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The representation of the environmental crises on Lake Victoria in Uganda's media: A critical analysis of the *Victoria Voice* radio documentaries

ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with how the environmental crises on Lake Victoria is addressed by the media in Uganda, while confining its focus on a single radio case study, and presents a critical textual analysis of the discourses and discursive practices of the Victoria Voice environmental radio documentaries aired on Uganda's Central Broadcasting Service (CBS) radio in 2005. The analysis focuses on two representative episodes of the Victoria Voice radio series relating to the situation on Lake Victoria. It argues that the framing and construction of the situation on Lake Victoria tend to privilege the wealthy or powerful elite rather than address the root causes of environmental degradation. The marginalization of the powerless (or

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ordinary people) recurs in these episodes, and while their voices are included in the programmes, they are framed by the more socially powerful.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the media and specifically radio is frequently valorized for its knowledge sharing and democratic potential (Moemeka 1994). Recognition of this potential has resulted in radio programmes being produced to address the broad population on important social issues. Such programmes have included environmental issues, at times sponsored by international donors who have a shared interest in these pressing issues. Yet, rather than merely applauding the existence of such programming, it is necessary to scrutinize them more closely in relation to their intentions and the discourses they articulate. A case in point is the environmental radio documentaries about Lake Victoria entitled the *Victoria Voice*. The twelve episodes sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and aired on Uganda's Central Broadcasting Service (CBS) radio were broadcast in 2005. This article sets out to make explicit the discourses and discursive practices inscribed in this series and to interrogate them in terms of the power relations endorsed. It argues that the framing and construction of the situation on Lake Victoria tend to reinforce the hegemonic order, which privileges the wealthy or powerful elite rather than address the issues of environmental degradation. Recurrence of marginalization of the powerless (or ordinary people) is common in these episodes.

Lake Victoria is of particular significance as a fundamental resource for the populations of the Great Lake's region, inclusive of Uganda. In the first instance, it serves as the primary source of water for both domestic and industrial use. In addition, it is a valuable source of food and provides livelihoods for many Ugandans, with the fisheries directly supporting around three million people (Commission to East African Commission (EAC) 2006). However, the current shifts in the economic base in Uganda, in line with IMF and World Bank principles of finance and conditionality, which emphasizes a commitment to economic reform to capital markets (Ogutu-Ohwayo and Balirwa 2006), have led to a multiplicity of industrial processes within the Lake Victoria basin and along the lake's shoreline. These include breweries, textile mills, food and beverages factories, dairies, oil and soap factories, leather-tanning industries, fishing processing plants and fishing (Ayazika 2001; MNR 1995). By agreeing with IMF conditionality, the Uganda government sought to negotiate a deal that not only enabled acquisition of more loans but a lift and/or a reschedule of its debts. Consequently, the export-oriented commercial fishing industries have effectively marginalized local fishers who have used the lake as a source of food and income generation. Essentially, Lake Victoria is in crisis. While it is responsible for a significant contribution to the GDP of the countries around it (Ogutu-Ohwayo and Balirwa 2006), the crisis is not being adequately acknowledged or addressed. The *Victoria Voice* then provides an interesting instance where this crisis is addressed.

This article is interested in how the media, specifically radio, represent and construct environmental issues. The focus on radio acknowledges the central role that radio plays in many Sub-Saharan African countries. With its wider reach and its transcendence of the illiteracy and poverty, it can provide information on public interest matters such as the environment (Moemeka 1994;

Jjuuko 2003). CBS is one of the many private radio stations that emerged after the liberalization of the broadcasting sector in 1993. While the programming includes commercial and developmental programmes as a private commercial broadcasting station, it is largely commercial and dependent on advertising revenue. These imperatives situate the informational needs of the citizens, especially minority groups, as a secondary factor. Given the current trends of media commercialization in Uganda (see Jjuuko 2003), the major industries identified in the pollution of Lake Victoria are among the major advertisers in the media, including CBS radio.

In 2005, when the *Victoria Voice* was aired with the broad objective of creating awareness about the environmental crises in the basin with a specific focus on Lake Victoria, the environmental situation on the lake was receiving renewed attention by government, non-governmental and news media organizations, accompanied by urgent calls for action. Earlier, the Global Environment Facility study (GEF 1995) had concluded that the lake was being polluted on a large scale. The main issues of concern within the entire Lake Victoria Basin revolved around deterioration of water quality, land degradation, destruction of biodiversity and misuse of natural resources. The poor or inadequate industrial and municipal waste treatment and the destruction of wetlands (reducing their buffering capacity to protect the lake) had been identified as the major contributors to the crises on the lake. Thus, Lake Victoria was the focus of repeated news media coverage from both local and regional news outlets, including print and broadcast media.

It is such representations of environmental issues on Lake Victoria that impelled the analysis this article presents. It sets out to investigate a single case, the *Victoria Voice*. It first provides an account of the context and the theoretical frame that informs the study. As it is concerned with radio documentary, the expectations of this genre and the discourse practice that CBS radio draws on to produce the programmes are discussed. After a brief account of the critical textual approach used, it critically analyses a small but arguably representative sample of the *Victoria Voice* episodes.

DISCOURSE, DISCURSIVE PRACTICES AND DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS

The theory of discourse offers an approach to understanding the interrelationships and power relations in the various moments in meaning-making (Barker 2003). Defined as 'a group of statements, which provide language for talking about something – a way of representing the knowledge about a particular historical moment' (Foucault 1980: 130), it lays down the rules of what are permissible statements about a particular topic. The concept of discourse draws attention to what is included and excluded. Importantly, it regulates not only what can be said under determinate social and cultural conditions, but also who can speak with authority, when and where. In relation to the media then, this directs attention not only to the texts but also to the context of production and its production practices. In this respect, environmental issues in the media are constructed and constrained by professional and institutional discourse, which are also largely informed by social, political, historical and cultural structures.

Foucault's conceptions also recognize the existence of contradictory discourses at play in any given discursive site and contestations between the different formations of discourse (Foucault 1982). Thus, neo-liberal discourses

of capital that insist on growth as progress are frequently in contestation with arguments for environmental sustainability. This approach recognizes that the arguments and stories produced within media texts are relayed from different positions and are part of the ongoing contestation between societal discourses. Importantly for this article, a single media text will frequently incorporate a plurality of positions, but how they are presented or framed becomes significant. Discourses in circulation do more than entertain their audiences. They propose ways of being in the world that are not merely benign; they have 'mediating and persuasive functions'; and they work to maintain and legitimate dominant power and to contest it (Prinsloo 2009: 207–09).

Informed by a Foucauldian understanding of discourse then, the study was undertaken in the spirit of critical discourse analysis. The method of analysis is an eclectic one that draws on both Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to media texts and Thompson's (1990) modes of ideology to direct the analytic process. It should be noted that while Thompson's modes of ideology provide a valuable framework for analysis, we do not ascribe uncritically to his conceptualization of meaning as in the service of dominant power, but to Foucault's notion of discourse and contestation (see Prinsloo 2009). The discourses and discursive practices of the *Victoria Voice* radio texts of CBS radio are scrutinized to consider the representation and inclusion of particular issues and the consequent omission of others.

Fairclough's (1989) approach to analysing texts presumes that a text can never be analysed in isolation, but needs to be understood in relation to the social contexts in which it is produced. Consequently, three levels of analysis are identified, namely, the text, discursive practices related to the production distribution and consumption of the text, and the social and cultural practices that frame discourse practices and texts. The analysis of a text concentrates on the formal features and provides insight into the ways in which texts treat events and social relations, and thereby construct particular versions of reality, social identities and social relations (Fairclough 1995). The analysis of the discursive practices relates to both text production and consumption and enables an examination of the specificity of programme production as a particular discursive practice, while the social-cultural analysis, implicates the social relations both in society as a whole and in specific institutions (Fairclough 1995).

Similarly valuable for the purpose of this analysis was Thompson's attention to the deployment of symbolic (or media) forms to sustain unequal relations of power, in a way that privileges particular individuals or groups over others (Thompson 1990). The 'meaning' he is concerned with is contained in these 'symbolic forms' and their ideological work (Thompson 1990; Janks 1997, 1998). His attention to how meaning might act in the service of power induced him to interrogate how this is achieved. He thus proposes five modes of ideology, namely, legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation and reification. These modes are detailed in Thompson (1990: 60–67) and are not repeated here. While our analysis is not framed as an ideological but a discursive analysis, Thompson's framework for examining texts is valuable for our purposes too. His framework of ideological modes and strategies assists in making evident the discursive work being undertaken.

These inclusive frameworks acknowledge the importance of the production context within which news media institutions operate (in this case CBS radio) and the processes of gathering, constructing and packaging information on environmental issues. Environmental radio programmes operate within

the relations of power and the social relations that they seek to report on or mediate. The resulting radio texts do not merely transmit knowledge, but involve a complex production process and activities that are organized within particular socio-political, economical, historical, and institutional contexts governed by particular forms of discourse and discursive practices. Thus, the discursive regime of radio documentary production, the genre that CBS draws on, informs and impacts on the nature of the selection and treatment of these programmes.

PRODUCTION CONTEXT OF THE VICTORIA VOICE

Positioned as a Current Affairs programme, the *Victoria Voice* radio series consisting of twelve episodes were aired bi-weekly on CBS radio airwaves on Sunday evenings (from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.) between January and June 2005. An initiative of the Buganda Kingdom, CBS radio covers many parts of Uganda with higher audience ratings in Central and Southern Uganda and parts of Western Uganda, putting its total audience coverage at approximately ten million people (CBS 2005). The station also broadcasts predominantly in Luganda, a language widely spoken and comprehended by the majority of Ugandans. While the broad audience for the *Victoria Voice* included all Ugandans residing within CBS' coverage area, the specific target audiences were the communities living and/or working within the Lake Victoria Basin, particularly the lakeside communities on the various landing sites on the Ugandan side.

The *Victoria Voice* was sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). Consistent with their government's visions donors, generally from the industrialized North, provide funding according to their identified areas of concern in line with a definition of development as linked to economic growth and framed within a modernization paradigm. International funding agencies have been criticized for, among other issues, introducing their own bias in projects and for being more concerned with budgets and reporting procedures on progress than careful consideration of what might constitute appropriate interventions (Moemeka 1994).

The *Victoria Voice* programmes are products of a specific production context. The station's programme schedules indicate high volumes of commercialized programming – a combination of commercial spots (advertising) and sponsored programmes categorized as infomercials (CBS 2005). The allotted time of the programme on Sunday is considered primetime listening and signifies the prominence accorded to the radio series and to environmental issues, particularly the concern for Lake Victoria. However, this should not be construed necessarily as CBS placing significance on issues of public interest, but understood also in terms of the economics of production since the documentaries were sponsored. Economic imperatives result in CBS programme schedulers prioritizing sponsored programmes for primetime listening, a practice justified by the Marketing Manager as 'survival of the fittest' when interviewed. He noted that, 'Much as we care about the content, we need also to look at the needs of our clients, the sponsors of programmes, to ensure that their views are represented' (Interview with Sam Nyatia, CBS Marketing Manager). The Programmes Manager moderated this position when he proposed that the programming is in the public interest and 'provides information, educates the people and at the same time promotes the products of our advertisers' (Ssali 2006). The advertisers referred to here, as

observed earlier in this discussion, own the industries implicated in polluting Lake Victoria. This contradictory set of interests undoubtedly impact on any public interest impetus.

Consistent with the genre of a radio documentary production practice, series of propositions are made to convince the listener and legitimate the claims made by CBS, 'the radio of the wise' (*Victoria Voice* transcripts). They employ an expository mode with direct address that sets out to impose order on the flow of experiences. The expository mode works to present an argument for a particular way of seeing what is being represented (Nichols 1981). Exposition in documentary production is traditionally based on the principle of rhetoric, in which verbal authoritative and persuasive arguments seek to inform, persuade and motivate particular audiences in specific situations about a given topic or event (Nichols 1991). Three strategies of sound representation are employed in these documentaries: The narrator's directive voice, voices of experts and eyewitnesses, and other background sounds indicating the ongoing activities. The authoritative voice of the narrator, referred to as the 'Voice-of-God' (Nichols 1981: 183), functions (by means of the soundtrack) to inform the audience about unfamiliar places and events, and in doing this, a series of arguments are presented either to argue one position or critique another.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE VICTORIA VOICE DOCUMENTARIES

This abridged and selective synopsis of the episodes is presented to indicate the nature and scope of the series. Of the twelve episodes, only eight focussed directly on the crises on Lake Victoria, while four address environmental education in schools. Their focus is explicit in their titles.

'Lake Victoria', the first episode, introduces the focus and objectives of the radio series. It establishes the significance of Lake Victoria and identifies numerous commercial activities, especially those along the shores of the lake, as major contributors to its pollution. The second episode, 'Kampala and the story of floods', uses the tragic incident of the drowning of a 14-year-old girl during the heavy flooding in the suburbs of Kampala city to introduce the broader topic of the rampant flooding of the city and the problems related to the encroachment on the wetlands by housing and industrial constructions, agricultural activities and poor waste management. Episodes 3 and 4, 'Cocoyam Part 1' and 'Part 2', address the issue of wetland encroachment by focussing on the growing of cocoyam in the wetlands, and the health hazards associated with the consumption of those cocoyams. Part 2 highlights the plight of 112,000 people living in the slums of the Namuwongo suburb of Kampala, who are faced with eviction from their homes, thereby raising issues ranging from urban migration, poverty, degradation of Lake Victoria and displacement of the poor, to political and corporate manipulation. Episode 5, 'Fish depletion in Lake Victoria', features the decline of the natural fishing habitats of Lake Victoria, both in terms of water quality and the biological diversity of the resources as a result of increased commercialization of fish. 'Relevance of Wetlands' (Episode 6) argues the dual importance of wetlands in the lives of people and the aquatic life inhabiting the wetlands, and the urgent need for their protection from degradation. The 'encroachers' are identified primarily as the subsistence farmers. Episode 7, entitled 'Nabajuzi wetland', exposes the Nabajuzi Leather Tanning Industry, a skin and hide factory located in the Southern Province of Uganda as a major pollutant. The focus of the last episode, entitled 'Environmental standards', is on the National Environmental

Management Authority (NEMA), a body charged with all issues related to the environment in Uganda.

PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

Our eclectic approach to textual analysis draws on analytic strategies associated with CDA as well as Media Studies. In relation to the former, the linguistic tools of predications, lexical and transitivity strategies are employed to examine the propositions made in the texts. Predication refers to 'the process and result of assigning qualities to persons, animals, plants, objects, events, actions and social phenomena' (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 54). Transitivity looks to the nature of actions contained in the verbs, and lexical strategies attend to the words chosen (Thompson 1990; Fairclough 1995), which facilitate the mobilization of meaning in certain ways. Media studies insights include structural approaches to narrative and narration. All quotations (including indented) in this CDA, unless flagged differently, relate to the primary data, i.e. the transcripts of the *Victoria Voice* documentaries. These were transcribed and then translated from Luganda, the local language in which the programmes were produced, to English.

The focus on how the environment is represented requires identifying the recurrent themes and the different arguments made by the social actors and the broadcaster. While the *Victoria Voice* radio texts inscribe a range of discourses, the construction of the crises on Lake Victoria is articulated from three competing discursive positions. First, the discourse of sustainable development or, more precisely, the sustainability of Lake Victoria, is articulated largely by the scientists and subject-matter specialists in environmental issues. Second, the discourse of basic economic survival is articulated mainly by ordinary citizens, the local fishers and fishmongers. Third, a competing discourse of modernization development related to corporate investment, profit and growth, is reinforced particularly by the politician(s) and the few industrialists who were represented, and indeed sustained by CBS radio reporters.

SAMPLING

This analysis of the *Victoria Voice* texts seeks to make evident the discursive work undertaken in relation to environmental concerns and how these issues are framed. For this article, two episodes entitled 'Lake Victoria' and 'Fish depletion in Lake Victoria' have been purposively sampled. This selection is based on a larger study (Jjuuko 2013) that interrogates the eight episodes that directly deal with the environmental issues. As qualitative textual analysis requires constant reference to textual data to illustrate the discursive working of the texts, it demands more space. In response to the constraint in terms of the length of a journal article, it was necessary to identify episodes that incorporate the various discursive approaches identified above.

'Lake Victoria' is the first episode in the series and introduces their focus and objectives. It establishes the significance of Lake Victoria and identifies numerous commercial activities, especially those along the shores of the lake, as major contributors to its pollution. It is this introductory episode and its treatment that sets the pattern for the following episodes and was included as broadly representative of the series. 'Fish depletion in Lake Victoria' is the fifth in the series and features the decline of the natural fishing habitats of Lake Victoria, both in terms of water quality and the biological diversity of the resources as a result of increased commercialization of fish. In addition

to illustrating the production practices, these episodes introduce all the three approaches and allow their discursive strategies, inclusions and exclusions to be made explicit. While necessarily reducing the complexity of the series, this sample is sufficiently representative of the major discourses articulated within the texts and the manner in which they are framed.

CRITICAL TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE LAKE VICTORIA EPISODE

The episode, as is the case throughout the series, uses the direct address mode characteristic of radio documentary; the narrator's voice of authority seeks to persuade and inform the audiences about the crises facing Lake Victoria, advocating for protection from further degradation. CBS reporters visit four different sites, namely, the lakeside, the city centre and two industrial sites, an abattoir and a beer-processing factory. The argument is structured in seven stages, which progressively provide information about the issues and population on Lake Victoria. It commences by establishing a state of harmony as the voice of a lakeside resident describes the tranquillity and leisure provided by Lake Victoria. Consistent with Todorov's narrative structure (see Prinsloo 2009), this equilibrium is disrupted in the second stage when the reporters go to the city and introduce the issue of pollution. At the third stage, the authoritative voice of a politician endorses and legitimates a discourse of modernization, while stage four poses the question as to who is responsible for the pollution of Lake Victoria. In stages five, six and seven, scientific responses to the issues on Lake Victoria are advanced as is a discourse of sustainable development. The narrator's voice of authority attempts to bridge the sequence of the various elements using music, ambience, and other natural sounds to reinforce the arguments on the significance of Lake Victoria and its challenges. A more careful scrutiny of these stages follows.

The narrator seeks to establish the significance of Lake Victoria as a resource shared by many East Africans both as a source of food and income for the people of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, and in relation to their economic activities:

Millions of people from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania and around the River Nile Basin depend on Lake Victoria for their livelihoods. Fishing and fish trading are among the major activities for these people.

The lake is subsequently metaphorically framed as a parent, 'our mother and our father', with the associated roles of nurturing and providing for those who depend on it. It is then portrayed as essential to basic survival, a 'source of life' and a 'life saver'. It also serves as a means of 'transportation' both for people and commercial goods. Thus, this resource for survival also has economic value as a 'water supply for domestic and industrial purposes', a 'tourist attraction', an 'income resource' and the 'earner' of the much needed 'foreign exchange' for the three East African governments. By establishing the lake's importance in terms of basic survival and in terms of the economy (industrial activities, tourism and foreign exchange), the introduction sets up these two discourses placing the interests of corporate capital alongside basic needs for food and water, as though of the same order.

In the second stage of narration, the reporter moves to the city where the harmony of the lakeside is disrupted by introducing the environmental crises facing the lake, a stage in the argument, which consequently will work to

justify interventions to protect it. The narrator informs the listeners that the lake is in serious trouble and invokes sympathy for interviewee Lukomwa, who identifies the lake as his parent:

It is true the lake has been Lukomwa's father and mother but little does he know that his life is in danger because the Lake, on which his survival depends, faces serious consequences as a result of the levels of pollution in its waters.

The focus on pollution introduces environmental sustainability as the third recurring discourse alongside the discourses that privileges corporate interests and those concerned with basic survival. The narrator identifies the major polluters of Lake Victoria as 'the manufacturing industries and factories of beer, soap, sugar, fish-processing plants and many others'. At the same times equal responsibility is attributed to the population of 'two million people' living and working in Kampala city. Again basic survival is effectively treated as disconnected from the prevailing economic order.

The argument for corporate investment

The third stage explicitly introduces the discourse of modernization and corporate investment. The programme producer enables the voice of government by giving Nathan Nandala, then Member of Parliament (MP), the first opportunity to frame the debate on whether 'the rapid increase' of industries along the shores of Lake Victoria has negatively impacted on the lake.

Yes, pollution in Lake Victoria has increased – but not necessarily due to the mushrooming industries. When we give licenses to these industries, as part of our investment plan, we emphasise that they put in place proper systems of discharging their waste and treatment plants. But you must remember that there are a lot of activities around the lake. All people, all industries, small or big, have the same impact and are responsible. There are local farmers and consumers who grow food in swamps, dispose off their waste in and around the lake. Everybody who dumps waste in the drainage systems with direct inflow into Lake Victoria is equally responsible.

The authoritative voice of the MP represents the government of Uganda as accountable and responsible. He uses both first person pronouns ('we' and 'our') to refer to government and material processes to reference them as an active and responsible government, for they 'give licenses' to industries, and 'plan' 'proper systems' and 'treatment plants'. These are intended to persuade listeners that their approach is appropriate.

While expediently deflecting blame from the state, he attributes blame equally to large industry and ordinary folk. He disavows the role of industry in terms of the magnitude of pollution in Lake Victoria: it is 'not necessarily due to the mushrooming industries' but 'everybody living and working in Kampala is responsible for polluting the lake'. These claims are made even where there is overwhelming evidence of industrial pollution of the Lake. Rather than any expressed concern with sustainable development and the protection of Lake Victoria, the MP naturalizes industrial growth as inescapable in line with the modernization paradigm of development. He further reifies the government's

actions as appropriate by reference to environmental standards and the government 'investment plan' – a strategy of naturalization (Thompson 1990) that validates industrialization and capitalist development.

It is notable that this documentary mobilizes meaning in the interest of capital and government. The MP is allowed considerable space to present these interests. His arguments are further validated by honorifics, notably 'Honourable' and 'MP'. The fact that his arguments are not contested validates them as responsible and credible, consistent with the dominant relations of power with little attention to ordinary citizens.

Industrial pollution of Lake Victoria: Who is responsible?

In stage four of the 'Lake Victoria' episode, the reporters visit two industrial sites in order to establish the source of the pollutants in Lake Victoria and to identify the culprits that threaten the sustainability of the lake. The ambient and discordant sounds (of running water in a drain, moving cars and people's voices at a busy city abattoir market) portray the ongoing activities for the narration of how 'wastewater channels' from the 'heavily populated areas of Kampala city and surrounding towns' and the 'factories and industries', discharge directly into Lake Victoria.

The city abattoir is constructed as a lucrative business that is 'very busy' and with 'no moment of rest'. The dirty conditions are noted: 'Heaps of dung, blood, skins and hides, horns and flies characterise the area'. The proprietor of the abattoir, Hassan Bassajja-Balaba, admits responsibility for the pollution of Lake Victoria in the past, but not the present. Yet he unwittingly admits to the current pollution of the lake:

We've been having sewers taking the sewage directly into the Nakivubo channel. All this refuse used to be drained into the channel but now only blood and water is left to drain into the channel.

Even with his outright admission that 'blood and water' eventually end up in Lake Victoria, this statement is left uncontested and the reporter ignores the opportunity to interrogate such environmental degradation. The focus on the role of these industries as valuable and the stakeholders as resourceful serves the discourse that privileges modernization and investment. These constructions indicate the complex power relations between media institutions and corporate institutions, particularly within the current trends of media commercialization (see Jjuuko 2003).

Scientific response and discourse of sustainable development

In contrast, stages five and six of the documentary introduce the discourse of sustainable development by raising the issue of the 'magnitude of pollutants' expelled into Lake Victoria. The situation is framed by scientists who identify 'industrial waste and refuse' as 'leading pollutants of Lake Victoria'. The scientists are constructed as knowledgeable and authoritative. Through mental and verbal processes, they are 'faced with the challenge' (of establishing the levels of pollution in Lake Victoria) and they make findings, 'based on research' (mental processes) and 'warn' (verbal process) about the 'grave consequences'. Kalibbala, a senior scientist at Makerere University, speaks with the authority attributed to academic scientific knowledge about the situation on Lake Victoria. He attributes responsibility to industries:

Agricultural-based industries produce organic refuse which, during the rotting process, use oxygen that would otherwise have been used by the lake's aquatic life. This brings about the situation known as biochemical oxygen demand [...]. Research tends to point to their dreadful impacts on the environment.

Through his scientific arguments, the scientist contests this hegemonic discourse and strongly advocates for the discourse of sustainable development. He insists on pollution as the consequence of the refuse in the water through the depletion of 'oxygen', a fundamental necessity for 'the lake's aquatic life'. The character and official position of the arguer attributes authority to the scientist's discourse of sustainable development, a discourse that contests the expedient and destructive waste disposal practices of certain industries.

Further scientific arguments

The two reporters move to a beer-processing factory to find out about the refuse flowing out of the factory into Lake Victoria. A worker's response to their enquiries indicates his vague knowledge of the chemicals contained in waste disposed at the drainage outlet that ended up in Lake Victoria: '[...] caustic soda, this and that [...] nobody knows for sure what is contained in the refuse dumped here'. While the issues raised here would provide insight into the dangers and responsibilities of this business, the reporters fail to interrogate them further.

The voice of a scientist, Dr Benerd Kiremera, establishes the dangers and the levels of pollution in Lake Victoria, furthering the argument for sustainable development. The scientist uses the findings of the water samples tests to reiterate the responsibility of industry in the pollution of Lake Victoria through 'high levels of acid' in addition to 'nitrogen, ammonium, phosphate, nitrate and lead', which disrupt the equilibrium of Lake Victoria and its aquatic life, human life and the environment at large:

Lead is dangerous and poisonous to the environment and human life.
Mercury is equally poisonous and dangerous to fish and its consumers.
These metals can also lead to infertility by reducing the sperm rate and consequently lead to impotence in men.

Scientific arguments are considered convincing as they are based on the moral competence, expertise and knowledge of the arguer (Richardson 2007), in this case the scientist. Interestingly, while the scientist identifies the risks of mercury poisoning to humans and aquatic life, and links it to infertility as an afterthought, it is this that the producer picks up on. The narrator concludes with 'Oh to become impotent in that way!', thus limiting the issue to male fertility, a concern strongly linked to validation of male sexual prowess and patriarchy.

CRITICAL TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE 'FISH DEPLETION IN LAKE VICTORIA' EPISODE

If the first episode foregrounds discourses pertaining to the sustainability of Lake Victoria on one hand, in contrast to a modernization/development one that valorizes industrial growth on the other hand, the 'Fish depletion in Lake Victoria' episode includes ordinary people concerned with basic economic

survival, the third discourse identified. It probes the decline of the natural fishing habitats of Lake Victoria and the positions are presented by a fisheries officer, fish community leaders on two fish landing sites (Kalangala and Gaba), a fisherman and a woman fishmonger, bridged with narrational links.

It is analysed in the four stages that structure it. The first stage re-states the significance of Lake Victoria to all those who depend on it. In the second and third stages, the presenters visit the island of Kalangala on Lake Victoria to investigate the diminishing fish catches and the challenges the fisher folk face. The final stage is set at Gaba landing site and the existing efforts to save Lake Victoria from further degradation are rehearsed, thus articulating the discourses of sustainable development and modernization from the perspective of local officials. The four stages are carefully examined here as follows.

Establishing the crises on Lake Victoria

The first stage of the episode identifies the numerous natural resources Lake Victoria provides, including 'fish', 'clay' and 'medicine'. Of these, fish is considered the major earner of 'foreign exchange' for Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The lake is described as 'abused', 'over-exhausted', 'poisoned' and a 'waste-dumping reservoir'. While blame is not apportioned here through the use of the passive voice, which obscures agency, it is implicit that it is the consequence of human action. Located within a discourse of sustainable development, the protection and sustainability of Lake Victoria is considered crucial.

Fish commercialization, basic survival, sustainability and corporate investment

In the second and third stages of the episode the scarcity of fish in Lake Victoria is attributed to commercialization by a fishmonger, Rose Nambowa, who earns her living by 'smoking and selling fish'. The rise in fish prices is described as 'sky-rocketing'; she 'hardly' gets enough fish to smoke and sustain her business. Her concern is with her basic survival, and she attributes the disruption of her business to corporate practices: the 'factories [...] are able to pay more even for the tiny fish', making it 'impossible' for her to 'do anything these days'; the fish are sold to the fish factories.

The episode shifts attention to the crude methods of fishing deployed in response to the limited catches. They include the use of poison and smaller-mesh nets, which consequently decimate smaller fish populations. Fisheries officer for Kalangala district, Jack Mbaleba, identifies these practices as factors contributing to the decrease of fish in Lake Victoria.

The population has increased, thereby increasing the fish demand, which leads to over-fishing and the use of crude methods to satisfy the market. Instead of using 10 canoes for fishing, more canoes, between 20 and 100 are used on these waters on a daily basis.

Mbaleba's argument acknowledges not only people's quest for survival but also the commercial imperatives of capital, evident in fish commercialization to 'satisfy the market'. Importantly this is not the local but the export market primarily.

The voices of ordinary people are included in this episode. They identify both the subsistence and small-scale fisher folk, and the Ugandan government as culpable of destroying the fishing stock. The government is framed

by ordinary people as 'corrupt and greedy', more interested in exporting 'high volumes of fish abroad than in the welfare of its citizens'. At this point, the documentary is critical of corporate practices and empathizes with the plight of the fisher folk, 'struggling' to earn a living amidst the 'shrinking' fish catches within a 'competitive market' – that is, in terms of their basic survival.

The discourse of sustainable development as rehearsed here understands poverty as underpinning the threat to the well-being of the lake as embattled people tend to resort to all sorts of 'illegal' activities that 'harm' the lake and the life in it. The fisheries officer of Kalangala district argues as follows:

Poor fishing methods like poison and *Kokota* [a net that catches all fish including premature ones] have decreased the amount of fish in Lake Victoria. While poison enables fishermen to catch a lot of fish in a very short time, [...] the poison affects the fish and other aquatic life in the lake, killing them and affecting their breeding, thereby impacting on both the local and international markets.

He attributes responsibility for over-fishing to the ordinary people and disregards the impact of fish commercialization on the lake. He claims a concern with sustainability but privileges the lake and its natural resources over the local communities and, through omission, he implicitly condones commercial activity. The rampant poverty among the fishing communities is explained away in the narration as though it is outside of structural and historical determinants: 'the fishmongers are very poor and because of that they resort to poor methods of fishing'. Here CBS reporters focus on one aspect of the problem and ignore the major causes of pollution on Lake Victoria, i.e. the many industries located on the shores of the lake.

Efforts for the sustainability of Lake Victoria

The final stage of the episode looks to the future and seeks to propose expedient measures. It rehearses the discourse of sustainable development by highlighting the measures put in place to address the issues on Lake Victoria. Here, government is framed as responsible, for it 'put[s]' 'measures' in place in a bid to 'address' the crises on the lake. These measures are presented to the listeners through the voice of Drissa Walusimbi, the chairman of Ggaba fishing landing site, who also happens to head a council put in place to control bad practices of fishing at the landing site. His explanation seeks to identify measures put in place to protect Lake Victoria from the abuse of the local fishers, who, by implication, are responsible for the degradation of the lake as a consequence of 'illegal methods of fishing' practices. His explanation, however, does not address what the fishers should do as a consequence of this act of exclusion. Positioned as the official speaking subject, this source overlooks the issues related to industrial pollution as well as over-fishing conducted by large commercial boats. Again, the producers leave this important aspect unprobed. These choices ultimately serve to endorse the discourse of corporate investment while apparently articulating a concern with sustainable development. Descriptions of heavy-handed measures to protect the lake make this more evident, such as:

We use patrols to carry out operations. We have apprehended culprits and captured illegal fishing nets and canoes. The culprits have been

punished through imprisonment and heavy fines. Many wrong-doers fear to be involved in fishing malpractices.

Certainly, the ‘culprits’ referred to here are the local fishers already associated with the ‘illegal fishing nets’. These are the ones who use ‘canoes’ to fish and not the large commercial boats. In addition to being constructed as ‘culprits’, other predications such as ‘wrong-doers’ and ‘malpracti[tioners]’ qualify the local fisher folk. The members of the councils construct themselves through material processes that position them as powerful. They ‘carry out operations’, ‘apprehend’, ‘capture’, ‘punish’, ‘imprison’, ‘fine’ heavily and ‘instil’ what they determine as good fishing practices into the fishmongers. Unification and fragmentation (Thompson 1990) are evident as ideological strategies. Those who can speak with authority constitute themselves as ‘we’ (the council who are the law enforcers) in contrast to ‘them’ (fishers/the wrong-doers/culprits). By constructing a division between ‘them’ and ‘us’, the beach councillors are inviting the listener to consider them as the protectors of the lake and to denounce ‘them’ (local fishers) as the wrong-doers.

Unification is further deployed when the narrator articulates a discourse of sustainability. They advocate a unified face: ‘all the voices are calling upon the government to protect the lake’. While the programme earlier pointed to government as responsible for the crises on Lake Victoria, this is disregarded in favour of the power they can wield in relation to the lake and lakeside inhabitants and which the fisheries officer expresses thus:

Instead of singing slogans like ‘fish is the number one source of foreign exchange for this country’, government should think about controlling the ways in which fishing is done through strict laws, to save the matter.

While the voices of ordinary people are present in this episode, these are constantly framed by the more socially powerful. In the end, the discourses of sustainable development and modernization through corporate investment triumph. The narrator argues for sustainable development when he concludes that Lake Victoria needs to be ‘pollution free’, that it should ‘not be poisoned’ or ‘abused’ and that the ‘use of wrong fishing nets’ has to be ‘banned’. Obviously, fishers are positioned here as the ‘abusers’ who use ‘poison’ and ‘wrong fishing nets’ to catch fish. In contrast, government and/or its agents are assigned the role to ‘control’ the fishing activities on the lake and to ‘ban’ use of wrong fishing nets. The discourse of modernization through corporate investment and profit is argued thus: ‘The better the quality and quantity of fish in Lake Victoria, the higher the chances of a better fish market and therefore the desired foreign exchange’.

CONCLUSION

This analysis has been limited to a sample of two episodes of the *Victoria Voice* radio series. It sought to make visible how a particular CBS radio series represents the environmental situation on Lake Victoria and established the three sets of contesting discourses, namely, basic survival, mainly articulated by ordinary citizens; sustainable development, particularly the sustainability of Lake Victoria, articulated by scientists and environmental specialists; and modernization development relating to corporate investment, profit and

growth, which was articulated by the politician(s) and industrialists. These three discourses are mediated throughout the series.

The analysis has made evident that elite people, i.e. scientists or subject-matter specialists, business people and politicians are privileged in the programmes. While their opinions differ, they are represented as responsible speaking subjects and definers of the ideal relationship between the people and natural resources. They are thus enabled through the production processes to define the situation and advance their positions. Thus, protectors of the environment are, 'us', the 'experts', the 'researchers', the 'government', etc. These categories of informants are also accorded more space in the programmes, indicated by the lengthy quotes. It is apparent that the producers deferred to these positions.

While the inclusion of the elite scientists can be argued to indicate concern about sustainable development and basic survival, they never fail to challenge the corporate elite (e.g., the managers and investors implicated in industrial pollution at the city abattoir) or politicians. By not challenging the severely inadequate industrial and municipal waste treatment and industrial expansion approach, CBS implicitly validates industrial growth beyond other concerns.

While the focus is on issues of pollution, CBS' framing of the situation on Lake Victoria tends to privilege the wealthy elite at the expense of the rights of a poor and excluded majority. The documentaries reinforce the marginalization of the powerless that are incriminated in spite of the fact that the factories discharge pollutants into the lake and destroy the wetlands at a vast scale. The construction of the elite as active and speaking subjects further endorses the unequal power relations. While CBS position themselves as the 'radio of the people' throughout the series, the position they adopt suggests otherwise, since there is nothing that advocates actively for the well-being of ordinary people. As argued earlier, discourses in circulation do more than entertain their audiences but propose ways of being in the world. These ways can work to maintain and legitimate dominant power or to contest it. Here it is clear that in spite of their claims to serve 'the people', the CBS did not contest it in the *Victoria Voice*.

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Empedocles aims to provide a publication and discussion platform for those working at the interface of philosophy and the study of communication, in all its aspects. The editors believe that philosophical reflection and analysis regarding communication is an intellectually exciting enterprise in its own right, but also important for today's globalising and increasingly mediated societies. They also believe that approaching traditional philosophical disciplines, topics and questions from the point of view of the impact communicative action and practices have on them is a necessary but underdeveloped area of intellectual activity.

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