation in this area for many hundreds of years. Man would almost certainly have used fire to clear his land and to assist him in the hunting of wildlife" (1971, 261). Causes of fire in the Park that are particularly illustrative of conflicting land interests include what Wheater (1971) has referred to as "land clearance fires" and "poaching burns", which are fires that help the local population free land for agriculture and provide better access to wildlife for hunting parties as well as poachers.

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The nature conservationists accused the native hunting parties (*dwar apet*) of parceling out the whole areas according to number of beasts and clustering each beast for a particular village or community (Interview 4) and they labelled such activity as 'destructive, unethical, and unsustainable' (Harvey1996).Consequently, such hunting parties were outlawed in 1902 (Corson and Kux 1982), and subsequently, the 1906 Game Ordinance prohibited the use of spears, pitfalls, and bush burning. Sport hunting became a dominant social practice, attracting sportsmen who lived in Koba Boma in 1907. Sport hunting brought in the institutional practice of licensing fees that sustained it (SPWFE 1904, 14). It further brought in a new practice of appropriation, the 1904 game law, which permitted an annual license holder to kill only 2 bulls in a year with tusk weighing more than 30 lbs. In the same period, the government also introduced gun tax to control firearms among the natives (SPWFE 1905, 12).

In 1926, the Game (Preservation and Control) Ordinance empowered the Game Department created in 1925 to pursue dual purposes in nature policy: these embedded nature conservation inscribed as *preservation* and nature development as *native protection* (Uganda Protectorate, 1935). Preservation served primarily tourism trade whereas native protection served the sport hunting practices. Whenever critiques emerged from conservationists against wildlife destruction in the name of sport hunting, the government was quick to produce counter narratives of its social practices meant to protect agricultural crops, but not for revenue consideration. Elephants were described to be everywhere, as destructive beasts and dangerous and sport hunting was further justified on the basis of protecting female elephants (Uganda Protectorate 1949). Sport hunting was also coordinated by local chiefs and their subjects, who slaughtered bulls that destroyed crops on behalf of government. For example, the resettlement of Bagungu along Lake Albert primarily succeeded on the basis of elephant destruction (Uganda Protectorate 1949). All in all, the government policy and social practices contributed to strengthening the discourse of nature development. However, this position was challenged by the outbreak and development of sleeping sickness.

Sleeping Sickness and Evacuation Policy
A critical discourse moment of vital importance for the discourse of nature conservation was the outbreak of sleeping sickness in 1905. Things started changing when the

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Government declared the 13,000 square kilometer on both sides of the Victoria Nile between 1907 and 1912 as 'sleeping sickness restricted area' (Greig 1907; King 1912; Koerner, de Raadt, and Maudlin 1995; Powesland 1957). Starting with the southern part of Victoria Nile in 1910, the Bugungu area was converted from Crown land into 'Bunyoro Game Reserve', a move away from freehold status into public land, as nature reserve. As mortality was reduced in the 1920s, the Bagungu were resettled along the shore of Lake Albert on 15 miles in 1930. On the northern side of Victoria Nile, the people were evacuated from Pajao to Kamdini up to Weiga river system (Morris 1960).As the evacuation of large areas gave space to wildlife, this resulted in a reinforcement of the discourse of nature conservation for the years that followed.

Globalisation of Nature Reserve

Sport hunting brought intense poaching in the 1950s. Some poachers were disguised as sportsmen, while others collaborated with local chiefs. Government responded by reducing the number of hunting days to 14 days in a year. This resonated with the past criticism put forward against sport hunting by the Society for the Preservation of Wild Fauna of the Empire who opposed sport hunting and negotiated with government to establish nature reserves, laws, and legislations (SPWFE 1904, 1905, 1907). The group cited the success of Yellowstone National Park which covered 5000 square miles and further urged the government to restrict activities of agriculture, settlements or mineral concessions in nature reserves. The 1993 London Conference on African wildlife brought into being what is today an accepted definition of a national park. The definition runs as follows:

> The expression National Park shall denote an area: (a) placed under public
> control, the boundaries of which shall not be altered except by competent
> legislative authority; (b) set aside for the protection and preservation, for all
> time, of wildlife and wild vegetation for the benefit, advantage and enjoyment of
> the general public; (c) in which hunting of fauna or collection of flora is
> prohibited except under the direction of park authority (Bere 1957, 21).

However, this definition did not consider proximate fields such as agriculture, or oil and gas in a protected area. When Murchison Falls National Park was created under

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the Legal Notice 162 of 1952, it aligned its dual purposes with the above statement: *preservation* as nature conservation and *contribution to the national economy* as nature development. This was a contradictory discursive formation where the park authorities had to pursue preservation while at the same promoting public acceptance through nature development, that is, the national park was created for people, not people for the national park.

Preservation promoting tourism trade had high priority whereas *game cropping* to control wildlife population and ecological destruction was given lower priority (Bindernagel 1968). At this turning point, the dichotomy, interdependence and rivalling of nature development and nature conservation became clearer. Likewise, it was evident that these purposes operate in a rather self-serving manner without taking into consideration the concerns of other interests and fields.

The analysis of CDMs has shown that the discursive struggles over the role of nature and nature policy has a long history and thus a great influence on the current and future situation of the MFCA. In the next section, we analyse in more detail the storylines that make up the discourse coalitions related to the MFCA.

Analysing Discursive Struggles

Drawing on the concept of storylines in the sense of Hajer (1995), we compare and contrast nature development and nature conservation. For this purpose, we identify actors, social practices and discursive struggles among discourse coalitions. This will help us explore the extent of the historical struggles as they are reflected in contemporary discourses, potentially framing the future of MFCA and understand some of the roots of emerging conflicting interests and the formation of discourse coalitions. The key actors we focus on in the policy study are mainly government, conservation organisations, private developers and the communities, who are still in conflict, as the historical struggles over nature remain unresolved. Table 3 shows some central storylines embedded in the discourses of nature development and nature conservation respectively. These will be elaborated in the following.

[table 3]

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Nature as a source of income versus nature as an inviolable system

Nature as source of income involves elements of revenue-sharing between the park authority and the neighbouring communities, income generative activities, wildlife as property of government and the promotion of multiple use rights in order to encourage sport hunting in agricultural land, among other things. In other words, nature as source of income contributes to socio-economic development both at local and national levels. Thus, investments in nature would restore its productive unit or the park authority. An example of such an investment in nature is the initial investment of 15 million DM from the German Bank KfW Group to the UWA in 1998 that was meant to build the capacity of UWA in managing the park estate (Wilhelmi 1999).

The basic idea of revenue sharing was promoted through a quadruple in 2003 which brought the district council, Uganda Wildlife Safari, UWA, and Aswa-Lolim Wildlife Association together (UWA 2003) and defined that the revenue accruing from sport hunting activities was to be distributed on percentage: 50 percent goes to the landowners, 20 percent to the sub-county, 20 percent to the district council and UWA goes with 10 percent (Interview 1). In order to secure the property right issue, the government defined wildlife as government property regardless of their location in the country. Uganda Wildlife Act authorises Uganda Wildlife Authority to protect, manage and own wildlife in agricultural field (UWA 2003). Section 29 of Uganda Wildlife Act 2000 and the UWA Conservation Policy 2004 enables wildlife use rights (UWA 2000). This encourages interaction between nature field and the broader socio-political contexts. Storylines of revenue sharing, income generating activities, and multiple rights of use would not be present in the social practices of the nature conservation discourse without legal intervention.

Within the nature conservationist discourse, nature is regarded as an inviolable system that should be protected. Among other things, this should be done through the creation of boundaries between wildlife and humans. As an example of support for the nature conservationist approach, the World Bank's Protected Areas Management Support Unit (PAMSU) of 2003 financed boundary demarcation exercises (UWA 2003)

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to enhance the inviolable system's capacity to deliver sound protected area management such as law enforcement for a secure property right regime. However, despite the financial support of nature conservation in boundary creation, PAMSU also supported the nature development idea in arguing that local communities were beneficiaries who could engage in economic activities, including selling crafts, education, and revenue-sharing schemes (World Bank 2011). The underlying rationale was here that poaching and wildlife crimes were driven by poverty. As beneficiaries, the communities could also participate in sport hunting activities, and the land owners responded by forming Aswa-Lolim Wildlife Association in the former Aswa-Lolim game reserve. The aim was to reduce poaching and human-wildlife conflict, a model which is based on public-private partnership to incorporate private concessionaire in sport hunting and which is part of the nature development discourse.

In the southern of Murchison Falls National Park , Karuma and Bugungu game reserves (1964 and 1968 respectively) were created for game cropping purposes. Aswa-Lolim game reserve was established in 1961 and enclosed 70.4 square miles under the Game Ordinance of 1959. The Kilak Control Hunting Area and East Madi Control hunting Area under the Game (Preservation and Control) Act of 1964 were mainly for sport hunting, besides the strategy to maintain space for wildlife outside agricultural land (Huxley 1961), thus minimising human-wildlife conflict and protecting government rangeland (Brooks and Buss 1962).

To a large degree, the discursive struggle between protagonists of either nature development or nature conservation has been embedded in the conflict between wildlife protection and wildlife utilisation and the issue of securing the livelihoods of the local communities. The following quote from a former minister of animal resources illustrates the conflicting concerns of protecting wildlife and its habitats from poaching and illegal settlements and securing the livelihoods of the local community while maintaining a sound balance between wildlife protection and wildlife utilisation. The quote by the government official is an answer/argument for/reasoning related to the conflicting discourses of nature development while at the same time serving the purpose of nature conservation. That is, regulating shooting of wildlife.

Wildlife, if it is to survive in this or any other country where large numbers of it still exist, must be seen to contribute to the economic and material wellbeing of the people of that country. In addition, there are other means of utilising game for the benefit of the people such as hunting, by residents and non-residents, for sport which earns revenue to the government. Another aspect of game utilisation is cropping. This is a deliberate reduction of animal populations to keep animals in balance with their habitats. The animals shot are usually antelopes, which are sold to rural people at very low prices. Revenue accrued from this aspect of wildlife utilisation includes the sale of game skins and other trophies (Game Department 1971).

Wildlife cropping contributed to the national coffer through the meat industry where over 400,000 kilograms were supplied annually was meant to support nature conservation discourse. For example, actors such as ecological experts used the euphemism of game cropping in storylines about maintaining the stability of the habitat. This was done through elephant destruction, encouraging over 600 elephant control shootings annually, while the Game Department introduced open-ranching within 5000 kilometer from nature reserve, including Aswa-Lolim Camp in 1965 and Omer Camp in 1967 (Bindernagel 1968).

The corollary of this is that the national interest to promote commercial agriculture inherently conflicts with wildlife interests. This may be seen from the following example. When Aswa-Lolim game reserve and Kilak Controlled Hunting Area were degazetted in 1972 to promote the growth of commercial agriculture. The rise of poaching entailed the discursive struggle between nature conservation and nature development. It structured the way the government governed, as seen from a quotation by the Minister of Tourism and Wildlife in 1973:

This greedy practice by some irresponsible elements in our society must be completely stamped out. I strongly endorse disciplinary action taken against field staff who have been found aiding and abetting poachers. There is still plenty of land in Uganda, which can be settled and cultivated without moving into the game reserves. Each one of us should realise that wildlife requires land

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where they live, graze, browse and roam. We cannot, therefore, on the one hand advocate for wildlife conservation and then on the other hand deny it land. I, therefore, endorse any research activities undertaken by the departmental biologists. It has been noted that a number of animals have been killed under control, for administrative and cropping purposes. The quantities of animal protein supplied are considerable and I believe this should be a lesson to all of us that wildlife is not just a source of revenue but a tangible asset conserved for the benefit of the people of Uganda. (Lt. Col. J.D Onaah, Minister of Tourism and Wildlife, 1973 (Game Department 1973).

The quote represents a support for the discourse of nature conservation in strongly advocating for the protection of wildlife and against poaching. Poaching was and is still a central issue which both discourses are against, yet they differ in the way it should be prevented. Henceforth, in 1973, Government banned tourism trade, and sport hunting in 1979 (Game Department, 1979). Poaching became very lucrative as global demand for ivory hiked against the Uganda Shilling for the first time. Poaching for food supply also intensified after the closing of Aswa-Lolim and Omer opening ranching project, which used to supply meat at a cheap price to the local population, and this was transformed into 'magendo' economy (O'Connor, 1988). This refers to the informal economic transaction that existed alongside the formal economy. This gave opportunity for groups of poachers who operated in large groups as reported in the annual report of the then Game Department:

> The evils of poaching manifest, not only in the number of animals wounded and left to die lingering deaths, but in the actual number of innocent persons, including our staff, who were injured, sometimes fatally, by such wounded animals (Game Department 1972).

Nature as institutional assemblage versus nature as state managed

Within the nature development discourse, nature is regarded as a matter of collaboration and partnership between/among various actors, i.e. government and other state institutions but also local communities and park authorities among others. Therefore, institutional assemblage covers not only institutions, but potentially also a large number of other actors (Clarke, Bainton, Lendvai, and Stubbs 2015). Nature as institutional assemblage interacts dialectically with nature as source of income. For example, the

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element of multiple use rights depends on the level of institutional assemblage through discourse coalitions (Ferns and Amaeshi 2017). Thus, the institutional assemblage in the context of Murchisoan Falls started with the restructuring and rationalising the park estates to fit into the broader aspect of capitalisation of neoliberal nature development. For example, the former UNPs and the former Game Department were restructured into a single entity, now the Uganda Wildlife Authority. This was linked to the broader elements of collaboration and creating local institutions. Collaboration among communities and park authorities could thus transform MFCA. This started with a series of policy forums sponsored from 1993-1994 to restructure UNPs and the Game Department. The World Bank's interests were mainly on expansion of 'network areas' and 'ecological infrastructures'. For this purpose, plans were made to:

"[…] survey and evaluate wildlife and resources; survey, mark and secure boundaries of parks, reserves and sanctuaries; [….] introduce hunting on quotas; [….] industrial development within protected areas, including mineral development" (World Bank 2011).

The social action of government was restricted to facilitating consultation, creation of enabling legislation, education and boundary demarcation to reduce poaching. In terms of network, the government negotiated for the reintroduction of a wildlife corridor in 1998, although it has not yet materialised, or is not well defined up to today. Gulu District did not approve the reintroduction of a wildlife corridor in the former Aswa-Lolim game reserve and Kilak controlled hunting area, which were degazetted in 1972. This indicates a lack of commitment to any of the discourse coalitions.

The examples point to negotiations among the various who are actors involved such as Uganda Wildlife Authority, National Park authorities, the government and the World Bank over land use, control of wildlife movement and regulation of game slaughters and poaching. Moreover, it is noticeable that industrial and mineral development was being prepared for as an element of nature development as a neo-liberal approach.

The nature conservation discourse regards nature as a state matter exclusively. The state, i.e. government and actors appointed by the government such as national park authorities, should regulate and manage nature alone. From this perspective, nature is state property and state responsibility and the involvement of other actors, as advocated by the nature development discourse, will only reduce the power and capability of the state in protecting nature from humans.

Nature as participatory governance versus nature as single authority governance

As mentioned above, involving a diverse range of relevant actors in policymaking processes is crucial/pivotal in the discourse of nature development. Accordingly, encouraging participation is a cornerstone element for nature development, besides consultation, regarding for example the decision to reintroduce wildlife corridors in the former Aswa-Lolim, Kilak and East Madi Controlled Hunting Area. Within the nature conservation discourse, community elements outside the existence of two separate institutions managing wildlife in nature reserves and in the community were considered undemocratic and incapable of dealing with poaching and encroachment. Nature as participatory governance encourages the decentralisation of land in the former game reserve and leaves it to the district council to manage and control the land on behalf of the communities. In that way, Aswa-Lolim game reserve and Kilak CHA, which were controlled and managed by Uganda Land Commission as a public land after 1972, were decentralised to the respective district council on behalf of local communities (Interview 1). Through the Wildlife Statute of 1996, the government put wildlife as a property of the government, whether in a protected or in agricultural land. It further clustered other animals as vermin (problem animals), and the control was transferred to the district council. This was intended to promote participatory development in the buffer zone that is compatible with local economic growth. Park Management Advisory Committee (PMAC) was entrusted with education and incorporating ex-poachers to engage in alternative livelihood activities (Interview 2, 3). PMAC was given shared responsibility of reducing poaching and problem animals, in exchange for revenue-sharing scheme and wildlife use rights. Over 2.047 ex-poachers were required to surrender their tools between 2004 and 2007, and wildlife was assumed to benefit everyone (Kyomukawa n.d.). Ex-poachers were transformed into community wildlife scouts, developing project proposals, after an approval from UWA, including goat rearing, tree planting, eco-

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drama and bee keeping (Interview 2). However, inadequate funding made some ex-poachers to abandon the project and resume poaching. In addition, the discursive struggle against PMAC gained force because it operated outside the political realm at the parish level (UWA 2006), sub-county, and the district, without legal status. This struggle resulted in the creation of community protected area institutions (CPI) in 2000 after a long consultation with conservation NGOs and PMAC member at national workshop in June 1997 (UWA 2006). This constrained the initial success in combating poaching. As a result of these initiatives, local voices were mobilised as community wildlife scouts and peer education on behavioral change and other alternative livelihoods upon the institutionalisation of revenue sharing scheme was introduced/implemented by the Uganda Wildlife Authority (Interview, 2). However, a change from PMAC to CPI made the ex-poachers go back into poaching activities. This trend that negatively affects the integrity of MFCA as the original idea of reducing poaching through alternative livelihood opportunities for ex-poachers never took off.

Nature as coexistence versus nature as separation

The discourse of nature development promotes coexistence between humans and wildlife. It understands human influence on nature as positive and, at the same time, recognises that the human-wildlife coexistence will be conflictual as interests differ. Thus, nature as conflictual coexistence and interaction also involves poaching, resettlement and compensation, and wildlife corridors. Unlike that approach, the nature conservation discourse views it as the right solution to separate humans from wildlife. Nature conservationists also promote wildlife corridors and rule-bound boundaries in order to protect nature from human influence.

These dynamics should be seen in the socio-economic context of nature development in general. The following is a statement reported in 2017 in Murchison Falls National Park.

> For the farming community, household poverty is no longer a significant factor
>
> in driving poaching. The poor are less involved in wildlife hunting than those
>
> who are better off. It could be argued that the better off households are more
>
> likely to hunt due to greater access to capital, time or hunting equipment.

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However, it seems more likely that households who engaged in hunting are

better off because of hunting and can afford to hunt... (Travers, Mwedde,

Archer, Roe , Plumptre, and Rwetsiba 2017, 23).

The statement shows/reflects/represents the commercial interest or wildlife values in influencing human activities on the future of the MFCA, not least because the funding agreement between the government and the World Bank's PAMSU project excludes poaching, resettlement and compensation to avoid conflict with its operational procedure. As part of the solution, UWA encourages the formation of community vigilant groups and training on how to scare wildlife on agricultural land where people are engaged in the production of soya, maize, banana, and cassava, which are attractive to wildlife (Interview 3, 4).

Conclusion

We set out to investigate first the historical background for the conflicting discourses of nature development and nature conservation in the context of The Murchison Falls Conservation Area and, second, identify actors and issues in the discursive struggles and finally discuss to what extent these discourses represent conflicting interests or common ground. Based on the analysis of critical discourse moments, we can conclude that the discursive struggle dates many years back and has influenced nature policy making for decades starting with the mapping of the Nile Province in 1902. Since then, the two discourses have been competing to shape policy decisions. However, the discourse of nature development has been prevalent most of the years. Except for three periods of time where the discourse of nature conservation was more dominant, i.e. around the break out of sleeping sickness in 1905, around the Ratification of the Convention on Fauna and Flora in 1933, and around the establishment of Murchison Falls National Park in 1952, the nature development discourse prevailed and shaped the policymaking. As a more recent example of the increasing hegemony of the nature development discourse is the Uganda Vision 2040 where focus lies on neoliberal thinking and economic growth as a means to transform Uganda from a peasant economy into a middle income country.

Based on the more specific analysis of the actors and the assumptions and understandings underlying the two discourses and their mutual struggles, we can conclude that in terms of nature's status as source of income or as an inviolable system, whether nature should be managed through collaboration and partnership or by government solely, whether participatory governance of single authority governance is preferable, and whether humans and wildlife should be separated or coexist despite conflicts, the discourses differ immensely. However, we have also identified common ground in order to reach a consensus between the discourse of nature development and nature conservation.

Agency has been distributed among the central government, conservation organisations, the communities and private developers. To begin with, the central government took ownership of wildlife as its property. It also secured boundaries and promoted consultation. The Local Government took the role of managing wildlife in the agricultural field and or in the buzzer zones. International Development Agencies such as the World Bank and GTZ took the position on nature development through the idea of participatory governance, promoting the creation of local institutions which we referred to as institutional assemblage in order to reduce poaching through community wildlife scouts. At the beginning, the discursive strategies were centered on democratic governance, including participation and consultation. As a result, agency was distributed to International NGOs and local communities who created the parish development committee, or PMAC. This local institution was given the responsibility to act as community wildlife scouts and educate the community members on the benefit sharing associated with nature development projects and social practices (Interview 3). However, the organising concept of community was short lived, and this was constrained by power relations and the reinstatement of the state in negotiating for networks and ecological infrastructure. This resonates with Foster, Kerr and Byrne (2014) on the depoliticisation and politicisation as strategies in politics and policy theory.

These discursive struggles both enable and constrain nature development with its logic on sustainable wildlife use, the reintroduction of sport hunting, concessionaire, and institutional rearrangements.Discursive struggles make institutional assemblage possible at governmental level, but remains highly contested at a local level. This could be problematic to the future of MFCA, although the state enabled laws, policies and

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legislations. The mediation and negotiation were necessary in establishing a new order of discourse (Hajer 1995; 2003; Star and Griesemer 1999), which created demarcation, aligning policy programs and ecological knowledge (Guyer and Richards 1996). It might be positioned ideologically within the discourse of sustainability, as institutional assemblage resulted in the implementation of park outreach activities, revenue-sharing schemes and knowledge sharing on the basis of expansive nature networks and ecological infrastructure in the field of agriculture. This came at the expense of discursive struggles and conflicting interests. It centered at maximising the opportunities nature offers to those engaged in agricultural activities, promising financial support, reinstating sport hunting, incorporating landowners into wildlife association as one way of reducing poaching.

Harmonising nature as source of income versus inviolable system depends on the business-as-usual approach (sport hunting) and the reinstating the role of the state to structure social interactions between the nature field and the agricultural field, especially on elements of compensation, resettlement and poaching. As the role of agricultural commodity has intensified, people settle on a more permanent basis, and this may gradually influence public acceptance and local appreciation of wildlife. Any further policy development will have to balance between human and wildlife interests, although it is complex, the nature field has conflictual interaction with the field of agriculture. If this does not happen, it would be met with little appreciation outside the nature reserve, seeing that although wildlife has become solely a government property, which has received little attention in general. Moreover, government interventionhas often been labeled as uncoordinated and incapable of managing poaching and encroachment. As part of the solution, nature developmenthas been adopted as a paradoxical neoliberal intervention which advocates reconciling the role of nature in promoting socio-economic development. This aim is to remedy the integrity of park institutions.

This article contributes to the practice and theory of organising nature development in the context of Uganda. It has highlighted the contribution of critical discourse moments in stabilising nature development. It also shows that socio-political structure influences power relations in nature as source of versus the inviolable system.

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Table 1. Overview of interview data

Interview	Interviewee	Interview topics
Interview 1	Former Legislature (Nwoya County) and chairperson, Uganda Tourism Board	Decentralisation of the former public land to district council
Interview 2	Former chairperson, PMAC	Local voices represented with community wildlife scouts. Peer education on behavioral change. Alternative livelihood through revenue sharing. Crop destruction. ex-poachers. Distance hunting gangs (Mafuta Minga).
Interview 3	Focus Group Discussion Interviews	Electrical fences. Trenches. Revenue. Community Vigilant groups. Training. Buffer zone crops.
Interview 4	Focus Group Discussion Interviews	Hunting parties. Evacuation. Resettlement. Protest

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Table 2. Critical discourse moments in Ugandan nature policy 1902 – 1996.

Year	Critical Discourse Moments	Implications	Prevalent discourse
1902	Mapping of the Nile Province	This provided opportunities for territorial control over commoditisation and utilisation of nature capital or ecological services. Hunting parties were outlawed.	Nature development
1904	Game law permitted an annual license	Sport hunting permitted inside and outside protected areas. This brought revenue to the central government.	Nature development
1905	Sleeping sickness broke out along Victoria Nile	Depopulation of the human settlement.	Nature Conservation
1906	The Game Ordinance prohibited the use of spears, pitfalls and bush burning	Sport hunting became the dominant practice promoted by government to the sportsmen.	Nature Development
1910	Evacuation policy due to sleeping sickness	This provided nature an expansive landscape	Nature development
1933	Convention on Fauna and Flora (demanded for the creation of national parks)	Internationalisation purpose, anti-sport hunting, liberal policy on nature. Aligned with the role of government in creating nature reserve.	Nature Conservation
1952	Murchison Falls National Park established	Trade tourism and limited game cropping for ecological purposes. Preservation and contribution to the national economy.	Nature Conservation
1964	Karuma Game Reserve, Aswa-Lolim Game Reserve, East Madi Control Hunting Area, Kilak Control Hunting Area established	Game cropping, sport hunting, although this controlled community access to other nature resources.	Nature Development
1965	Open-ranching (game) in Aswa-Lolim Game Reserve	Sport hunting, minimising human-wildlife conflict.	Nature Development
1967	Open-ranching (game) Kilak Control Hunting Area and East Madi Control Hunting Area	Lowest hierarchy, to serve community interest. Buzzer zone to game reserve. Sport hunting, game cropping, rangelands.	Nature Development
1968	Bugungu Game Reserve established	Game cropping and buffer zone.	Nature Development
1972	Aswa-Lolim Game Reserve and Kilak Control Hunting Area degazetted	Commercial agriculture and ranching schemes co-existed with wildlife, but priority was given to agricultural development.	Nature Development
1996	Uganda National Parks and Game Department restructured into single agency, Uganda Wildlife Authority	The merger of these institutions increased capacity of the state and encouraged community participation through decentralised activities (both state and private business actors).	Nature Development

Table 3. Juxtaposition/comparison of Dominant Discourses in Nature Policy.

Discourse of Nature Development (ND)	Discourse of Nature Conservation (NC)
Nature as a source of income	Nature as an inviolable system
Nature as institutional assemblage	Nature a state managed
Nature as participatory governance	Nature as single authority governance
Nature as coexistence	Nature as separation