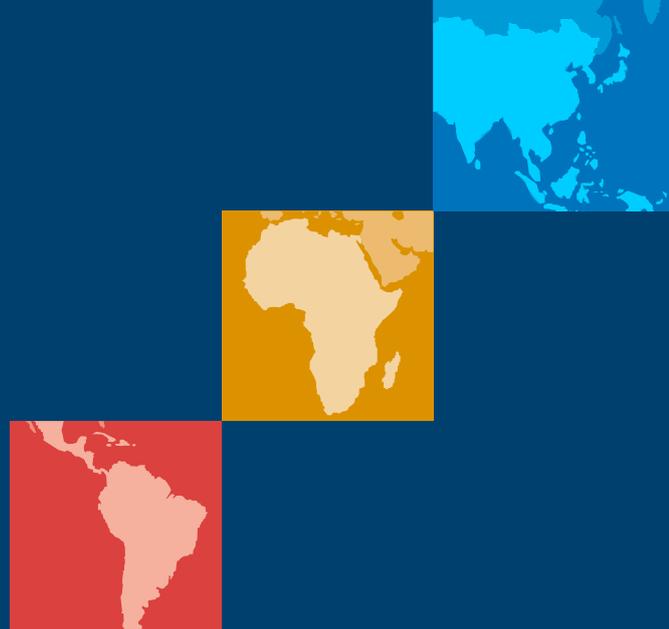


DISCUSSION PAPER / 2008.06



# A Green Revolution for Rwanda?

## The Political Economy of Poverty and Agrarian Change

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**DISCUSSION PAPER / 2008.06**

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## The Political Economy of Poverty and Agrarian Change

An **Ansoms**\*

June 2008

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## **CONTENTS**

	<b>Abstract</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Résumé</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Introduction: Towards a “Green Revolution” for Sub-Saharan Africa?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>The political economy of Rwanda: the distribution of power and wealth</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The visions and ambitions of the ‘new’ Rwandan élite: a discourse analysis</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1	Main profile of the post-1994 political élite	18
2.2	The perceived potential of the Rwandan peasant class	19
2.3	The developmental potential of the Rwandan economy: what place for small-scale peasants and unskilled labour force?	21
2.4	‘Re-engineering’ rural society: law enforcement and stringent targets	26
<b>3.</b>	<b>Conclusion: political economy dynamics and the chances for a green revolution</b>	<b>33</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>35</b>
	<b>Annex</b>	<b>38</b>

*“Remove the secondary causes that have produced the great convulsions of the world and you will almost always find the principle of inequality at the bottom. Either the poor have attempted to plunder the rich, or the rich to enslave the poor. If, then, a state or society can ever be founded in which every man shall have something to keep and little to take from others, much will have been done for the peace in the world.”*

*Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)*

## ABSTRACT

The World Development Report 2008 highlights the need for a green revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa. This paper reflects upon the visions and ambitions of Rwandan policy makers to make this happen. It first analyses the political economy of Rwanda in a historical perspective. It outlines how political evolutions and events – with special reference to 1994 – have brought to power a political élite whose identity (both ethnic and spatial) differs profoundly from that of the overall majority. The main part of the paper links the identity of the current political élite to its vision and ambitions to create and foster a “green revolution” in Rwanda. Based upon interviews conducted by the author in mid-2007, the paper illustrates the strong ambitions of national policy makers to re-engineer the traditional agricultural sector into a modernized vehicle for economic growth, with little place left for traditional smallholder agriculture. The paper points to the flaws and shortcomings in this strategy. In the final part, it draws conclusions from the Rwandan case to feed the wider debate on how political economy dynamics shape the chances for a successful green revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Key words:** political economy, agrarian policy, green revolution, Rwanda, Sub-Saharan Africa, small scale peasants, elite-peasant relationship.

## RÉSUMÉ

### **Une révolution verte pour le Rwanda? L'économie politique de la pauvreté et le changement agraire.**

Le rapport de 2008 sur le développement mondial souligne la nécessité d'une révolution verte en Afrique subsaharienne. Cet article réfléchit aux visions et aux ambitions des politiciens rwandais pour réaliser cet objectif. Il commence par analyser l'économie politique au Rwanda d'un point de vue historique. Il résume comment les transformations et les événements politiques – avec une référence spéciale pour 1994 – ont amené au pouvoir une élite politique dont l'identité (tant ethnique que géographique) diffère profondément de celle de la majorité de la population. La partie principale de l'article lie l'identité de l'élite politique actuelle à ses visions et ambitions de créer et de favoriser une révolution verte au Rwanda. Se basant sur des interviews menées par l'auteur au milieu de l'année 2007, cet article illustre les grandes ambitions des politiciens du pays à reconstruire le secteur agricole traditionnel en un instrument modernisé de croissance économique qui laisse peu de place à l'agriculture traditionnelle des petites exploitations. L'article dénonce les défauts et les lacunes de cette stratégie. Finalement, il tire des conclusions du cas rwandais pour alimenter un débat plus large sur la manière dont une économie politique dynamique crée des possibilités pour une révolution verte couronnée de succès en Afrique subsaharienne.



## INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A “GREEN REVOLUTION” FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA?

In various economic theories, the structural transformation of the economy from the primary towards the secondary and tertiary sectors was seen as the sole path towards sustainable economic growth and development (e.g. Kuznets, 1973). Over the last few decades, however, the agricultural sector has reappeared on the agenda of the development community.

From 1965 onwards, new trends (or revolutions) in agriculture in rural Asia, and to a lesser extent Latin America (collectively termed, by some, as the “Green Revolution”) began to emerge. It entailed the introduction of high-yield varieties of rice and wheat, combined with other ‘modern’ technologies (e.g. irrigation, mechanisation, etc.), and had profound economic, social and political ramifications. Views differ, however, on the overall desirability of the revolution’s accomplishments. Though many applaud its achievements in terms of output growth, there are critics of its distributional effects (e.g. Griffin, 1979).

While the introduction of new varieties and the commercialisation of the agrarian sector had reached many Asian and Latin American regions by the eighties, the “Green Revolution” never took off in Sub-Saharan Africa. The causes are diverse ranging from a lack of incentives (e.g. related to low population density), to poor policies embedded within a problematic governance structure, to the unsuitability of the biophysical environment (e.g. Voortman *et al.*, 2003; Otsuka, 2006 and World Bank, 2007).

The debate on a “green revolution for Sub-Saharan Africa” has, however, revived with the publication of the 2008 World Development Report (WDR) which focuses upon ‘Agriculture for development’. The report acknowledges the specific constraints upon the agricultural sector in the African continent, and highlights that a “green revolution”, if one is to develop at all, will have to concentrate upon the potential of smallholder farmers (World Bank, 2007). These discussions are highly relevant for Rwanda where officials are now planning agrarian and land reforms to increase agricultural efficiency and output. By promoting internationally the idea of a “green revolution” for Rwanda, national officials hope to fit their ambitions for unique policy reforms into a larger international donor-funded framework.

This paper first analyses the political economy of Rwanda from a historical perspective. It outlines how political evolutions – with special reference to 1994 – have brought to power a political élite whose identity (both ethnic and spatial) differs profoundly from that of the overall majority of the population. The main part of the paper links the identity of the ‘new’ political élite to its vision and ambitions to ‘create’ or foster a “green revolution” in Rwanda. Based upon interviews conducted in mid-2007, the paper elaborately illustrates the strong ambitions of policy makers to re-engineer the Rwandan agricultural sector into a professionalised motor for economic growth, with little place left for traditional smallholder agriculture. The paper points to the flaws and shortcomings in this argumentation. In the final part, it draws conclusions from the Rwandan case to feed the wider debate on how the dynamics of political economy shape the chances for a successful “green revolution” for Sub-Saharan Africa.

## 1. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RWANDA: THE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND WEALTH

Rural development in a country is not a purely technical issue. Bebbington points to the interrelatedness of various societal dynamics in shaping rural living conditions, “Neither patterns of asset distribution nor institutional conditions in rural areas are accidental. Indeed, they each derive from the broader relationships between politics, economy, and society that drive and undergird the overall patterns of rural development” (Bebbington et al., 2006, 1963). The WDR 2008 outlines that agricultural policy making is predetermined by the political economy dynamics of a country as it results from a political bargaining process driven by the power dynamics between citizens and politicians (World Bank, 2007). Therefore, one should examine the context of a country’s political economy to understand the political élite’s specific discourse on rural development embedded within its (proposed) rural policies.

The élite-peasant relationship in Rwanda is rooted within various layers of identity. Though historic research has focussed principally upon ethnicity, other factors (e.g. regional background, kin, social class, occupation, gender, etc.) have influenced these identities. The relative importance of each type of identity in explaining Rwanda’s history and politics has been subject to change over time within Rwandan historiography (see Newbury and Newbury, 2001). In this paper, we focus upon three main cleavages that undergird Rwanda’s political economy: ethnicity, regional background and the rural-urban gap.

Many scholars have elaborated extensively on the **ethnic cleavage**, focusing upon the strong animosity between Hutu and Tutsi. Different studies have often exposed very different and contradictory theories on the origins of ethnic differentiation (for an overview, see De Lame, 2003; Newbury and Newbury, 2001; and Vansina, 2001). It is clear, however, that the Hutu-Tutsi rift evolved over time from a flexible social class indicator towards an increasingly institutionalised division. Belgian colonial policy also used ethnicity to accomplish its own political agenda. Just before independence in 1962, ethnic Tutsi dominance in the political centre was reversed. For the subsequent 30 years, a Hutu president ruled Rwanda. Several episodes of inter-ethnic tension/violence during that time lead to significant Tutsi emigration.

**Geographic origin(s)**, along with ethnicity, equally underlie disparities. The ruling Hutu élite, though often urban-based, retained important links with their rural areas of origin, and have tried, not surprisingly, to unduly advance their interests. The first Hutu president, Grégoire Kayibanda, favoured the central region. After a military coup in 1973, the new president, Maj. Gen. Juvénal Habyarimana (a native of the north-west province of Gisenyi), began to grossly favour the country’s north (De Lame, 1996). Newbury and Newbury (2000) e.g. document regional disparities in the distribution of government development funds.

The Habyarimana administration (1973 – 1994) relentlessly championed the culture of an agrarian society. Verwimp outlines how Habyarimana in his speeches, “glorified the peasantry and pictured himself as a peasant” (Verwimp, 2000:3). A strong link between the political/power centre and a section of the peasantry, both in ethnic terms and family ties, enhanced the élite’s appreciation of (and links to) Rwandan agrarian society. De Lame, for example, points to the importance of the Kigali political élites maintaining ties with their hills of origin (De Lame 1996).

Despite this pro-peasant political rhetoric, several scholars refer to an **anti-rural bias** in the Rwandan society of the seventies and eighties. Marysse (1982) explains this by referring to three mechanisms. First, the disintegration of the lineage structure in an increasingly cash-based economy led to the breakdown of traditional solidarity ties that had previously enhanced a relative redistribution of national wealth. Changes in the normative system caused by the country's dependency on development aid intensified this process. Lastly, he adds that the political élites' uses of financial surpluses (e.g. taxes, foreign aid and private investment) were determined more by their personal needs (e.g. security) than proclaimed pro-peasant rhetoric.

Other authors also refer specifically to anti-rural policies during the Habyarimana reign. Verwimp (2002) illustrates how Habyarimana's regime failed to respond to early warnings, after crop failures in 1989 resulted in severe famine in southern Rwanda. In addition, the price crisis in the coffee market during the second half of the eighties had a profoundly negative impact upon rural living conditions (Verwimp, 2002). Rumiya (1985; cited in Newbury and Newbury, 2000) criticises the ideology of 'planned liberalism' adopted by the Habyarimana regime. He acknowledges the achievements in terms of the development of Kigali, the quality of the road system, the accessibility of modern tools, etc.; but he also points to the (problematically) low economic trickle-down effect vis-à-vis the rural masses.

Within the realm of pre-1994 agrarian policies, Pottier indicates how agricultural officers, who functioned as brokers between the central state and local peasants, often served as 'imposers' of state policies. He points to the excessive formality of public meetings that gathered together Rwandan cultivators and agronomists, standing in the way of true dialogue, "interaction boils down to a one-way, dogmatic delivery of textbook instructions" (Pottier, 1992, 151). In an earlier article based upon a specific case study of a 'small gardens project' near Butare, Pottier showed how the power dynamics between the agronomist and local peasants resulted in the neglect of useful traditional knowledge and techniques in favour of imposed and standardised techniques that did not seem suitable for the local micro-environment (Pottier, 1989). Newbury and Newbury (2001) add that agricultural officers were chosen mostly based on their educational profile instead of their actual experience. They were often male and could not relate to the majority of female producers; and they often extracted respect from deference instead of true dialogue with the peasants in question.<sup>[1]</sup> They conclude that, "not only does 'state agriculture' become a coercive field, but much local knowledge (e.g. local variations of crops, soils, pests, labour practices, etc.) is lost, in the name of standardizing and 'rationalizing' agriculture" (Newbury and Newbury, 2001, 856). In summary, the introduction of these 'modernizing' agricultural practices worsened an already considerable disparity between rural and urban living conditions. By 1990, about one out of six urban inhabitants lived below the national poverty line, while in rural areas it was over half (UNDP 2007).

In the early nineties, Rwanda suffered profound and tragic societal upheaval with a civil war that lasted four years. It culminated in 1994 with a genocide; that in about 60 days took the lives of 800,000 Tutsi and Hutu opponents. With the war's end in 1994, the victorious Tutsi rebel army (i.e. the Rwandan Patriotic Front or RPF) seized power. The previously ruling (Hutu) élite disappeared from the political power centre.

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[1] In their text, Newbury and Newbury refer to the pre-1994 findings of Pottier. However, they speak in the present tense when enumerating the characteristics of the agricultural officers. Indeed, all comments that were relevant for the pre-1994 situation are still so (see later).

The origins of the ‘new’ Rwandan political élite do not lie in a mass-based liberation movement. Though its political leaders typically portray the RPF as the main force behind the “liberation” of Rwanda,<sup>[2]</sup> the fact remains that the country (post-1994) has been ruled generally by an élite whose identity, in terms of ethnicity and origin, differs markedly from the majority of the population’s.

The rebel army was transformed into the RPF political party, including both Tutsi and Hutu. The party’s membership has become the major recruiting ground for political and administrative staff (Table 1), but for top positions also ethnic background plays an important role. Table 1 illustrates the profound **ethnic bias** in the constituency of the presidency and the government. Although 85% of the Rwandan population are Hutu, the majority of the presidential and government positions are Tutsi-filled.

**Table 1: Constituency of the Presidency and the Government**

	Ethnicity				RPF / non-RPF		
	Tutsi ex-refugee	Tutsi (non) ex-refugee	Hutu	N.a.	RPF	Non-RPF	N.a.
10/01/1998*	14	8	18		20	15	5
08/02/1999*	18	9	19		26	17	3
20/03/2000*	12	9	11		19	11	2
31/05/2001*	15	7	12		21	11	2
10/08/2002*	18	3	14		21	10	4
20/06/2003*	16	3	15		23	10	1
24/06/2004*	15	1	17	3	23	9	4
22/06/2005*	15	3	15	3	23	8	5
23/05/2006**	6	2	12		15	5	
01/06/2007**	7	2	11		15	5	

\* Ethnicity of president, ministers, secretary of state and secretary general (of all names available)

\*\* Ethnicity of president and ministers only.

Source: Reyntjens and Marysse (over several years).

In addition, the regional background of the majority of this Tutsi élite is predominantly foreign. Most are returned refugees from Uganda (including current President Kagame), in addition to refugees returning from other neighbouring countries. English is progressively becoming the dominant language within governmental circles, which further favours the promotional chances of former exiles – mostly from Uganda.

[2] In a speech on 1 October 2000, referring to the date the RPF started its military campaign, Kagame stated, “I would like us to remember the great and heroic deeds of ten years ago when the struggle for the liberation of our country began.” See: Official website of the president of Rwanda 2000, ‘Address to the Nation on 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the commencement of the liberation struggle’, 1 October 2000, <[www.gov.rw/government/president/speeches](http://www.gov.rw/government/president/speeches)>. In the post-1994 period, celebrations are held on the anniversary of liberation day (i.e. 4 July) rather than independence day (i.e. 1 July). On TV and radio broadcasts on 1 July 2007, several government officials maintained that ‘real’ independence only began in 1994. They argued that bad political leadership before 1994 had deprived the Rwandan people from true independence from the colonial powers. For a written report on the 1 July 2007 speeches, see: *The New Times*, 2007, ‘Past leaders spoiled our Independence’, Kigali, <[www.rwandagateway.org](http://www.rwandagateway.org)> ‘News’.

Most of these (ex-refugee) Tutsi have lived outside of Rwanda for decades or even generations. They were raised in cities or in cattle-farming families abroad. Following their military victory, the new élite installed themselves in the capital, Kigali. This was partly for security reasons (the countryside was still unstable in the immediate post-1994 period); but moreover, the returnees had lost all ties with the hill of origin and thus little incentive to go back. As a result, the new political élite appears to have few links (unlike their predecessors) to the Rwandan peasant class or to the logic and constraints of subsistence farming that characterises the rural environment. Over the past years policies have focused mainly upon the development of the **urban environment** to the neglect of the **rural hinterland**.

Overall, therefore, the characteristics of Rwanda's current political élite contrast strongly with those of the majority of Rwandans. The former are mainly Tutsi versus a majority of mostly Hutu, nearly always urban-based versus a majority of rural peasants, and often born or raised in a neighbouring country in contrast to the majority of 'original' or native citizens of Rwanda.

Despite the fact that the current Rwandan élite is not founded upon mass popular support, Rwandan power holders have good reasons to act in the population's interest with respect to improving their living conditions. With the end of the genocide in 1994, the country became a new focal point for international aid. Rwanda has profited from very high aid inflows in the immediate post-war period (on average 113\$ per capita, per annum during 1994 -1996). They are maintained, in more recent years, at levels far above Sub-Saharan standards (World Bank, 2006). Funding of Rwanda's national budget depends largely on foreign aid.<sup>[3]</sup> The Rwandan government's accountability for this aid lies, to a considerable degree, with donors' perceptions of progress in poverty reduction.

Poverty in Rwanda decreased considerably between 1995 and 2001.<sup>[4]</sup> Nonetheless, the overall result, in terms of improved living conditions, was rather disappointing when set against the impressive economic growth in the period (Ansoms, 2005). In 2001, however, the Rwandan government began implementing its first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), a strategy for poverty reduction funded by national and international actors. Implementation of the 2002-2006 PRSP strategy was an important condition for access to HIPC<sup>[5]</sup> assistance and debt relief, and allowed Rwanda to obtain PRGF<sup>[6]</sup> and other financial aid. The drafting process of a second Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy paper (EDPRS) for 2008-2012 has recently been finalised (GoR 2007).

Between 2001 and 2006 – the implementation period of this first PRSP – the incidence of poverty based on the national poverty line (\$ 0.44 nominal, 2006 prices) decreased from 60.3% to 56.8%. However, Ansoms (2007B) has shown how in comparison with cross-country evidence, this is less than what could have been expected in relation to the economic

[3] For example, general budget support contributed between 15 to 40% in total government recurrent expenditures between 2002 and 2004. For the period 1998 – 2003, total Official Development Assistance (ODA) represented between 17 and 20% of the Gross National Income (Purcell et al., 2006).

[4] Poverty is estimated to have decreased from 77.8% in 1995 to 60.4% in 2001 (UNDP, 2007); however, the data of 1994 seem to be based on extrapolations and may not be entirely reliable.

[5] HIPC stands for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries

[6] PRGF stands for Poverty Reduction and Growth Facilities, replacing the previous Structural Adjustment Facilities (SAF).

growth reported for this period. She concludes that the pro-poor character of Rwandan economic growth has been low despite the implementation of PRSP policies. When considering changes in absolute numbers, the image is even less positive. Given high population growth of 3.5% per year, the absolute number of people living in poverty in Rwanda has increased from 4.8 to 5.4 million people over the period 2001-2006 (Government of Rwanda, 2006).

When looking at poverty changes in **rural versus urban** terms, Table 2a indicates how the percentage decrease of overall and extreme poverty was most pronounced in urban Kigali and least marked in the rural areas. In absolute numbers, poverty increased in rural areas, with an additional half million living in poverty and 170.000 more confronted with extreme poverty. Also disturbing is the strong increase in the number of poor in non-Kigali urban areas as compared to 2001.

**Table 2a: Incidence of poverty and extreme poverty for Rwanda**

In percentage	Poverty incidence <sup>1</sup>		Change	Extreme poverty incidence <sup>2</sup>		Change
	2001	2006		2001	2006	
<b>Kigali urban</b>	12.3%	10.4%	-15.1%	4.5%	3.7%	-17.8%
<b>Other towns</b>	19.4%	17.8%	- 8.2%	9.8%	8.8%	-10.5%
<b>Rural areas</b>	65.7%	61.7%	- 6.1%	45.8%	41.3%	- 9.7%
<b>National</b>	60.3%	56.8%	- 5.8%	41.6%	37.8%	- 9.2%

Sources: GoR, 2002 (for 2001 data); UNDP, 2007 (for 2006 data).

1 The national poverty line represents 64.000 frw per adult equivalent per year for 2001 prices, and 90.000 frw per adult equivalent per year for 2006 prices.

2 The national poverty line represents 45.000 frw per adult equivalent per year for 2001 prices, and 63.500 frw per adult equivalent per year for 2006 prices.

**Table 2b: Incidence of poverty and extreme poverty for Rwanda**

In absolute numbers (millions)	Poverty incidence		Change	Extreme poverty incidence		Change
	2001	2006		2001	2006	
<b>Kigali urban</b>	0.11	0.09	-18.2%	0.06	0.04	- 33.3%
<b>Other towns</b>	0.29	0.36	24.1%	0.18	0.22	22.2%
<b>Rural areas</b>	4.43	4.93	11.3%	3.06	3.23	5.6%
<b>National</b>	4.82	5.38	11.6%	3.30	3.49	5.8%

Source: GoR, 2007.

In addition, Rwanda faces the problem of increasing wealth disparities between poor and rich. Rwanda in the mid-1980s qualified as a low-inequality country with a Gini coefficient of 0.29. However, the Gini coefficient by 2001 had risen to a considerable 0.47; representing a situation where the richest 20% enjoyed the same consumption level as the poorest 80%. Due to a lack of data for the interim years, it is unclear whether the situation worsened before, during, and/or after 1994.

Regardless, inequality in the most recent years has even further increased with the Gini coefficient reaching 0.51 in 2006. A preliminary report of the Rwandan government that discusses changes over 2001-2006 acknowledges, "because growth over this period has been accompanied by increasing inequality, this has reduced its impact on the reduction of poverty levels" (GoR, 2006, 7). Data differentiating urban and rural areas (Table 3) indicates how intra-urban inequality has remained constant or even decreased in Kigali. Income disparities within the countryside worsened with an increase of the Gini coefficient from 0.37 to 0.44 over a period of only five years.

**Table 3: Gini coefficients for Rwanda**

	2001	2006
Kigali urban	0.49	0.47
Other towns	0.52	0.52
Rural areas	0.37	0.44
National	0.47	0.51

Source: GoR, 2006.

**Regional income disparities** lessened between 1990 and 2000. While the better-off provinces<sup>[7]</sup> before the war (i.e. Kibungo, Rural Kigali, Ruhengeri and Byumba) experienced very low or negative growth rates over the decade, the poorest provinces (i.e. Gikongoro, Kibuye and Cyangugu) had positive growth rates. Justino and Verwimp point to the impact of the civil war and genocide on capital stock as an important factor. The Northern provinces and the surroundings of Kigali city were the heaviest affected by fighting during the 1990-1994 civil war. Further, Rural Kigali and Kibungo faced the mass resettlement of former refugees after 1994. The Southern provinces, on the other hand, suffered the greatest loss of human life during the 1994 genocide (linked to the high proportion of Tutsi inhabitants), but the regions' capital stock remained largely intact and there was less resettlement of former refugees in those regions (Justino and Verwimp, 2006).

When comparing 2001 and 2006, the regional picture looks different. The decrease in the poverty headcount has been the most impressive in Rural Kigali (-24% for the poverty line of \$0.44 per day). It was also considerable in Kibuye, Umutara (a province that did not exist before the war), Kibungo and Ruhengeri (cfr. some of the provinces that had low or negative growth during the war decade). Poverty rates increased in the Southern provinces (e.g. Gisenyi, Gikongoro and Gitarama - GoR, 2006).

**Data on ethnic income disparities** are currently unavailable, as ethnicity has become a taboo subject in the post-1994 Rwandan society. Within the rural setting, ethnic disparities are probably not as large as one might assume from historical studies that interpret the genocide mainly in ethnic terms. Already in the mid-50s, Leurquin challenged the traditional view regarding ethnicity by showing that there were no significant income and food access differences between rural Hutu and Tutsi. He found a slight difference in access to off-farm resources and access to cattle, given the more intense ties of Tutsi with urban settings (Leurquin, cited in Newbury and Newbury 2000). André and Platteau advance grievances and resentment as factors in the escalation of the 1994 violence, but they point out that these feelings could be directed towards any person (regardless of ethnic identity) resented for his pre-war success. They do not reject ethnicity as an important factor, but also seek to explain how the civil war provided desperate, young people with an opportunity to settle scores and reshuffle land property (André and Platteau, 1998).

[7] Before the recent administrative reform (2006), Rwanda was divided into 12 provinces (Ruhengeri, Byumba, Umutara, Kibungo, Kigali Ngali, Butare, Gitarama, Gikongoro, Cyangugu, Kibuye, Gisenyi, Ruhengeri). After the reform, there are 4 provinces (Northern Eastern, Southern and Western provinces), next to Kigali City

There is no data, whatsoever, on ethnic disparities within the rural environment for the post-1994 period. Various field visits by the author to peasant communities suggested that Tutsi survivors have somewhat larger per capita land holdings, due, perhaps, to the death of many family members. In numerous local settings, the author observed both hidden and more open resentment towards (Tutsi) genocide survivors who had profited from the FARG programme (Fonds National pour l'Assistance aux Rescapés du Génocide / Victims of Genocide Fund) that provides housing, health benefits and/or school fees. On the other hand, the socio-economic situation of these survivor families was often poor given their loss of assets and human capital during the war. Ethnic disparities within the rural setting are much more prominent in certain regions in the north of Rwanda (cfr. ex-Umutara province) where members of the new political and military élite have been able to acquire land to raise cattle. But the greatest ethnic disparities in post-1994 Rwanda relate most closely to the urban-rural divide, where a Tutsi-dominated political élite in Kigali appropriates the benefits of economic growth while very little trickles down towards Rwanda's peasant and rural world.

## 2 THE VISIONS AND AMBITIONS OF THE 'NEW' RWANDAN ÉLITE: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Overall, one might conclude that the achievements, in terms of poverty reduction, during the first Rwandan PRSP period are limited. There are many explanations for these disappointing results. Rwanda is a land-locked country, carrying the reputation of a conflictual history and environment, confronted with highly problematic structural constraints. It is strongly dependent on agricultural production, has few diversification options outside the primary sector and, at the same time, is highly overpopulated (which results in fierce competition for natural resources, specifically land). All of these factors strongly limit the potential of policies combating poverty and inequality.

Moreover, the challenges in the social sectors after 1994 were huge. A high-ranking government official of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning stated, "*The evaluations of the first PRSP suggest that the social sectors have received a lot of attention: health and education were the real priorities. In this field, indicators have improved, even though there is work to be done. But in the productive sector most has to be done.*" (Interview A, June 2007). Indeed, Ansoms (2007B) confirms that the first PRSP strategy has failed to transform the agricultural sector into a stable engine for growth. Nevertheless, it is stressed that growth alone would not suffice: the pro-poor impact of agricultural growth over the implementation period of the first PRSP has been problematic due to the low participation of the poorer rural categories.

A preliminary Rwandan government report that reviews progress in living conditions over the 2001-2006 period acknowledges, "*because growth over this period has been accompanied by increasing inequality, this has reduced its impact on the reduction of poverty levels*" (GoR, 2006, 7). A recent UNDP report (2007) expresses strong concerns about Rwanda's limited achievements over the last years in terms of poverty reduction.<sup>[8]</sup>

The Rwandan government has recently finalised the follow-up program of the first PRSP, named the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS or PRSP-2). This framework will outline the basic policy measures of the Rwandan government for the period 2008-2012. A high-ranking government official closely involved in the drafting process stated: "*In the new EDPRS, we now have to address the sectors that should be the motor of economic growth and of employment creation [referring to the agricultural sector]*" (Interview A, June 2007). The stated ambition of the EDPRS strategy is to, "*refocus on equitable growth, sustainable development, and poverty reduction,*" with rural development as an important priority.

How and if this ambition can be realized are the main questions. To answer this, it is useful to look at the discourse of development stakeholders with respect to poverty reduction, the EDPRS ambitions, agricultural and land policies, and Rwanda's future in general. Between May and July 2007, the author conducted field research in Rwanda, interviewing persons

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[8] This report was signed by Finance Minister Musoni who was also the chairman of the steering committee that oversaw the report's formulation. However, two weeks after the launch of the report, Musoni expressed public regret that he had not read the last edited version of the report, accusing the Swedish editor of adding unfounded and misleading interpretations to the figures. He stated that the government had blacklisted the editor and a Rwandan researcher involved in the report's formulation (New Times 24/08/2007). This incident indicates the sensitiveness of the Rwandan government to criticism on poverty and inequality-related policy performance.

closely involved in poverty reduction, agricultural and land policies (26 in total – see Annex)<sup>[9]</sup>. The interviews conducted with Rwandan policy makers, along with secondary data, provide a rather complete picture of the present rural development discourse within government circles. Interviewed individuals included high and lower ranking officials of the three ministries centrally engaged in rural development: the EDPRS department (Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy) within the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning; the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources; and the Ministry of Land, Environment, Forests, Water and Mines. As a complementary approach to the field interviews, the author also conducted intense research in six different rural localities in the Southern Province on locals' perceptions of their own poverty.<sup>[10]</sup>

## 2.1 Main profile of the post-1994 political élite

A first (and key) point that came up during the interviews (mostly raised by non-government interviewees) is the clear **over-representation of Tutsi ex-refugees in official posts** in the post-1994 era. A representative of a European donor country highlighted that the characteristics of the current élite explain, to a considerable extent, their relation with the countryside, *“Many of the government officials have never known the Rwandan countryside. They came from refugee camps, and when they took over power, they often left their parents behind in Umutara [province in the Northeast of Rwanda with many large cattle farms]. Moreover, in the past, there was still a lot of insecurity in the countryside, so people preferred to live in the city of Kigali. That is where they are concentrated now, and it explains why they have limited knowledge and understandings of how peasants live”* (interview - T, May 2007).

Indeed, many of those ex-refugees (including President Kagame) have come from Uganda, an English-speaking country. Before 1994, the second language in Rwanda after Kinyarwanda was French. Under the influence of the Ugandan diaspora in the post-1994 period, the use of English in Rwanda has become increasingly important. In most recent years, the knowledge of English has become a prerequisite for promotion within the administration and the government. A civil society person put it this way, *“The government really adopts a policy to exit ‘Francophony’ and to enter ‘Anglophony.’ One may perceive this at the economic and political level, but also in the friendship ties with other countries [referring to the USA, the Commonwealth, and Uganda]. Within the government, we see the same trend. Those who speak French and have the right competences are not taken into consideration [when assigning someone to a post]; and when they are, they keep quiet because they do not want to create any problems. It is nonetheless mostly the French speaking who master the rural setting”* (interview X, May 2007). The interviewee referred to the fact that those with more experience in rural development are often Francophones who were present in Rwanda before 1994. They have a longer and more in-depth experience with the problems of the rural environment, and often have direct ties with the countryside where their families still reside. Accordingly, they are more familiar with the logic of subsistence farming. However, their lack of English is a barrier to a government post.

[9] The majority worked for the Rwandan government (17). The author interviewed both English and French speaking-government officials, born in Rwanda or in neighbouring countries. Another part of the sample of interviewees worked for multilateral (1) and bilateral donor agencies (3). There were also several interviews conducted with civil society persons, either involved in projects with local farmers or farmer groups (2), and with human rights issues (3). The interviews with donors and civil society reiterate some points made in the paper, but should not be considered representative for the entire donor and civil society communities.

[10] Although the data from these qualitative focus group interviews (at least 12 per setting) are not core information in this paper, they are sometimes referred to when illustrating particular points.

According to several interviewees, even if Francophones do learn English (as many in official posts are doing at high speed), their promotional chances are still lower due to a lack of political connections. A representative from a European donor country mentioned that it is indeed not merely an issue of English versus French-speaking, *“It is not that much about bilingualism, it is clear that people with Ugandan roots are favoured. The language issue is simply the consequence of the fact that more people from Uganda are pushed forward. This is not so positive for the future; it will most likely create tensions.”* He added that favouritism towards Anglophones is also seen in other areas such as in education (*“in tertiary education, there is a lot of investment in new English-language initiatives”*) and in the media (*“in the New Times [government-related journal], in general, mostly French-speaking ministers receive more criticism”*) (interview U, May 2007).

## 2.2 The perceived potential of the Rwandan peasant class

The fact that Anglophone officials are often less familiar with traditions of subsistence agriculture - and therefore less familiar with the specificities of the Rwandan rural setting - becomes clearer when analysing the **discourse on the Rwandan peasantry**. Analytically, one should distinguish between an honest analysis of the limited prospects for subsistence agriculture in Rwanda, and the disrespectful statements (made by some) with respect to subsistence farmers. Let us start with the first. The contrast between past and present opinions on the potential of the peasantry to develop the economy is dramatic.

Here, for example, is an intriguing quote from Habyarimana’s speech at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Republic of Rwanda (1 July 1987), *“If in the 25 years of our independence Rwanda has known a lot of success in its struggle for progress, if it has been able to take a number of important steps, it is in the first place our farmers who made this happen (...) it is their total devotion to the work, every day (...) their fabulous capacity to adapt, their pragmatism, their genius, their profound knowledge of our eco-systems that allowed them to extract an amazing degree of resources from their plots of land...”* (Verwimp, 2000, 16). Despite the occurrence of anti-rural policies during the Habyarimana reign, the rhetorical language of the administration did refer to the peasantry as the ‘Rwandan ideal’.

This has profoundly changed after 1994 under the Kagame administration. The influential Vision 2020 document (2000) outlines the main challenges and policy priorities of the Rwandan government up to 2020. It states, *“Rwanda’s economic policies since independence are said to have targeted agriculture as the main engine of economic growth. However, the agricultural sector has continued to perform poorly, with consistently declining productivity. It will be necessary to formulate and implement realistic developmental policies that move beyond past delusions of viable subsistence-based agriculture”* (GoR, 2000, 17).

In the current context, it is obviously a pertinent conclusion that a subsistence-based economy is not viable in terms of long-term developmental progress. Therefore, the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation identifies, as a main challenge, the *“transformation of subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture with all its involvements in terms of institutional, social changes of behaviour and distribution of roles and responsibilities between different stakeholders”* (GoR, 2004A, 33). The land policy takes it even further, *“... the Rwandan family farm unit is no longer viable. ... The re-organization of the available space and technological innovations are necessary in order to ensure food security for a steadily and rapidly increasing population”* (GoR, 2004B:16). This process is termed by Alison Des Forges as the government’s ambition to *“winnow out the chaff”* in the agricultural sector (Des Forges, 2006).

There is some awareness among policy makers of the many institutional constraints that small-scale peasants face, retaining them in subsistence agriculture. However, the solution of the poverty problem is often reduced to adopting a 'good mentality'. At his inaugural speech (2000), President Kagame called upon the Rwandan people, "*Despite all this [referring to the many problems Rwanda is facing], I do not believe that we should lose hope and surrender ourselves to lives of poverty. If we can utilize the resources that God has given us to good effect, we can eradicate poverty. [...] We would like to urgently appeal to the Rwandese people to work. As the Bible says, 'he who does not work should not eat'. I would like to request every Rwandese in whatever trade they are involved in, to work with dedication and diligence. If we adopt this culture of working diligently, we will be able to create more jobs for our people.*"<sup>[11]</sup> In subsequent years, President Kagame would frequently speak of the burdens of the past, while emphasizing the responsibility of each citizen to overcome his/her own poverty.

Some interviewees referred to an awareness problem of the Rwandans. For example, "*[We have to convince the people] to change radically and to become part of a society that can take care of itself, that can survive on its own, and that does not have to beg. In Africa, the people are too dependent; one should not wait until one comes to help you as if you are a little baby. The head of state [referring to President Kagame] is angry with this spirit. Instead of depending upon others, one has to do things on its own. There are times that one may think that it is impossible to succeed, but one will do it nonetheless. We really have to convince every one to be with this national slogan that everyone has to go forward in life*" (interview C, June 2007). The tone of this quote suggests an underlying assumption that poverty is, in fact, a state of mind, somehow a deliberate choice. Getting out of poverty then becomes a question of adopting the right strategy and 'setting one's mind to it'. In a similar vane, this is the underlying assumption of the local authorities' "performance contracts" (imihigo) which households must sign. In these contracts, they "make vows of the achievements that they will have attained in a period of one year", which "will [be] base[d] on the government's goals meant to uplift the country's economy and the people's welfare", and which be assessed by the local authorities (New Times 19/11/2007).

Some interviewees made rather bold statements on the causes of poverty. A district official (Southern province) highlighted the mentality of the people in the South as one of the major explanations for the province's limited performance in well-being indicators, "*You talk to them and you think they listen, but the people do nothing with the good advice you give them. They say 'yes' because they are tired of you and your speeches, but they are never convinced. It is not like in the North; in the South they are resistant, they are really difficult*" (interview Q, June 2007). Although this was not the general tone of the interviews with most of the government officials, it was, nonetheless, symptomatic of the current élite's view that poverty is partly due to a 'wrong peasant mentality'.

Another illustration of this is found in the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation. The document refers to the problem of peasants' ignorance and resistance to adopt recommended productivity-enhancing measures that go beyond traditional subsistence farming (GoR, 2004A, 6-17). As such, their (i.e. the peasants') perceived lack of capacity to embrace 'modernised' farming is at least partly attributed to a 'lack of vision'; a view that totally disregards the institutional barriers they face.

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[11] Official website of the President of Rwanda (2000), "Address to the Nation by H.E. Paul Kagame on his inauguration as President of the Republic of Rwanda", 22 April 2000, online at [www.gov.rw/government/president/speeches](http://www.gov.rw/government/president/speeches).

### 2.3 The developmental potential of the Rwandan economy: what place for small-scale peasants and unskilled labour force?

Musing over which options are valid for development in Rwanda, there are two main schools of thought within our sample of government interviewees. On one hand, there are the interviewees who adhere to a rather **naive view on the developmental potential of their country**. When asked how the country would look in ten years, one answered, *“What will change is the way of doing things. The people of Rwanda will be educated, the large majority will be able to read and write. They will also be bilingual, speaking French and English. [...] There will be a big airport, a railway from the east to the west, and maybe from north to south, there will be asphalt roads everywhere. There will also be a pipeline for petrol. [...] Rwanda will become a medium human development country. The lack of resources does not have to hold the country back, we can really transform. In fact, these are the large projects, it will take time, but this is certainly on the current agenda”* (interview C, July 2007). Other examples are in the first PRSP, where ICT (information and communication technology) development is identified as a main priority in poverty reduction. This should allow for a jump from a subsistence-based economy into a *“service-sector driven, high-value added information and knowledge based economy that can compete on the global market”* (GoR, 2002, 69).

A donor representative mentioned that in the EDPRS discussions, there has even been considerable debate on whether agricultural development should still be a core issue, *“There has been quite a battle on this issue. At one stage, people in Minecofin [i.e. Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning] had the opinion that after trying out agriculture and failing in this, it was time for something new. This argument was taken up to a level where Rwanda should become a service-driven high-tech economy. However, a degree of realism returned, certainly for the plans in the short and medium term”* (interview S, May 2007).

The majority of government officials interviewed, however, supported more modest development plans. In their view, the **focus in an early stage should lie on agricultural growth and development**, in addition to the extension of the service-sector driven by local demand. Only in later stages, would there be room for more far-reaching modernisation. As an interviewee mentioned, *“... first we have to do a lot in the area of agricultural productivity that is extremely low in Rwanda. The goal is to evolve from an agricultural economy towards a service-based economy. But in a first stage, this means a service sector based on local needs”* (interview A, June 2007). All interviewees, both within government, donor and civil society circles confirmed that the agricultural sector would be at the forefront of the new EDPRS policy.

Next question is then however which type of agricultural transformation should be aimed for. A considerable number of the interviewed policy makers strongly supported investing in the **rapid modernisation and professionalization of the agricultural sector**, with a strong focus on maximum productivity and output growth. One government official remarked, *“The agricultural sector really has to orient itself towards the market. And this cannot be done with the traditional cash crops as coffee and tea. We have to try out new cultures as macadamia, patchouli, moringa and vanilla. And we strongly have to encourage the initiative of the private sector in these new speculations”* (interview C, June 2007).

Ansoms (2007B) analyses how this focus on professionalization and modernisation allows for a pro-poor rhetoric of rural policies on one hand; but in reality, actual government

support favours competitive and commercial farmers on the other. This disregard for equitable wealth distribution threatens to further enfeeble small-scale farmers. In fact, the structure of subsistence peasants' farms often prohibits the necessary risk-taking that would allow them to invest in new, high-potential production systems. An independent consultant remarked, "If one wants to introduce new techniques, it is the task of the government to take the risk. [...] In fact, one has to give the farmer the opportunity to try out new things, but without them taking the risk. People have seen so many things arriving and enforced upon them that did not work. Moreover, they often lack the capacity to enter in yet another novelty. [...] But once the commercialisation network has been installed, then the risk becomes limited. [...] At that time, one can leave it to the peasant. If one proposes something to the population that is profitable, one can be sure, they will be very quick to adopt something that really works" (interview H, July 2007). A human rights activist agreed, "I agree totally with the need to conserve the land, but the policies have to be adapted to the small peasants. How will a peasant exploit his land in a 'professional' manner with the little he has and without the support of the government? In fact, they need training, specifically oriented towards the exploitation of small surfaces, because this is the reality of agriculture in Rwanda" (interview X, May 2007).

Most government officials among our interviewees, however, linked the professionalization and commercialisation of the primary sector to the **necessity for larger farm units**. Some see this happening by consolidating current farms through collective ownership. One high-ranked government official of the Ministry of Land said, "We will not take someone's land. The consolidation objective has the aim to intensify productivity; this is not equal to taking away land from people. When *minagri* [Ministry of Agriculture] is talking about large farms, they do not mean that these farms would belong to one person. [...] Households will consolidate in terms of land use, not in terms of land ownership. [...] We will teach them methods for soil conservation, ecosystem rehabilitation etc. And if we teach them terracing techniques, it is better to do this on larger surfaces. This does not mean one big farm of one person, but a conglomeration of farmers" (interview I, July 2007). Another interviewee confirms, "... people will exploit their land together with neighbours following the advice of *minagri*. *Minagri* has to provide them with a crop type that is profitable" (interview J, July 2007).

However, a high-ranked government official in the Ministry of Agriculture stated, "They say that agriculture is the productive sector, but it isn't in Rwanda. [...] In fact, we should stop calling it the productive sector; it is at this point the survival sector. [...] At this point, most people are not earning because their pieces of land they have access to are too small. [...] We have to get more people off the land, as we cannot continue a system with small pieces of land. [...] When people get off the land, there will be more land in the hands of fewer people, which will allow a better planning of the system." The person interviewed even compared the Rwandan case with the USA where, "they first evolved to a system where only those who were profitable remained in the agricultural sector, and then further evolving to only big farms remaining." The person added that this might not be the exact evolution in Rwanda, but that in any case, the country would have to go into that direction (interview E, June 2007).

Government officials regularly referred to the aim and need to set into motion a 'green revolution' within the agricultural sector. It is surprising indeed that most of these interviewees, involved moreover in rural policy making, saw no role for smallholders in this process. The recent World Development Report however accentuates the importance of smallholders in a green revolution for Sub-Saharan Africa. The document recognises that modern agricultural evolutions can reverse the superiority of smallholder farming, but it points to the potential of

policy instruments to enhance smallholders' competitiveness. The WDR document asks the question whether farms are becoming too small, referring to China, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Malawi (where average farm size is between 0.5 and 0.8 hectares – comparable to Rwanda). Whether or not small-farm consolidation might be beneficial depends, according to the WDR, on the way consolidation is managed (preferably through the rental market), on the safety-net value of small farms, and the availability of alternative income sources (World Bank, 2007).

Indeed, almost all Rwandan policy makers referred to the off-farm sector to absorb the labour surplus that already exists and would increase further if more people move out of agriculture. One of Vision 2020's principal goals, referred to extensively by our interviewees, is to **decrease the population dependent upon agricultural activities from 85 to 50% (i.e. decrease of 35%) by the year 2020**. The Secretary of State of the Ministry of Land stated, *"In fact, this vision came from this ministry. It is a vision based on the land perspective, not on the agricultural perspective. If the population will continue to increase with 3% per year, we will have a huge population while the surface of land is not increasing. [...] It is crucial for people to get another livelihood. In fact, the goal is to maintain the existing number of people in the agricultural sector, and to employ the increasing number in other sectors. We will be with about 15 million in 2020, it is only logical that we talk about the 50% target. We are not removing anyone [out of the agricultural sector], but the surplus of the people should go elsewhere in another sector"* (interview I, July 2007). Many of the other interviewees shared this analysis.

None of the interviewed Rwandan policy makers, however, had a clear vision of the employment alternatives available to the foreseen "surplus" 35% of the population (previously dependent on farm activities) about to enter the economy as non-agricultural labourers. A representative of an international donor organisation remarked, *"it is not that all those people not being part of the 50% in agriculture will not be involved in agricultural activities; but they will have their main livelihood coming from another source, e.g. from the processing industry or as a bicycle vendor."* He added, *"...employment in other sectors will appear, but the question remains at which pace, which scale, and which support this will get"* (interview R, July 2007).

Some had a rather **unrealistic view on the potential of off-farm employment**, *"We will build factories that work twenty-four hours. And this is not only in Kigali, also in other centres of economic interest"* (interview C, June 2007). The first Rwandan PRSP even explores the opportunity, *"... to leap-frog the stage of industrialisation and transform her [Rwanda's] subsistence economy into a service-sector driven, high value-added information and knowledge-based economy that can compete on the global market"* by using the potential of the ICT technology (GoR, 2002, 69).

Many interviewees highlighted the importance of the private sector in creating non-farm employment, sometimes presented as an almost miraculous solution to absorb the labour surplus. One mentioned, *"The private sector will have a very important role in the development strategy: it will create jobs, which leads to incomes, which leads to improved living conditions, which leads to decreased poverty. This means that the private sector will play a very big role in poverty reduction"* (interview B, May 2007). Another went into detail on how to attract private investment, allotting a major role for both foreign and domestic investors. He stated, *"If we will get more foreign investment in town, then locals will be more inclined to invest in the rural sector as they will not be able to compete with the large businesses in the city. These rural investments will then create spill-over effects; at least, that is what I expect. I have seen this happening in Uganda with the return of the Indians."*

When the big business was taken over by foreign investors, the local investors shifted towards local areas” (interview M, July 2007). As a prerequisite for rural investment, he accentuated the need for registered land titles and guaranteed land rights, which would give urban investors more security on land in rural areas. In addition, he stressed the need to solve energy and water problems that currently constrain investment in rural areas. Increased investment in the rural setting would, in his opinion, generate employment that in turn would make people move off the land. Quoting from the interview, *“If someone who works for 100\$ per month will be able to get 400\$ working in other jobs off the land, then that person is better off. People will then sell their land if they have an alternative”* (interview M, July 2007).

Presently, however, the level of private investment remains low, and it is questionable whether employment absorption by private actors will be considerable. Interviewee M (see above) continued, *“We should invest in making the Rwandan environment more suitable for foreign investment, because, we should admit, having a lot of local investment is a dream.”*

In addition, rural investment (often correlated with land accumulation) by the urban and/or foreign private actors may also have perverse effects upon the local economic system. To cite an example: in 1997, the Madhvani group bought the Kabuye Sugar Works Company for \$1.5m. It was the only sugar manufacturer in Rwanda, and the first post-conflict company to be privatised. In 2004, the company employed 370 permanent workers and 4000 casual labourers (Cherif, 2004). At the same time, the government granted Kabuye a lease on 2,735 hectares for 50 years. The land transfer deprived the previous occupiers from their very fertile marshland plots that they had used traditionally for food production. The arrival of the private investor had a considerable negative impact on the overall living conditions in the nearby rural communities (Ansoms, 2008).

Most interviewees were **more realistic with regards to the immense challenge for the growing labour force to be absorbed within the off-farm sector**. A high-ranking official in the Ministry of Agriculture who pleaded for fewer people in agriculture, realised that *“The country will then need the creation of industries and services, and not in sophisticated sectors, say for example the packaging industry, carpentry workshops, rural manufacturing”* (interview E, June 2007). He highlighted the importance to develop smaller-scale industries and services.

Concerning the local service sector, several interviewees mentioned the importance of adequate training. A high-ranking official of the Ministry of Agriculture stated, *“People cultivate because they did not have the chance to be educated. We have to give the people a formation. They should not leave the agricultural sector without alternatives”* (interview F, July 2007). Quoting a representative from a European donor country, *“The result of the land reform process will be that there will be a lot of people who currently have small land holdings, that will become agricultural labour force or that will look for other occupations. But the big problem in Rwanda is that there is almost no professional education for plumbers, electricians, and other small professions. The government should invest in this. And people could also be redirected to the commercial sphere. The government declares having the ambition to create one million jobs between 2000 and 2015. But it is highly doubtful whether enough jobs will be created to absorb the labour surplus”* (interview T, May 2007). In drafts of the District Development Program for two districts, Kamonyi and Muhanga (Southern province), we find, indeed, reference to increasing facilities for training masons, carpenters, weavers, dressmakers and embroiderers, cooks, sculpture makers, decoration artisans, transporters, etc. In Kamonyi, there

are currently five professional training centres with 452 enrolled students (District of Kamonyi, 2007). In Muhanga, there are currently 513 students in technical schools and 378 in other types of youth training (District of Muhanga, 2007). The district agronomist of Muhanga explained, “... we plan to create additional professional training centres in each sector. If they can educate between 50 and 200 people per year, this could be a first step in pushing people towards the non-agricultural sectors” (interview P, June 2007). These training numbers, however, are insignificant in comparison to the overall population (265,365 in Kamonyi and 297,997 in Muhanga).

But next to the need for skilled labour force as an input for the off-farm sector, there is also a need for local-driven demand for the goods and services developed in the smaller-scale industries and services. At the present time, there are already unemployed carpenters and masons in the countryside. A human rights/civil society person clarified that indeed, “... for those who fall out of the agricultural sector, some will find other things to do. But the large mass will stay behind unemployed. One should really try to see the reality in the field and not stay at the level of sectoral analysis. Even without doing all these studies, if you walk in the hills, and even in the city, you see people outside of the agricultural sector who have nothing else to do” (interview Z, May 2007). The reason behind the lack of local demand is the limited purchasing power of subsistence farmers. A European donor representative mentioned that the strategy to move people out of agriculture depends upon creating a dynamic system in which many people participate in growth, “When everyone earns a little more money, then this money will be spent in the local economy and as such people improve their living conditions through each others’ increased consumption. Important prerequisites are professional technical education, access to energy, improved infrastructure, and maybe even most important: access to micro-credit up to the most local level” (interview U, May 2007).

An independent consultant reflected upon the combined assumption of a trickle-down poverty-reducing effect based on agricultural growth and a decrease in the agriculture-dependent population. He explained, “We should not dream. Where will we put all these people? If we could find something that could employ 40 to 60% of the population, at that moment we could count on a trickle-down effect. But with a range of activities that can give revenue to 2-5% of the population, we will never be able to create a trickle-down effect of which the benefits will reach the other 85% [adding up to the 90% of population living in rural settings]” (interview H, July 2007). A human rights activist spoke on the same issue, “[If the government wants to reduce the population dependent upon agriculture from 85 to 50%], what will the 35% do? It would be really great if there was less dependence upon agriculture. Even if there would be only 10% in agriculture, and the 90% others working for them or in other economic sectors. But the important thing is that people have viable livelihood strategies and that they can be satisfied with their lives. I do not see this happening in a context where rural policies allow for the rich to walk away with the gains of the agricultural sector, while others are increasingly excluded. I believe that the essential thing is the redistribution of the gains of growth. [...] Rural policies may strive for increased productivity and conservation of soils. But they have to be appropriate and adapted to the capacity of small peasants” (interview X, May 2007). Both individuals referred to the dangers of Rwanda’s rural policies focusing on output maximization by concentrating on highly productive farm units. It is, indeed, unlikely that the resulting growth effects would trickle down quickly enough to the remaining population (see also Ansoms, 2007A). Instead, rural policies should aim for empowering and actively involving a large mass of farmers – in most cases subsistence farmers – in agricultural development strategies. Even a modest income increase for these layers of society could enhance the demand for off-farm services and thus the demand for off-farm labour.

## 2.4 'Re-engineering' rural society: law enforcement and stringent targets

Quite some of the interviewed Rwandan government officials align to a theory of culture contact. Migdal (1974) identifies three assumptions underlying this view: 1) the benefits of the modern, by definition, outweigh the benefits of the traditional; 2) the peasant is not constrained by his institutional environment which, in fact, prevents him from making certain choices; and 3) rejecting modern alternatives can only be explained by wrong or non-rational values (Migdal, 1974, 7). Indeed, in the interviews (both quoted above and not), officials often stated, "we have to learn farmers, we have to show farmers, we have to bring farmers in contact with modern production techniques" while referring to poverty as "at least partially a problem of mentality".

The view of **social engineering through law**, as conceived by Roscou Pound (1968), is reflected in the mainstream rural development discourse. Rwandan government officials see law and policy as tools for 'shaping' society, but often neglect to consider the institutional and environmental conditions in which the new law(s) will operate.

An example of this social engineering ambition is the **villagisation policy** of the Rwandan government. Though this policy was designed to resettle Tutsi refugee households in compound villages, in a later stage it was more widely adopted as a measure to increase the efficiency of land use. Quoting President Kagame in his speech of 23 November 2001, "[There is a] lack of understanding of the resettlement policy. Some critics say that it's a way of dividing people and oppressing others. This is not the case, of course. This policy aims to change the settlement system of Rwandan people; which will set apart settlement sites and sufficient land for enough production; hence ending disorderly land use. Some people mislead the population about this land use policy fuelling their reluctance; hence derailing them from development" (National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, 2002).

However, Human Rights Watch (see "Uprooting the Rural Poor in Rwanda," 2001) found that people were obliged to destroy their homesteads – traditionally scattered on the hills – to live in compact villages (imidugudu). Overall, the results were disappointing: many households were worse off both in terms of housing quality and land possession. The policy failed to decrease pressure on available land holdings, and in many cases even created or deepened land conflicts (see also Pottier, 2002; Van Hoyweghen, 1999).

Despite unfavourable experiences, the policy has not been annulled. On the contrary, it could play an important role in a new wave of 'anti-poverty' measures. A highly-ranked government official advanced this as one way to increase off-farm activities, "Another thing would be to make people live communally in a village. This could increase trade and exchange which is more difficult if people live scattered on the hills. It will also facilitate access to school infrastructure, health centres, etc. [...] Very important is the interaction between people, and this is not optimal when people live scattered on the hills" (interview I, July 2007). Another government official raised this as a crucial issue in the environmental debate, "A big exercise will be to design the land use master plan. At this point, people cultivate everywhere and live everywhere. But the goal is to determine in great detail the purpose of each plot of land. We will plan for imidugudu, grouping people around centres with infrastructure. This will allow us to recover the land that is best for agriculture. It will allow us to cultivate large land surfaces with specific crops, and most importantly to implement anti-erosive measures on those surfaces." In addition, he added that grouping people would be a way to withdraw them

from the agricultural sector (without specifying how), which would again increase the available space for environmental rehabilitation (interview D, June 2007).

The policy's continuing relevance (since the administrative reforms of 2006) is manifest in the name(s) of the lowest administrative units ('umudugudu'). That term was reserved previously for villages created in frame of the villagisation policy. The use of the term now stands loose from the villagisation policy; it has replaced the more neutral term 'cellule', previously used for this administrative unit. In the drafts of the District Development Programs (set up by the district officials), we also found reference to the ambition to go forward with the villagisation policy, given that, *"The liberation of space will enable the recuperation of arable land and an intensive and industrial exploitation of the areas, the regrouping of the population in cooperatives active in production, transformation, distribution, savings and credit"* (quote from a preliminary draft, July 2007).

A second illustration of the social engineering ambitions of the current élite is their intention to **change the image of poverty** by imposing certain 'poverty-related' obligations or prohibitions. In reality, this leads to a situation where it seems to have become 'prohibited by official policy' to be poor. In 2006, Twizeyimana mentioned the obligation to wear shoes, to be clean, use mosquito nets, adhere to the health insurance guidelines, wear school uniforms, construct toilets, make compost pits, and dry dishes on a table instead of on the grass. In the six field research settings visited by the author in June–August 2007, local inhabitants mentioned the existence of an obligation to 'walk with shoes'. In a first stage (2006), this policy was enforced in urban settings, but increasingly it has become common in rural areas. In some areas, local administrators (at district, cellule and umudugudu level) were quite flexible in the enforcement of this policy. In other areas however, people were not allowed to attend public meetings or gatherings (e.g. go to the market) without wearing shoes or flip-flops. Several people reported that when arriving at the market without shoes, their food money was taken from them forcibly by the local authorities to buy them shoes. A similar but less enforced policy is for people to wear 'decent cloths'. In two settings, better-off people were building 'decent' stables for their cattle, modern toilets, and some constructed modern ovens, mentioning that they had to comply with official policy. Some mentioned specifically that while they had the money to invest, the poorer people of their hill would not be able to comply with these obligations.

Another example of social engineering ambitions is found in the **eager race towards performance targets at all levels**. In terms of management, the definition of targets is certainly not a bad idea. However, the risk exists that striving to reach those targets results in blind policy enforcement and, possibly, perverse effects on the local setting. An international donor representative cautioned, *"indeed there is a danger to focus too much on targets and not on the process. The results are important, but as important are the processes to arrive to these results. In fact, a big challenge remains in terms of bringing in quality targets: how, for example, can you measure participation"* (interview R, July 2007)?

A remarkable anecdote related to the author's fieldwork illustrates this further. In a certain umudugudu in the Southern Province, some of the interviewees did not turn up for a meeting. The research project coordinator set off to see whether all had been informed. He was able to trace one man who, according to some neighbours, would be working in a certain field. When the coordinator arrived at the spot, no one was present, although the cloths and cultivat-

ing equipment were still there. One of the neighbours asked why the coordinator was looking for that particular man. After being explained, he suggested coming back without the motorbike. Upon the return of the coordinator (on foot), the missing man and his friend laughingly explained that they had been hiding because they had been uprooting coffee trees in the field. In the respective district, the agronomist had put firm targets with respect to coffee plantation. They associated the motorbike sound with the district's agronomist. If caught, they would have had to pay 100 Rwandan francs per destroyed coffee tree – adding up to between 4000 and 5000 Rwandan francs in total;<sup>[12]</sup> and if they could not pay, they stated they would be imprisoned until the fine was paid.

There are other records of peasants being **obliged to destroy or to produce certain crops that local authorities (dis)approved of**. In 2006, officials urged peasants in the Eastern Province to plant their crops 'in row' and adopt monocropping. In the autumn of 2006, local administrators in certain districts pulled out crops when peasants had not followed the guidelines (i.e. they had planted beans in between banana trees, Reyntjens, 2007, 2). In September 2006, the Major in charge of Muhanga (in the Southern Province) urged the population to replace their banana trees with other cash crops, flowers or pineapple. After a broadcast of the BBC, the recommendations were suspended (Cros, 2006). In early January 2007, the Governor of the Eastern Province, Mr. Mutsindashyaka, placed a ban on sweet potatoes. His decision was later revoked by the Minister of State for Agriculture (New Times 26/01/2007). In mid-2007, sector administrators of Gatsibo District in the Eastern Province compelled peasants to grow maize. According to the interviewee, it initially seemed that punishment might be used to oblige compliance, but he did not actually know of any such cases. However, in another sector (Rwamagana) in the same province, some maize crops had been uprooted during umuganda when not planted 'in rows' (Huggins 2007). In August, the governor of the Eastern Province added that peasants should concentrate on certain crops like maize, banana, rice, passion fruits, pineapples, soya beans and coffee (New Times 27/08/2007). In one of our own interviews with a district official (Southern province), he maintained that specialisation will be a major goal in the rural development strategy of his district. He added that the people fear the risk but, *"they are obliged to obey: either they invest in this technique, either they will have to leave their land and work for someone who is willing to invest"* (interview Q, June 2007).

The issue of monocropping is controversial for several reasons. First, the extreme variety in soil types – even within the same locality – and in climatic conditions makes it difficult for local administrators to assign certain crops to administratively defined regions. Further, most subsistence peasants opt for diversification in crop types based on risk-averse considerations. They will hardly be inclined to adopt monocropping when there are no risk-insurance mechanisms that will protect them in the case of failure (Ansoms, 2007A). As one civil society member put it, *"There are climatic instabilities. If people adopt monocropping and regional specialisation and if that particular crop type fails, what will the government offer? Policies have to be analysed in great detail to avoid that they lead to a humanitarian catastrophe"* (interview X, May 2007). Finally, a crucial issue is what bargaining power the local peasants will have on the regional markets (Ansoms, 2007A). The previous speaker remarked, *"In general, it is the rich that dominate the market. If the population will grow one crop that has to be traded for others on the market, will they have access to*

[12] As a basis for comparison, the daily wage to work on another person's field in this umudugudu was about 500 Rwandan francs, among the highest in comparison to the other five case study areas, visited by the author. The penalty fee represented the wages of 8 to 10 working days.

these other products” (interview X, May 2007)? Another civil society person involved in grouping peasants into cooperatives highlighted the importance for people to work within the framework of a cooperative as a way to communally defend their interests. Within the framework of the new agricultural policy, he saw this as the only alternative to having a market dominated by large agricultural entrepreneurs where small-scale peasants would totally lose their independence (interview W, May 2007).

Indeed, policy-imposed crop cultivation is not a recent idea. Also the Belgian colonial administrators and the Habyarimana government have practiced ‘forced cultivation’. Pottier explains how agronomists and ‘vulgarisateurs’ in 1986, the year of agricultural intensification, promoted monocropping (and combinations of beans and maize or soya and maize) as the only good gardening method. He points to the disastrous results of the ‘top-down’ approach in agricultural extension (Pottier 1992). Newbury and Newbury (referring to the same period) point to the danger of such state-induced practices, which often favour technical insights on climatological conditions and suitability of land over the knowledge and abilities of the peasants themselves. They also highlight the danger of élites redirecting such policies to their own benefit (Newbury and Newbury, 2000). Given the problematic experience with forced cultivation in the past, the current scale of crop planning; the blind belief of the administration in technical solutions; and the degree of force used during the implementation are again major reasons for concern.

Stringent **targets** are also formulated in the area of **land registration**. According to several interviewees in the Ministry of Land, the issue of land registration should not pose a major problem for the local population. One stated, “Land is not a sensitive issue to Rwandans. People going into the field [referring to researchers] often expect a lot of disputes, but in fact this is not the case. Most disputes that exist are within families, and due to polygamy. Therefore, land dispute is not the most serious issue in land reform, the most serious thing to look at is the human capacity building. The rest will be simple. In fact, in the past, land was managed under the customary system. So the essence of the organic land law is to start issuing rights. It is now that people get rights. There is therefore a huge need for people with skills to do the land administration. The need for trained people to do this is the biggest constraint. Setting up procedures and systems is simple. But who is going to manage them; that are the hard things. The rest is not very difficult. [...] We start from fresh. It is easy to get the system running because you are not competing with something what existed before. As a result there can be no resistance from other things. In any case, people will be happy as we offer them a better option for their future” (interview M, July 2007). A foreign consultant within the Ministry of Land opined, “... the problem of land conflicts in Rwanda is overblown by the international aid community and the western embassies. Land is not the cause of a lot of war. Indeed there are problems related to polygamy and to struggling brothers. But in fact the formal registration could turn out to be an opportunity for solving conflicts by providing a simple clear and formal procedure” (interview K, May 2007).

A researcher, who had spent one and a half years studying gender relations and land disputes in relation to formal procedures, had very different findings, “When asking people about land registration or consolidation, they often agreed, but most probably because the authorities said they had to. Due to the culture of silence and adherence to hierarchy in the public sphere, people will not speak out. But after continuing the interview and coming back to the issue, they often say completely different things after a while. The main question in counting land disputes in the registration process is thus whether people will be pissed openly or behind closed doors. In any case the tensions do exist” (interview Y, May 2007).

The view on land titles as a simple and clear solution to the ambiguity of informal rules reveals a more generalised belief of Rwandan policy makers in legal engineering through the implementation of formal procedures. It totally bypasses a reality of land rights based on a combination of formal and informal rules that mutually interact, reinforce or compete with each other. New formalized rules are not simply complied with, but adapted or reinterpreted according to specific situations. They add a new dimension to the competition that exists between different prevailing institutional arrangements, which, in practice often results in a “plurality of norms” (Chauveau 1998).

There is, moreover, considerable controversy over the usefulness and ‘pro-poor-ness’ of the land registration process. A clear picture of ‘who owns what’ protects people in a process of land consolidation either by clearly marking their boundaries, or by giving them a legal basis for compensation. On the other hand, the registers may be used to identify the owners of wrongly used soils and oblige them to adopt other techniques and fine them in case of non-compliance (interview U, May 2007).

Another question is whether land registers will be used for taxation. Several government officials mention that people will be less inclined to register their land if they are aware about the possibility to be taxed at a later stage. However, most of them mention that it is feasible to do this once the land register is ready (interview K, May 2007; interview M, July 2007). A high-ranked government official of the Ministry of Land mentioned, however, that land taxes would depend upon the surface that one owns, adding that, “*we won’t be charging people who do not get anything out of the land. There will be people that won’t pay taxes on land*” (interview I, July 2007).

The risk of running blindly to meet **targets** is equally high with the new **EDPRS framework**. The sector ‘logframes’ (defined within this EDPRS framework) mention very detailed targets. As such, many of these aims make sense but they are extremely ambitious. By July 2007, these targets were already (partly) communicated to the district offices (interview A, June 2007), who have to consider them when designing their District Development Plans. In addition, the district mayors have signed a performance contract (imihigo) with President Kagame (from 2006 onwards). The performance contracts specify the key targets for the districts to attain within one year, in line with the government’s national priorities (Minaloc 2006).

The district is the central unit in the decentralisation policy, and the core level for **national policies and targets to be re-stated into local plans** (interview N, May 2007). Indeed, the responsabilisation of the local authorities in the implementation of national policies could improve the translation process of national targets towards the local context, adapting them to the needs of the population. However, there are some major constraints.

First, at the most important local administrative levels (district, sector and cellule), the main decision making power lies with an administrative person who is appointed by the central administration, and is thus not elected by the population (cfr. the executive secretary) (Ingelaere, 2007). As a result, this person is not directly accountable towards to the local population which he/she is supposed to represent. The legitimacy of the appointed person, to a great degree, depends upon compliance with (the implementation of the) national priorities, regardless of the burden on the local population. A human rights spokesperson stated, “*Free expression is currently a utopia. Laws are implemented in an authoritarian way and the population cannot say ‘no’*”

to the authorities. In fact, the current leaders receive their instructions and have to implement. I do not believe in the district responsables, they are commissioners of the RPF. They are the link between the RPF and the population, not chosen but imposed. And they receive good salaries for it. They are not at all close to the population, often they are not even from the region they rule. The local population had to accept, but it created tensions. This is not a stable base for peace. And the same goes for the sector and cellule level. The executive secretary is appointed by the RPF. The person responsible for security is often an ex-military person. And the (elected) coordinator, say the 'conseiller' in the previous system, is not paid. Only the people appointed are paid. At the lowest level of the imidugudu, local authorities do not really have a decision capacity; their role is more symbolic" (interview X, May 2007).

Near Kigali, those appointed at the district level have generally worked in ministries. In an interview with a district official (Southern province), he mentioned that he had been 'sent' to the district when his ministry (Ministry of Agriculture) was reorganised. He was clearly not satisfied with his new position outside of Kigali, having to go out to work and return every day. He explained, "I do not like to look at poor people and deal with them. In fact, when I worked in the ministry, I did not have to look at the poor. That was the level of policies and decisions. It is now in this new function that I am directly confronted with the poor." He was clearly not happy about this.

Surveying the six field research settings (visited by the author) at the lower sector and cellule levels, we found, indeed, that the executive secretary of the cellule was, in all cases, native to that cellule. However, in none of the settings was the sector level executive secretary native to that sector. In one case, he was from the same district in which his sector was located. In all other cases, he was from elsewhere (and often the population had no idea from where). In one setting, there was considerable speculation about the executive secretary's origins. When asked, he would only respond, "know only that I am from Kamonyi [the district]." His accent was Anglophone and people thought ('suspected' using the words of the local population) that he was from the Ugandan Diaspora.

The central administration, as well as the local peasants, see the local authorities as the implementing body of national strategies. When asking peasants about their opinion on specific policies, we got reactions like, "one can not discuss with the state," "one can not refuse the law that is given by the state," "a peasant can not neglect the ideas of the state," "the government can not have bad ideas. Can I as a peasant neglect the idea of the state? The government thinks more than the peasant," "generally, the peasant is always in favour of the authorities [referring to the fact that they have no choice]." Going into more detail, someone mentioned, "our own umudugudu coordinator has no power; and for the executive secretary (at the sector level), he might say that we are being disobedient towards the government if we protest." These remarks strongly suggest that the peasants interviewed by no means saw the local authorities as their representatives.

The central role of local administration in implementing national policy is even more apparent in some of the interviews with central government officials. An interviewee of the PRSP coordination committee (within the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning) explained, "The ministries will play a monitoring role, while the biggest part will happen at the district level. The key indicators are passed on to the districts. There the authorities have to be engaged to make sure that the national priorities are in line with the local priorities. The reactions of the districts are very good. They will be evaluated based on the key indicators. If they do not meet them, they need to explain the reasons. It is of course not a crime. But the national priorities have to be implemented at the local level" (interview B, May 2007).

As one Ministry of Agriculture consultant put it, “while targets at the national level were already considered to be ambitious, the targets at the local district level are put even higher than the national targets” in the framework of the agricultural strategy (interview G, May 2007). In the preliminary drafts of some district development plans, we found extremely detailed references to crop production targets, to the percentage of soil that should be terraced, to the percentage of households that should be living in imidugudu (projected to increase from 3% in 2007 to 30% in 2011). Such rigid targets seem to ignore what popular support there is (if any) for planning targets at the local level. An independent consultant explained, “We are going to loose a lot of time in things that will not improve the living conditions of the great mass of people. For example, the anti-erosive policies: the mayor of the district can reach that 90% of all soil is protected, but how long will this last? It asks a lot of maintenance, and quite often this is not possible” (interview H, July 2007).

A European donor representative stated, “at the level of the district, there is a great need for the reinforcement of the capacities, and not only in policy training, but even more importantly in reinforcing the level of ownership of policies, of making local authorities accountable towards the populations they represent, of enhancing participation. These governance principles should be clearly mentioned in the district development plans. At the level of participation, one should not only say to people what they have to do; the relation between authorities and population has to be a partnership that gives perspectives to the local” (interview T, May 2007).

The Rwandan government is incorporating civil society organisations in the implementation of its agricultural and land policies. However, this ‘participatory process’ often comes down, in practice, to simply using civil society organisations in a public awareness campaign of what has already been decided. In the eyes of the policy makers, the role of the civil society organisations is to ‘inform’ the population, while ignoring the capacity of these organisations to give a voice to the population’s feedback upon national targets and policies (this can be concluded from examples given by two civil society spokespersons in interview W, May 2007 and interview V, May 2007). A major challenge for civil society will be to play an interactive broker role between government and local populations, both from top to bottom as from the bottom up.<sup>[13]</sup>

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[13] As one of the civil society representatives stated, “The government is the ‘*maître d’oeuvre*’ but with a vision to re-inforce the capacity of the population. The civil society can play a role to help the population understand the policies and to learn from them that they can speak out. We have to help them understand that they can express themselves, it is not because the Major [referring to official authorities at the district level] says something that one should accept.” Later in the interview, the person gave an example of how this freedom of expression should look, “With the district development plans, the Major has to be accountable based on which objectives he has reached, both towards the population as towards the President of the Republic. It is there that the population has to learn that they can protest when the Major has not reached the targets. The population has to be a counterweight. But objecting should be done with arguments, if not, you have to keep silent. Without arguments, objecting may seem like one is against those in power as such.” As such, this person sees the role of civil society organisations as making the population a watchdog, to check whether the Majors have reached the objectives in the district development plans. At the same time, however, the civil society person did not mention the need for civil society to give a voice to the local population with regards to the contents of those plans.

### **3. CONCLUSION: POLITICAL ECONOMY DYNAMICS AND THE CHANCES FOR A GREEN REVOLUTION**

The Rwandan case explored in this paper illustrates that rural development is not a purely technical developmental issue. Policy choices fit within the larger societal context(s) and are strongly related to the position of élites and their relationship(s) with the peasantry. The current Rwandan élite is mostly Tutsi, urban-based and often born outside Rwanda; while the Rwandan peasantry is mostly Hutu, rural-based and born in the country. The physical, ethnic and mental gap between their worlds profoundly shapes the chances for successful rural development.

The élite believes in a modernisation of Rwandan society, either by a service-driven, knowledge-based economy, or by going for a rapid modernisation and 'professionalisation' of the agricultural sector. In any case, they strongly reject the current subsistence-based agricultural mode, in which the majority of the rural masses are trapped. This majority of (nearly) subsistence peasants are challenged with severe institutional constraints to adopt an active risk-embracing role in a modernisation and 'professionalisation' phase of the agricultural sector. They lack the means to manage the risks of adopting new techniques.

However, instead of analysing how rural policies can remove the constraints of small-scale peasants, the answer of the élite is to plead for larger farm units and consolidation of landholdings. These objectives may be achieved either by grouping farms in a type of collective ownership, either by transferring land into the hands of fewer people. In any case, the goal is to reduce the proportion of the population that depends upon agricultural activities. There is, on the other hand, no clear public vision of what alternatives will be open to those who leave agriculture hoping to enter the (non-agriculture) labour market to gain their income.

This is worrying given the sincere commitment of the Rwandan government to re-shape society with official policies, targets and performance contracts. Decentralisation has not, in fact, increased the voice of the rural poor in policy making. On the contrary, it has allowed the central level to extend its influence to the local level. Representatives of decentralised units (certainly the appointed non-elected authorities at the district, sector and cellule level) are seen as imposers and punishers with whom one cannot negotiate or to whom one cannot object. In such a context, target-based assessments to evaluate national policies are potentially dangerous monitoring and evaluation tools.

A crucial exercise lies in defining institutional access gates or barriers for divergent population groups; and in analysing how specific policies can enhance or remove those barriers. Such an approach requires that all types of peasants are involved in the policy-making process. At this stage however, there is a lack of participatory engagement by the population at all administrative levels. Further, the current structure of Rwandan political life does not seem to allow for the active involvement of peasants in the discussion of future policy choices.

Turning to the broader picture, the analysis and discussion of the Rwandan case can enrich the wider debate on how political economy dynamics shape the chances for a 'green revolution' in Sub-Saharan Africa. The World Development Report 2008 devotes a lot of attention to the potential of smallholders in an African 'green revolution'. It does however not go into

detail on the political economy process in which agricultural policy making is embedded. The report recognises that agricultural policy making results from a political bargaining process in which the interests of smallholders may be underrepresented to the benefit of urban concerns and the landed élite. As part of the answer, the report speaks of increased agricultural budgets, collective action mechanisms (e.g. producer organisations), and decentralisation which should reduce the physical distance between policy makers and the rural population. The WDR report does not consider, however, how the wider power game between peasants and elites is played within domestic circles. As a result, the document misses an opportunity to highlight to international development/aid donors the importance of analysing the political economy dynamics that predetermine the peasant-élite relationship.

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## ANNEX: LIST OF INTERVIEWED PERSONS

	Date	Affiliation	Description	*
A	June/2007	Minecofin	Involved in EDPRS – high rank	F
B	May/2007	Minecofin	Involved in EDPRS – high rank	E
C	June/2007	Minecofin	Involved in EDPRS	F
D	June/2007	Minecofin	Involved in EDPRS	F
E	June/2007	Minagri	High rank	E
F	July/2007	Minagri	High rank	F
G	May/2007	Minagri	Foreign consultant	
H	July/2007	Minagri	Local consultant	F
I	July/2007	Minitere	High rank	E
J	July/2007	Minitere	High rank	F
K	May/2007	Minitere	Foreign consultant	
L	July/2007	Minitere	Foreign consultant	
M	July/2007	Minitere	Local consultant	E
N	May/2007	Minaloc		F
O	May/2007	Minaloc		F
P	June/2007	Southern Prov. District		F
Q	May/2007	Southern Prov. District		F
R	July/2007	International donor		
S	May/2007	Bilateral donor (Eur)		
T	May/2007	Bilateral donor (Eur)		
U	May/2007	Bilateral donor (Eur)		
V	May/2007	CSO	Domain : Agriculture	F
W	May/2007	CSO	Domain : Agriculture	F
X	May/2007	CSO	Domain: Human rights	F
Y	May/2007	CSO	Domain: Human rights (foreign)	
Z	May/2007	CSO	Domain: Human rights	F

*Minecofin: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning*

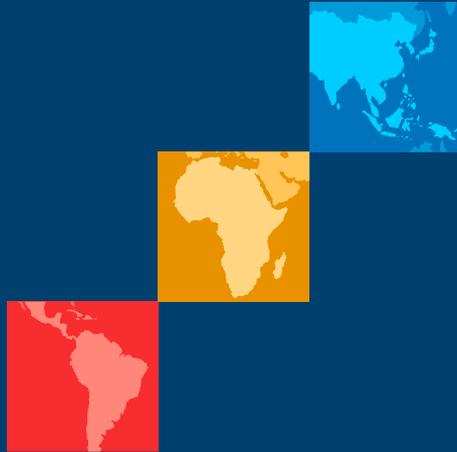
*Minagri: Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources*

*Minitere: Ministry of Land, Environment, Forests, Water and Mines*

*Minaloc: Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Social Affairs*

\* English or French as second language





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