He says he’s here to study chimpanzees but we know different! The researcher as a ‘social actor’.

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Aims

1. Explore the role of the field biologist as a social actor

2. Blurring of roles; researcher to conservationist, and implications for relationships with local people
Bulindi, Northern Hoima District, Western Uganda
Local social processes and political dynamics: Trees or timber?

- Unprotected forests targeted for timber production
- Local forest owners selling trees on their land
Local social processes and political dynamics: Land tenure

- 1998 Land Act – customary land ownership
- Very few households had registered their land holdings
- Confusion over legal rights to forest and forest resources
Local social processes and political dynamics: chimpanzee conservation & local politics

Prior to our arrival:

- Chimps already focus of local controversy
- Ecotourism proposal from local landowner
Local social processes and political dynamics: chimpanzee conservation & local politics

After our arrival:

- Meeting between UWA, national & international NGOs, and private individuals – problem of chimps in the District
- Research meeting – hijacked by local NGO
- Radio announcement
- Loggers arrive
‘Researcher Influence’

1. Increased rate of tree cutting
2. Chimpanzees become a focus of attention locally
Activities likely to exacerbate local conflicts:

1. Continued cutting of important food trees – increased foraging in crops

2. Harassment of chimps by people – further attacks on people
Outcomes of intervention; relationships with local people

- Involvement in community affairs intensified

- Arranged meeting with development NGO
  - Livelihood alternatives
  - Enrichment planting
Conclusions

Researcher influence – increased rate of timber extraction, resulting in degradation of chimp habitat

Blurring of roles – from impartial researcher (Matt’s view) to partisan conservationist (local view)
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