

Conflicts of Values and Interests: The Lost Opportunity to Conserve a Productive Landscape of Wildlife and Pastoralism

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Abstract

Ankole Nshara rangelands lying in a rain shadow between Lake Victoria and Karinzu forests in mid south western Uganda are inhabited by a variety of wildlife species that form part of a socially defined beautiful landscape. Overtime a number of development interventions have been implemented in the area with the aim of improving the productivity of the rangeland and economic welfare of the people. These include wildlife conservation, ranching scheme and sedentarisation of Bahima pastoralists. Unfortunately, these interventions are conflictive, do not take into consideration the ecologically fragile area and failed to appreciate the importance of Bahima pastoralists and their long horned Ankole cow that defined the Nshara landscape and ensured its sustainable productivity. The process of gazettement of the Park disrupted the harmonious relationship between wildlife and livestock and created serious conflicts between communities and Park's management. The ranching scheme introduced exotic breeds favored against the cultural Ankole cow, even though these exotic breeds are not suited for the environment. We argue that sedentarisation has caused more conflicts between Bahima cattle keepers and wildlife, has negatively affected sustainable productivity of the rangeland and rendered meaningless the socially constructed beautiful landscape because of removing the beautiful cows that is threatened by cross-breeding.

Bahima pastoralists feel their landscape is meaningless without the Ankole cow and its associated culture. Their worries are compounded by the fact that the Ankole cow is threatened with extinction through cross-breeding. Narratives from the older Bahima people express their fear that time will soon come when the traditional cattle will be no more.

The Ankole Cow Conservation Association was conceived to conserve the long horn Ankole Cow as a cultural artifact to conserve a complete image of the Nshara landscape, in light of the wildlife, livestock interaction and it is expected to widen the scope of tourism by integrating the Ankole Cultural Cow into the Lake Mburo tourist package.