MARSHLAND DEVELOPMENT IN RWANDA

AGRARIAN CHANGE, GENDER DISPARITIES AND STATE POWER

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ABSTRACT

Marshland Development in Rwanda: Agrarian Change, Gender Disparities and State Power

Rwanda is a remarkable country in many respects. Over the past decades, the country's reputation has changed: once best known for the Rwandan genocide, it is now a seemingly best-practice example of successful reconciliation and development politics. Despite a growing body of critical literature and increasing concerns regarding the government's authoritarian tendencies, Rwanda is largely considered a peaceful, well-organised, and safe place. It is internationally praised for its ambitious reforms and laws as well as for its continued economic growth, partly stimulated by the government's efforts to implement a "green revolution" in the rural countryside. Most outstanding, however, are the country's progressive gender politics: Rwanda has the worldwide highest number of female parliamentarians. Gender equality is enshrined in the constitution and several laws have been put in place to improve women's legal position.

While in the country's public discourse, all these achievements wonderfully intersect to portray a great story of success, the lived realities of rural smallholders presented in this dissertation convey a more nuanced image. The transformation into a "New Rwanda" has produced several frictions, not just between, roughly speaking, "the old" and "the new", but particularly within the different realms of reform. These frictions are analysed in this work by looking at Rwanda's marshland politics. The Rwandan marshlands account for about ten percent of the country's surface. According to the government, they are one of the last remaining unexploited sources of land, and hold great potential for Rwanda's post-genocide development. Over the past years, the marshlands have thus gradually been put under the state control, regulated and shaped by different policy measures and laws.

This dissertation explores the question of how rural Rwandans deal with this new situation in Rwanda's marshlands and how it has affected their livelihoods and more particularly the situation of female smallholders on the ground. Following a description of the socio-political history of Rwanda's marshlands, the analysis evolves around three central themes: **first,** Rwanda's new land laws and agrarian policies that aim to transform the marshlands into modern, large-scale and investor-friendly production zones for cash crops; **second,** the primarily structural reform that puts the use of marshlands under the control of so-called "marshland cooperatives"; and **third,** the measures that were taken in the marshland to push forward the country's gender-equality agenda.

This work combines historical analysis with oral history and empirical findings based on twelve months of in-depth fieldwork in rural Rwanda between 2014 and 2016. On a theoretical level, it combines contemporary debates from critical agrarian studies, feminist theory and the anthropology of law and governance. The offered case studies illustrate that the lives of rural smallholders do not smoothly align with the optimistic trends presented in most government and donor statistics. They rather point to the complex dynamics that emerge when high-modernist and post-colonial state-building is combined with a global, neoliberal agenda. They furthermore show that while some benefit from the government's current approach in the marshlands, others are excluded from the government's ambitious vision of development.

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I am greatly indebted to my Rwandan informants, most especially the cooperative members, but also the many people who warmly welcomed me and introduced me to the habits and secrets of their lives. They shared their knowledge, ideas and thoughts, and I want to express my sincere gratitude for their trust and patience with regard to the many questions they had to answer. In this regard I also want to thank my research assistants, who helped me to overcome language barriers and who provided valuable contextual knowledge as well as background information that was of immense importance for this work. I know that your tasks were stressful and demanding at times and I really appreciated your commitment and endurance! My appreciation also goes to Veronika and Aline, my diligent helpers who prepared and processed part of my research data.

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ACRONYMS

CICA	Agricultural Information and Communication Centre
CIP	Crop Intensification Program
COSAVE	Community-based savings groups
DG	Director General
EPPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GoR	Government of Rwanda
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MINIRENA	Ministry of Natural Resources
MINITERE	Ministry of Lands Environment, Forests, Water and Mines
NAEB	National Agricultural Export Development Board
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
OCIRU	Office des Cafés Indigènes du Ruanda-Urundi
PNUD	Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
PSTA	Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture
QWMDP	Quick Win Marshland Development Project
RAB	Rwanda Agriculture Board
RCA	Rwanda Cooperative Agency
REMA	Rwanda Environment Management Authority
RSSP	Rural Sector Support Program
RWF	Rwandan Franc
USD	US-Dollar

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I was sitting in a car owned by an international NGO working on food security in Rwanda. At short notice, I had been invited to visit one of their field sites: a 200ha large marshland in Rwanda's Southern Province. Over the past ten years, the NGO has helped to transform this marshland into a modern hub for rice production. Most of the construction work had been implemented by local "craft for cash" workers. Now, the agricultural production in the marshland was managed by two rice-farming cooperatives with a total of three thousand members. Some time ago, a third cooperative that was in charge of the water management in the marshland had been put in place.

At the first meeting with this NGO in its Kigali office, the project leader had informed me about the project's great success. In the past years the cooperative farmers had yielded a yearly revenue of 300 to 500 euros per plot, which was, as he detailed with a certain pride, far above the levels of production in other African countries. Most of the rice was produced for the market. "We don't mind if the farmers take home some of their harvest, but the government wants them to sell it all", the project leader had noted. Additionally, the NGO's marshland project was combined with supplementary programmes such as building schools, HIV sensitisation, and theatre plays on gender equality and domestic violence. "Everybody likes theatre, which is why it is such a good medium to discuss issues" the NGO's gender coordinator, a Rwandan woman had explained. She had briefed me about the NGO's gender approach: their programs would target women in the first place and encourage them to join the cooperative. "Often women tend to register their husbands, because he is the head of the household, but the cooperative makes sure that the official membership status is given to those who effectively work the land. In most instances, these are women". As the gender coordinator further noted, the good thing about targeting women was that the revenue was much safer with them than with men: "Men first think for themselves and often spend their salaries in the local bars. Woman take their money home because they keep in mind the needs in their families", she had put forward her argument about the necessity to promote women's financial independence.

The car had left the good tar-road and now jolted down a rough track. "We are almost there!" the project leader announced from behind the steering wheel, and pointed to a rice-processing mill. He

explained that the mill had been built to better exploit the value chain. Recently it had been put under the control of a local enterprise. Looking through the windscreen, the project leader examined the mill and voiced his concern about its current state.

We arrived at the lower floodgate of the marshland and got out of the car. There were hardly any farmers working in the fields, but some men were standing around the floodgate. They were engaged in a lively debate and the project leader joined them to find out the cause of their irritation. I overheard that there was a conflict between the water-management cooperative and the farming cooperatives. The water-management cooperative had increased the water fee. Farmers complained about the high cost and some shirked the payments by no longer attending the cooperative meetings, where the fees were collected. The project leader then introduced me to a Rwandan woman. I will call her Anne, which is not her true name. Anne had come do a “gender-impact monitoring” of a previously held gender training intervention with the farming cooperatives and invited me to attend the discussion. All enthusiastic about this opportunity, I agreed and followed her along the short path to the cooperative office. I was wondering what to expect from this evaluation, and whether the discussion was held in a mixed group or in separate groups for women and men. Yet, before even finishing my question, Anne interrupted me: “Of course it is a mixed group! There is gender!” she stressed. Her correction made me feel foolish. I nodded and entered the sparsely lit cooperative office behind her.

Most of the cooperative farmers had already taken a seat. After a welcome prayer and a subsequent introduction by the cooperative president, Anne started with her first questions, which mainly addressed the attendees’ understanding of terms such as gender, sex and gender equality. Like dutiful pupils the farmers came up with definitions that sounded very much like the memorised rules of thumb I had to recite in primary school. The entire situation seemed to me more like an oral examination than a discussion. This, however, changed in the second part of evaluation, which addressed the members’ personal perspectives about the gender training. People became more engaged in talking about how bad the relationship between women and men had been in former times and how the training had changed their family life for the better. Only one woman, whose husband was not a member of the cooperative, critically remarked that it would be better, for the next time, to include all husbands, not only the ones who were registered in the cooperative. The other women nodded their agreement. Then the meeting was over, and while I was left with a rather sceptical impression about this “evaluation”, Anne looked quite pleased about its outcome and promised to send me her report. (FN_2014-04-21 and FN_2014-05-08)[1].

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1 For an explanation of these references, please see the detailed explanation in Appendix 1, page 256.

This dissertation takes up three important themes in Rwanda's post-genocide development discourse: first, the **agrarian intensification in the country's marshlands,** which is part of a state-led green revolution that targets large-scale and market-oriented (export) production. Second, the **marshland cooperatives,** which were set in place to put the agrarian intensification into practice and which furthermore are intended to create a stronger sense of unity within the divided population. And third, the government's strong commitment to **gender equality**, which has found expression in several new political measures and legal regulations. How these three themes are related to each other might not be obvious at first glance. This interrelation is one of the themes this work elaborates, from different perspectives. The previously described excursion might have prompted some initial ideas.

Marshlands, cooperatives and gender equality: These three themes take an important position in the present-day debates on agrarian development and food production, not only in Rwanda, but on a more global scale. Non of them is a very new topic, at least with regard to the African continent.[2] Notwithstanding this fact, all of them have substantially influenced the debates and currently reappear in a new light, which makes them an ever more interesting subject of research: marshlands are hyped as future zones for food production and, in the last few years, have moved more strongly than ever into the focus of social science literature (Woodhouse 2000; Haller 2002; Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013b).[3] As Wood et al. (2013:2ff) emphasise, they "(…) have a critical role to play in supporting and developing people's livelihoods, reducing poverty, improving food security and, in the wider context, contributing towards sustainable development". Cooperatives are currently being rediscovered by neoclassical economists as a collective action strategy to empower rural smallholders and to integrate them into a global market (Develtere et al. 2008; Wanyama, Develtere, and Pollet 2009). Likewise, "gender and development" approaches today find themselves on top of the agenda of leading development institutions, most notably the World Bank (King and Mason 2001; World Bank 2011).

In that sense, this work contributes to three classical topics of renewed relevance in the current discourse on agrarian development in Africa. It unites these three themes, as it asks how Rwanda's agrarian politics in the marshlands impact upon the (re)configurations of gender and power relations

2 The marshlands entered these debates in the early 1970s with the Ramsar convention on wetlands; cooperatives were already popular under the high-modernist development approaches after colonial independence, and gender-related issues have shaped development planning at the latest since 1970, when Boserup's groundbreaking "Women's Role in Economic Development" shed light on the situation of women as rural producers.

3 A quick online search for works related to "wetland OR marshland" in *The Journal of Peasant Studies* delivered 59 results. Out of these, seven results were published between the late 1980s and 1999, while the remaining 52 results were published in 2000 or later. The Journal of Peasant Studies has existed since 1973 and is among the most influential journals in the discipline of Anthropology and, as Akram-Lodhi argues, of great importance to the field of critical agrarian studies (Akram-Lodhi 2018).

in rural everyday life. In this question, the marshland cooperatives act as the central hub, where the government's expectations meet with the farmers' lived realities on the ground.

1.1. Rwanda: A Country with Ambitions and Ambiguities

Rwanda is a country undergoing rapid change. Over the past two and a half decades, Rwanda has been recovering from a war and social breakdown as a consequence of the 1994 genocide. Even though the legacy of this conflict is still visible in many aspects of Rwandan everyday life, the government of Rwanda and its most prominent figure – the President, Paul Kagame – have earned a lot of international recognition and respect for leading the country out of post-war destruction and fostering peace and national unity. The traumatic images of the killings that went around the world 25 years ago have given way to a rather positive image of a country that has worked hard to overcome its dark history.

Newspaper reports on Rwanda often praise the government's "home-grown solutions": the *gacaca* courts that have dealt with the large number of genocide trials, or the *umuganda* labour day as a best-practice example of self-help at the community level. The streets of Kigali, Rwanda's capital city, are said to be the cleanest in Africa, and the ban of plastic bags is presented as an innovative approach to protect the country's environment (ManagementToday 2014; Berliner Zeitung 2017; The New York Times 2017; Simone Schlindwein 2018; Goebel 2019; Munaita 2019). Even though some of these articles comment quite critically on Kagame's "firm hand", which, since the constitution was amended to allow for his re-election in 2017, is now referred to more and more frequently as authoritarian, the general verdict is that Rwanda is different from other African, authoritarian countries and that it is a best-practice example of how committed development can work. Official government and donor statistics confirm this positive trend: production rates and export rates are on the rise, while poverty rates have been declining.[4] Last but not least, Rwanda has gained international recognition because of its progressive gender politics, which are regarded as a centre piece of the county's success. In the past years, the Global Gender Gap Report presented by the World Economic Forum has repeatedly ranked Rwanda within the top ten countries with the lowest gender gap (Schwab et al. 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017; World Economic Forum 2018).

While Rwanda is apparently doing well in such statistical rankings, critical voices have come to question to what extent these optimistic trends truly reflect the lived realities of the Rwandan population on the ground (Ansoms et al. 2017, 2018; Desiere, Staelens, and D'Haese 2016). There have been calls for more in-depth, qualitative and long-term research that may offer a more nuanced pic-

4 These statistics and the positive trend they declare, has been scrutinised by different authors (Desiere, Staelens, and D'Haese 2016; Ansoms et al. 2017, 2018). Interesting in this context are the ongoing discussions under http://roape.net/tag/national-institute-of-statistics-of-rwanda/ [07-10-2019]. A more general critique of development statistics in Africa has been presented by Jerven (2013).

ture of how the prosperous development in numbers takes effect in Rwandan everyday life, not only in the elitist, urban centres, but also in the countryside where most of the population lives.

With this work, I offer my insights into how rural Rwandans deal with the state-led agrarian transformation in the marshlands. I look at the gender-specific outcomes of this process of agrarian change and I pursue the question of how the government's new gender legislations have shaped the agrarian politics in the marshlands. My insights are based on twelve months of intensive research over a period of about two years that, for the most part, took place in a rural setting. The lived realities I observed during these months display a rather contradictory image of Rwanda's current success. They confirm certain achievements, but equally reveal the downsides of the government's ambitious development agenda.

An anthropological case study on modern-day Rwanda that deals with agrarian change in the marshlands with a focus of gender is a novelty.[5] Most of the contemporary anthropological monographs on Rwanda pay relatively little attention to agrarian issues. Rather, they have studied the legacy of the genocide: they have looked into processes of governance and unity-making (Purdeková 2015), and they have reflected upon state authority and civic education (Sundberg 2016) as well as upon the complex subject of ethnicity in the new Rwanda (Thomson 2013, 2018; Eramian 2018). Other works were concerned with "the politics of remembrance" (Brandstetter 2010), or the state's discursive practices when it comes to reconciliation and forgiveness (Nsabimana 2017). They have analysed the production of Rwandese identity in the public and media discourse (Grant 2017), or have investigated women's new role and gender equality in post-genocide Rwanda (Burnet 2008, 2011, 2019). Agrarian change and land issues are secondary in these works even though, as I show, the land question is closely intertwined with the genocide and the current political situation in Rwanda.

The few works by anthropologists that deal more profoundly with agrarian and land issues in post-genocide Rwanda are Pottier's (2002) book "Re-imagining Rwanda" and his later critical reflection on the new land law (Pottier 2006), as well as a more recent ethnography presented by Leegwater (2015) that investigates resettlement, land registration and land-sharing arrangements in Rwanda, yet pays little attention to the marshlands. There exists, however, a growing body of literature from related fields such as development studies, political science and geography that discusses the ongoing transformation and agrarian intensification in Rwanda's marshlands (Ansoms and Murison 2012; Ansoms, Wagemakers, et al. 2014, 2014, Nabahungu and Visser 2011, 2013; Nyenyezi Bisoka, Giraud, and Ansoms 2020; Nyenyezi Bisoka and Ansoms 2020). Furthermore, there are

5 I know of only one anthropological work that studied Rwandan marshlands in more detail. This is Jefremovas' (2002) work on the brick-making industry. Her research took place in the 1980s.

several critical contributions that deal, more generally, with social inequalities and environmental governance in Rwanda, which have helped me to contextualise the happenings in the Rwandan marshlands (Huggins 2017; Dawson 2018; N. Clay 2018; Cioffo, Ansoms, and Murison 2016).

1.2. Themes: Marshlands, Cooperatives and Gender Equality in Rwanda

Rwanda's society is largely dependent on agriculture. In 2016, the agricultural sector represented one-third of the GDP and rendered employment for about 70% of the country's working population (NISR 2016c, 2016b). Women here take a more central position than men. Almost 80% of Rwanda's female population is involved in agriculture, mostly subsistence agriculture, as compared to the much lower rate of men engaged in the agricultural production, which lies at about 55% (Gender Monitoring Office 2017, 10). The country's agrarian production primarily, yet not exclusively, serves subsistence needs. This, however, is about to change. Following the "Vision 2020", one of the country's leading policy documents, subsistence farming shall be replaced by "(…) a fully monetized, commercial agricultural sector by 2020" (GoR 2000, 17). Today, in 2019, Rwanda is still far from having reached this goal,[6] yet the past decades have seen a series of policies and reforms that have led to a fundamental reorganisation of the country's rural space. The consequences of this radical change on the ground, especially with regard to gender relations, are of high relevance for this work.

Within the government's vision of a modern and market-oriented agrarian production, the Rwandan marshlands take a central position. **Marshlands**,[7] also known as "swamps", "wetlands" or, in the Kinyarwanda language, *ibishanga* account for approximately 10.6% of the country's territory (REMA 2009, 67). Given the country's hilly topography, most of the marshlands can be classified as valley-bottom swamp-lands, as they are typically found in the mountainous areas of "high Africa" (Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013b, 4). According to the Ministry of Lands marshlands are "(…) Rwanda's only significant unexploited land resource" (GoR 2004, 94 quoted after Potter 2006, p. 515). This, however, does not mean that Rwanda's marshlands are completely unused. Rwanda is a densely populated country and arable land is limited. More than half of the country's marshlands are under agricultural exploitation (REMA 2009, 28). For many Rwandans they serve as an important source of food and money, most especially during the long dry season, when the arid

6 The government's Labour Force Survey Trends from 2018 states that in February 2018 still about a quarter of the working population was "exclusively involved in subsistence agriculture" (NISR 2018, ix)

7 In this work I primarily employ the term "marshland" because it is mainly used in the Rwandan agriculture discourse (see also chapter 3.4). However, in the scientific literature the term "wetland" might be even more common, most especially in reference to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Examples are Zimmerer's (1991) work *Wetland Production and Smallholder Persistence*, Carney's (1993) article *Converting the Wetlands, Engendering the Environment*, the book *African Enclosures?: The Social Dynamics of Wetlands in Dryland* edited by Woodhouse et al. (2000), Haller's (2002) article *Common Property Resource Management, Institutional Change and Conflicts in African Floodplain Wetlands*, the book *Wetland management and sustainable livelihoods in Africa* edited by Wood et al. (2013b).

hillsides cannot be cultivated. Meschy (1989, 131) writes: "From an agricultural perspective the value [of the valley-bottom lands] lies in the complementarity of these irrigated fields as opposed to the hillside fields which are reserved for rain fed agriculture".[8] The marshlands thus, must be understood as an integral part of the Rwandan farming system, an ensemble that is finely tuned to the country's agro-ecological conditions. Being an anthropologist, I further understand marshlands beyond their mere agricultural value as social spaces. These social spaces are embedded within a wider system of local norms, power relations and social structures.

The Rwandan marshlands are considered government lands. As Adams, Berkoff and Daley (2006, 12) note, Rwanda was the first East African country to declare wetlands state property and putt them under governmental control. This partly explains why over the past decades marshlands have been gradually turned into pilot areas for the government's agrarian vision. Furthermore, their year-round water availability as well as their mostly flat and sometimes quite large surface areas provide good conditions for mechanised and large-scale production.

According to the new Land Law (GoR 2005, article 29), people can not hold titles to marshlands. Instead, use-rights are given to private investors or community-based marshland **cooperatives**. This cooperative setup stands in contrast to the government's approach on the hillside fields, which can be held under a private land title. However, as I will show (see chapter 5), the situation of these marshland cooperatives is highly contradictory: on the one hand, the government regards these cooperatives as an autonomous movement, founded on internationally recognised cooperative values and principles. The new cooperative policy portrays cooperatives as "(…) good mechanisms for pooling the people's meagre resources with a view to providing to them the advantages of the economies of scale" (GoR 2006, 1). This economic understanding of cooperatives was combined with a reconciliatory mission that understands cooperatives as "(...) a tool for combating social exclusion and promoting peace and reconciliation" (GoR 2006, 2). On the other hand, empirical evidence shows that in several cases, agricultural cooperatives (and not only those in the marshlands) were co-opted by state programs and local authorities who follow their own interests rather than serving for the benefit of local farmers (Huggins 2017; Ansoms and Murison 2012). Although voluntary membership is among the core principles of a cooperative, in the state-owned marshlands, farmers were more or less compelled to join the new cooperatives in order to maintain the use-rights for their plots. The introductory story is also a good example of an instance where the government interferes with the cooperative affairs, as it decides that farmers must sell the harvest and not consume it. This work will showcase more stories that call the effective autonomy of marshland cooperatives into question. The case studies provided in this work suggest on the contrary that

8 "(…) sa valeur essentielle du point de vue agricole réside dans la rélation de complémentarité qui caractérise ses champs irrigués, par rapport aux champs des collines, consacrés aux cultures pluviales" [own translation].

cooperatives serve as the most convenient tools for the government to implement its new agrarian politics.

But it is not only the new agrarian vision that finds its way to the rural areas through marshland cooperatives. Cooperatives play an equally important role in the government's **gender politics**. The Rwandan state's commitment to gender equality is commonly linked to the immediate post-war and post-genocide situation, when approximately 70% of the households were headed by women (MINAGRI 2010, 27). As new household heads, they were in charge of a lot of duties that "traditionally"[9] had been reserved for men (Burnet 2008, 383). To deal with the heavy workload and the necessity of rebuilding a country, women joined forces. This gave rise to a strong and active women's movement. However, as Burnet (2011, 312) remarks, the situation of these early "feminists" should not be idealised, as many women suffered under their increased burden.

Only five years after the genocide, the government acknowledged women's demand for a secure position concerning land titles in the 1999 succession law. Whereas in former times, women acquired land-use and usufruct rights by marriage or through their fathers, the new law grants them the right to inherit land in the same way as male heirs (Daley, Dore-Weeks, and Umuhoza 2010, 134). Gender equality has also been enshrined in Rwanda's new constitution, which comes with a 30% quota for women in decision-making organs. And also the new Organic Land Law from 2005, which was replaced by a more recent version in 2013, prohibits "[a]ll forms of discrimination, such as that based on sex or origin, in relation to access to land and the enjoyment of real rights" (GoR 2013, article 4). These new legal framework conditions give Rwandan women a relatively privileged position compared to women in other African countries. Nevertheless, there are some severe limitations to these laws, which have been extensively debated by experts and development practitioners (Pottier 2006; Englert and Daley 2008a; Ansoms and Holvoet 2008; Daley, Dore-Weeks, and Umuhoza 2010; Burnet 2011; Bayisenge 2015, 2018).[10] What is, however, neglected in these debates is Rwandan women's current situation in the state-owned marshlands, where most of these legal regulations are not effective. In order to close this gap, the present dissertation takes a close look at how the Rwandan state pursues its vision of gender equality in the marshlands.

9 As the collection of Rwandan biographies by Codere (1963) shows, these "traditional" gender role patterns varied strongly among households of different social standings.

10 The major criticism concerns the fact that only legally registered marriages are considered in this law, which excludes polygamous relationships or couples married "only" by customary law. Also, "illegitimate" children from such unions are not considered. Furthermore, the law text sometimes lacks clarity, which has caused confusion among those who implement the new laws. In some cases social pressures have urged women to refrain from using their rightful land to avoid family conflicts. For more detail and literature regarding this issue see (Treidl 2018, 82).

1.3. Two Approaches and Several Questions

My initial approach was to understand how the government's plans for intensification and commercialisation of marshland agriculture had uprooted something like a "traditional" family farming system and thereby altered women's opportunities to access and benefit from these lands. More generally speaking, how had the recent transformations (the implementation of marshland cooperatives, the shift from small-scale to large-scale and market oriented production, the introduction of new see varieties) impacted upon the local configuration of power and gender in rural everyday lives? Since this question involves a diachronic perspective, I first had to find out more about how the Rwandan marshlands were used in former times. Most important here was to look at how access to, use of and control over the marshland and its resources has been subject to change. This work thus takes an approach inspired by political economy. It traces back the history of Rwandan marshlands and shows how this particular history relates to the more general history of social and political change in Rwanda. Furthermore, it reflects on my conversations with local farmers, women as well as men, about how they perceive the environmental transformation of their local marshland and how they experience the government's more recent agrarian politics. And while the government's new marshland regulations and their effects on the ground emerge as the dominant theme in this work, I also look at farmers' agency, at the different strategies they have developed to access the marshlands and to manoeuvre in between the state's expectations and their personal realities. Gender here takes an important role, especially if we follow a feminist approach that understands the cooperatives, the families, households and the markets, where the harvest is to be sold, not as neutral but as "gendered" institutions. Doing so raises several more specific questions: what are the constraints women face in particular with regard to the new production setup? What roles do they play in the new marshland cooperatives? To what extent are (gendered) power relations reflected in the internal hierarchies and structures of such cooperatives? How do the government's new crop obligations and its impetus towards large-scale production and monoculture interfere with gender-specific crop preferences and land-use patterns? Are there crops or labour tasks that "traditionally" are attributed to a certain gender, and how do such perceptions still shape the labour division in the marshlands today? How does the state-propagated integration of local marshland cultivation into a global market through state-facilitated cash cropping schemes and international farm land investments impact upon rural lives? Does participation in such schemes and the access to wage labour contracts in these international firms constitute an equal opportunity for both women and men? As I show, and already have indicated elsewhere (Treidl 2018), the category of gender here comes into effect in combination with other social divisions such as age, marital status, household composition, education and social status.

In the process of doing the research, I came to realise that the new position of Rwandan women in the marshlands could not be fully understood without taking into account the country's wider gender policy. This discovery gave rise to a second approach in which I switched my perspective: instead of looking at how state-led agrarian change had altered gender relations in rural Rwanda, I now sought to understand how the government's legal measures and gender policies had taken effect on the ground, most particularly in the state-owned marshlands. Once again, the marshland cooperatives here take a central position, for instance when government or international development institutions actively encourage women to join cooperatives, or when gender quotas make sure that women partake in the cooperative's decision-making. But who are the women that follow such calls and join cooperatives? Who are the ones that benefit from the government's quota policy? Furthermore, marshland cooperatives are approached for gender workshops or theatre plays that spread NGOs' and the government's vision of gender equality into the rural areas. Such workshops and theatres can be understood as political technologies that serve not only to inform the rural population about the new gender legislation but also to convey a particular image of gender equality in a new Rwanda. By demonstrating how women's entrepreneurial spirit and financial autonomy may impact positively on a family's living standard, they create a very clear idea of what an emancipated Rwandan woman looks like, and of how a modern Rwandan man has to define his masculinity. But how is this new vision of gender equality taken up by the cooperative members themselves? Has women's more powerful position inside the marshland cooperatives also changed gender norms and labour relations beyond the marshland context? What about women's empowerment and agency in other, less public and less visible domains of production and reproduction (e.g. housework and care work)?

We may thus speak of a double relatedness between gender and agrarian change in the Rwandan marshlands. The cooperative here acts as the institution where these two approaches meet, and not necessarily in a harmonious way. As I show in the coming chapters, there emerge several conflicts, for instance when the state's vision of agrarian intensification excludes poor women and thereby undermines the government's efforts in terms of gender equality, or when the basic principles of a cooperative are corrupted by the government's own development agenda. These examples highlight the role of state power in Rwanda. The government's rather authoritarian top-down approach is a central part of all these conflicts. State power is a meta-theme that runs through this thesis from the very first chapter to the very last. The reason why this important insight comes so late in the introduction is because it took me a while to see this point. The thesis therefore juggles with three theoretical frameworks: critical agrarian studies, feminist theory, and legal anthropology concepts that focus on the issue of governance.

1.4. Theoretical Inspirations: Agrarian Change, Gender and Governance

According to Eric Wolf, "(…) [a]nthropology was once defined as a discipline that tried to find good reasons for absurd behaviour" (Wolf 2001, 50). Weird moments, irritating replies, contradictory accounts as well as explanations that went beyond my own logic were common experiences of such "absurd behaviour", in the broad sense, that I encountered during my twelve months of fieldwork in Rwanda. Theory can help, at times, to make sense of these situations despite their quirky character. According to Alan Bernard, theory is "(...) any discourse, perspective or statement which leads to some conclusion about the world. Anthropological theory is centrally concerned with making sense of ethnography and with generalizations about culture or society" (Barnard 2003, 212). Thus, theory should support analysis. It should help us to better understand what we perceived and experienced during our research and it can help us to conceptualise our observations at a more general level. And while theoretically theory should help us, the truth is that it not always helpful. Several of my PhD colleagues struggled to find the one perfect theory to use in their dissertations; others, like me, became entangled in the multitude of interesting concepts and approaches so that eventually theory was no longer a wise friend but a hungry monster that ate their data and they no longer knew what they had. Thus, my own experience is that working with theory has a lot to do with taming this "hungry monster". I am not good at this, but I am still learning.

This work now brings together theoretical debates from three main strands: **First,** to make better sense of the radical changes that have swept over the Rwandan countryside and the marshlands in particular, this thesis heavily relies on the contributions in the field of critical agrarian studies. **Second,** it employs feminist theory to critically investigate the effects of these radical changes with regard to gender relations, inequalities and the reconfiguration of normative gender-role patterns. And **third**, this work makes use of legal anthropological concepts to understand agrarian change as well as gender politics within the larger context of state sovereignty and power in Rwanda's post-war development.

1.4.1 Critical Agrarian Studies

Critical agrarian studies have emerged from the field of peasant studies, which became a distinct field of analysis in the 1960s and 70s. In a nutshell, peasant studies centred around the agrarian question and the fate of the peasantry at the entry into the capitalist mode of production. Anthropologists such as the so-called "gut marxists"[11] as well as the French neo-marxists have extensively

11 Firth (2004, 43) introduced the casual distinction between the "gut marxists" and the "cerebral marxists" in the early 1970s. The first category included the American branch of Marxist anthropology, represented by authors such as Wolf, Mintz or Leacock, who had adopted a very historical approach of analysis. These and later works became known under the label of "political economy". The second category referred to the French Marxists, whose works were influenced by Structuralism. A good overview of the development of political economy in Anthropology up to the late 1980s is provided by Roseberry (1988).

contributed to these debates by providing a "(…) finely grained, intimately detailed ethnographic analysis" (Akram-Lodhi 2018). Many of them saw themselves as working in the tradition of political economy. In this work, I have drawn from such historically inclined works that tried "(…) to understand the formation of anthropological subjects ('real people doing real things') at the *intersection* of local interactions and relationships and the larger processes of state and empire making" (Roseberry 1988, 163). Eric Wolf, one of the most prominent representatives of this theoretical track argues that

> (…) older anthropology had little to say, however, about the major forces driving the interaction of cultures since 1492 – the forces propelling Europe into commercial expansion and industrial capitalism. Yet the cultural connections that these anthropologists sought to delineate can be rendered intelligible only when they are set in their political and economic context. The insights of anthropology therefore have to be rethought in the light of a new, historically oriented political economy (Wolf 1997, xv).

Following Wolf's call for a "historically oriented political economy", this work investigates the socio-political history of Rwandan marshlands. The Rwandan marshlands provide a highly suitable setting to unfold such an analysis: as I will show, they have long been in the focus of central power politics, and to date the state-owned marshlands continue to be the places where rural lives and (gendered) identities ultimately reconfigure themselves amidst national visions of development and global power interest.[12] This work sketches how marshlands have become spaces of not just local but also national and global interest. Especially the more historical chapters in the beginning of this work trace back processes of enclosure, and changing systems of land tenure and land use, and locate these shifts within a larger political and economic context. The current revival of the cooperative approach under the banner of community-based resource management too will be discussed as part of the new wave of land-tenure reforms in Africa.[13]

12 In my work such intersections appear, for instance, when the Rwandan government's quota politics, which is informed by a global discourse on gender equality, changes the working relations between women and men, who, as a result, employ their own, situational interpretation of gender equality (see chapters 6 and 7), or when an international and state-supported investment project fails and provokes local resistance instead of the promised rural development (chapter 8).

13 Land reforms and processes of enclosure are closely related. In the African context three major historical waves of land-tenure formalisation can be discerned: **First**, the colonial era, where the different colonial regimes introduced statutory land laws that usually followed a very European understanding of land matters. **Second**, the land reforms during the early stage of colonial liberation that tried to redistribute land in the context of state-led agrarian development. As with earlier, colonial approaches, they "(…) were based on the premise that customary systems did not provide the necessary security to ensure agricultural investment and productive use of land" (Peters 2009, 1318). These two periods of land reform went down in history as the "golden age of land reform" (Bernstein 2006, 452; Razavi 2009, 211). With the upcoming crisis of such kinds of state-led development concepts in the late 1970s, the land question lost its prominence, temporarily at least. Since the new millennium, a **third** wave of land tenure reform has been observed (Nyamu-Musembi 2008; Peters 2009). One of the most prominent figures in this context is the economist Hernando the Soto, who has propagated the new land formalisation as a pro-poor strategy to "unlock" the "dead capital" of poor farmers' land held on informal titles (Soto 2001). Rwanda's new land reform and land titling programme, as well as the cooperative approach in the marshlands, can be understood as constituting this third wave of land reforms. And while many of these new land laws acknowledge earlier critique, they continue to tread the same old pathways as earlier approaches (Nyamu-Musembi 2008). Some conditions are changed, but not the general prospect of a neoliberal and market-friendly formalisation approach. As Peters argues, this results in a highly contradictory and ambiguous character of many of the new laws (Peters 2009, 1319).

However, there is a reason why the debates that once were held in the field of "peasant studies" are today carried forward under the label "critical agrarian studies". This shift can be explained on the one hand by the disciplinary development that Anthropology and related disciplines have undergone over the past decades, and on the other hand by the fact that the historical context of these debates has changed. Modern-day dynamics, such as the crisis of neo-liberalism, the global land rush, climate change and environmental challenges, the aggravation of the food crisis, the new dimension of migratory movements, and, last but not least, the upheavals of world politics over the past half-century, make it increasingly difficult to apply the classical peasant-studies frameworks to current processes of agrarian change (Borras 2009; Akram-Lodhi 2018). Akram-Lodhi nicely summarises the core differences between the two approaches:

> To put it simply, but not simplistically: in peasant studies agrarian political economy framed the central research questions, quantitative data provided the "what", and ethnography provided the "why". Cumulatively, powerful explanations of social change in rural societies around the world were established in the peasant studies literature.
> (…)
> However, critical agrarian studies has a much broader approach to agrarian questions, reflective of its more open and pluralist lines of enquiry. Its foundation, it appears to me, is to base its theory and its empirics, in some way, within varieties of structure versus agency (Akram-Lodhi 2018).

At the end of this quote, Akram-Lodhi refers to the **"agency problem"** (see also Roseberry 1988, 171). The agency problem or critique has, over the past few decades, run like a red line through the wider social science debates. It is found in Anthropology's crisis of representation as well as in the feminist critique of victimisation and has turned upside down the concept of power which, in the postmodern age, is no longer "situated" and repressive but relational and productive.[14] Also, this work has not got around the squabble between structure and agency. In Rwanda, where the penetrating forces of state power are so overwhelmingly dominant, the more subtle aspects of agency easily get lost within structural determinism. This becomes most explicit in the later chapters of this work, where I discuss local farmers' perspectives and strategies against the backdrop of global interests and the state's politics in the marshlands.

The agency issue was only one fundamental point of critique of the earlier works on the political economy of the peasantry. The **peasant concept** itself gradually eroded under the severe criticism of later works: too rigid to be used within a globalised world; too much glorification and "mystification" (Shanin 1982, 428), way too male-biased to serve as a useful category in describing modern-day processes of agrarian production in times of the "feminisation of agriculture" (White 1986; Deere 1995), to name just a few examples. It thus comes as no surprise that in this work I do not

14 According to Foucault, power is something that unfolds in the relationship between subjects and therefore cannot be "possessed". It is "productive" in the sense that it "makes individuals subjects" (Foucault 1983, 212).

adhere to Eric Wolf's distinction between a peasant and a farmer.[15] This distinction makes little sense in the Rwandan context where global and state policies interfere with local livelihoods in such a way that the demarcation line between market- and subsistence-oriented production gets increasingly blurred and nowadays is often found even within households. Most of the people, farmers or peasants, who contributed to this work refer to themselves as *abahinzi* – cultivators – who spend most of the time of their days in agricultural production or processing, who eat the crops they have harvested from their fields as well as selling them, and who own small pieces of land that are not always sufficient to sustain them without other sources of income. This description comes close to what Netting defines as smallholders:

> (…) smallholders are rural cultivators practicing intensive, permanent, diversified agriculture on relatively small farms in areas of dense population. The family household is the major corporate social unit for mobilizing agricultural labor, managing productive resources and reorganizing consumption. The household produces a significant part of its own subsistence, and it generally participates in the market, where it sells some agricultural goods as well as carrying on cottage industry or other off-farm employment (Netting 1993, 2).

However, even within this smallholder category, in Rwanda there are many differences in terms of available land, family size and access to agricultural labour force, the extent to which off-farm employment is considered, the amount of harvest that is sold and the kind of markets that are targeted. All this is shaped by the given circumstances of life, current opportunities of institutional "support" (government programs, investment projects, NGOs) and sequences of better or worse seasons. I therefore understand smallholders not as a fixed and homogeneous category but rather as something that must be understood situationally and relationally within a given context. In doing so, I acknowledge Cousins' critique that considering smallholders as homogeneous, as regularly happens in the political discourse, "(…) obscure[s] inequalities and significant class-based differences within the large population of households engaged in agricultural production on a relatively small scale" (Cousins 2010, 3).

While Cousins speaks of the importance of addressing "class-based differences", it is nowadays widely acknowledged among the representatives of agrarian change studies that social differentiation, which has been so eagerly researched, does not only run along class lines, but must also be understood at the intersection with other social divisions, notably ethnicity, caste, religion and gender (Bernstein 2006, 453; Razavi 2009; Borras et al. 2011, 212; Moorsom et al. 2020, 218). I would now like to draw attention to the issue of gender and to the question of how feminist theory has informed my dissertation.

15 According to Wolf a peasant's core interest is in running "a household, not a business concern", whereas the term *farmer* refers to someone with a mainly entrepreneurial interest who produces for the market (Wolf 1966, 2).

1.4.2 Feminist Theory

"If neoclassical economists are guilty of distorting gender relations, then political economists of agrarian change must be faulted for ignoring it", states Shahra Razavi (2009, 198) in an article titled "Engendering the Political Economy of Agrarian Change". Her criticism about the male bias in scientific theory is far from new. It stretches back to the rise of second-wave feminism in the early 1970s, when the so-called women's question and with it the supposedly female domestic sphere moved more strongly into the focus of scientific debate. Over the past decades, an extensive body of feminist literature has emerged from this critique, whereby "feminist" actually unites multiple debates that involve different disciplines and also quite different ideological positions.[16]

With regard to gender relations in the development context, one of the most groundbreaking publications probably was Boserup's (1970) "Woman's role in Economic Development". It was one of the first publications that raised international awareness about gendered dynamics of development in what by then was still commonly called the "Third World". New about Boserup's analysis was that she devoted particular attention to women's productive roles at the household level. In line with other feminist scholars, Boserup rejected the clear-cut division between **productive and reproductive work.** The former being paid wage labour that contributed directly to the market economy whereas the latter was the "invisible" work done by many women in their homes or as female subsistence farmers. These two spheres of production, she argued, could not be understood independently of each another.

Boserup's critique was enthusiastically taken up by many feminist scholars and development practitioners. It informed the United Nations Decade for Women from 1976 to 1986 and led to a rethinking of development politics (Rodgers 2010). Part of this rethinking was the fundamental critique of the so-called **"unitary peasant household"**. While formerly, the unitary peasant household had been considered as a harmonious unit, typically run by a male household head who seemingly represented the interests of all household members, feminist scholars began to challenge this idealised image by pointing to gender-related inequalities and discrepancies inside the household sphere (Benería and Sen 1981; White 1986; Razavi 2009; Li 1998; Doss, Summerfield, and Tsikata 2014).

16 Some of these ideological differences reflect the more general development within anthropological theory that were also encouraged by feminist anthropologists and that came to be known as the discipline's "postmodern turn". Gayle Rubin, for instance, remarks in an interview conducted by Judith Butler that: "(...) there is an immense Marxist legacy within feminism, and feminist thought is greatly indebted to Marxism. In a sense, Marxism enabled people to pose a whole set of questions that Marxism could not satisfactorily answer (Rubin and Butler 1994, 63). Gayle Rubin here points to the limitations of the classical Marxist approaches. Many feminist anthropologists therefore welcomed the new postmodern tools and perspectives in understanding gender relations. Others again criticised postmodern theory for rejecting political economy and neglecting the materialist basis of gender inequalities. In her article "What a Difference Political Economy Makes: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era", Di Leonardo makes a strong point in favour of political economy within feminist analysis, as she argues: "Certainly economies are culturally constructed, but so are cultures economically channelled" (Di Leonardo 1993, 78).

Furthermore, they pointed out that "the peasant" targeted by development politics or discussed by scholars in the field of peasant studies was commonly seen as a male figure; or, as White puts it pointedly: "The field of peasant studies generally implicitly equates 'the peasant' with male household heads, which actually excludes the majority of the peasant population from the socio-economic analysis" (White 1986, 60).

It is one of the achievements of the feminist literature in the 1970s and early 1980s that it unmasked the male bias that had neglected and disadvantaged women in the context of earlier land reforms, agrarian policies and development projects (Verma 2014, 67; Peters 1997; Englert and Daley 2008b) and developed alternative concepts. Doss and others, for example, began to distinguish between five facets of land rights: the right to 1) access, 2) manage, and 3) sell land, as well as the right to 4) withdraw goods from the land, and finally the right to 5) exclude someone from using the land (Doss, Summerfield, and Tsikata 2014, 10–14). This much more nuanced understanding of "land rights" is helpful also when it comes to the Rwandan marshlands that are "owned" by the state, managed by cooperatives and used/cultivated by many women in Rwanda.

Aside from spurring such important revisions and insights, Boserup's findings about women's important contribution to a country's development also gave rise to what critics came to call the **"gender efficiency approach"** (Razavi and Miller 1995). The gender efficiency approach became a very dominant political argument within the Women in Development (WID) discourse, and, as I show in chapter 6, it is also a quite popular argument in the Rwandan debate on gender equality. It basically argues that women must be granted rights and access to capital and resources in order to make sure that their productive forces are not "lost" for the economic development of their nations. Razavi and Miller (1995, 6), however, critically note that such arguments are very simplistic and reduce gender equity to a neo-classical cost-benefit calculation. As Razavi and Miller argue, "(…) the emphasis on women's productivity ignores the impact of a broad range of social divisions and social relations that constrain women's economic choices and opportunities".

This criticism about the neoclassical feminist reception is in line also with Marxist-inspired **ecofeminists** whose ideas entered the scholary debates in the 1980s (Holland-Cunz 2014). Other than the neo-classical WID approaches, they conceptualised women's reproductive and care work and their struggle for land within global processes of enclosure and environmental degradation.[17] The three core axes of domination and oppression spotted by ecofeminists – capitalism, patriarchy and coloni-

17 It is one of the great strengths of ecofeminist theory that it situates the women question within a larger debate and raises the analysis to the macro level of theory. Then as now, this was not a matter of course. As Carla Freeman (2001) critically observes, most gender analyses tend to restrict themselves to the very local sphere (the household), while at the macro level, the big global theories still pretend to get by without dealing with the gender question in a more fundamental way. This holds true also for the political economy of agrarian change, where gender nowadays is valued as an accompaniment, but rarely gets to the heart of the plate, or, if you will, "gender" still carries the taste of being a mere "side contradiction".

alism – provide a useful framework also in this dissertation, to examine the happenings in the Rwandan marshlands, which I do consider as processes of enclosure in one way or another.[18] Ecofeminists criticised WID approaches for trying to integrate women into the neo-liberal market economy instead of fighting capitalism as one of the core underlying causes of female oppression (Mies 2014, 122). One of their proposed alternatives to the dominant paradigms of capital accumulation and economic growth is the so-called **subsistence perspective,**[19] which redefines the primary value of "economy" by creating prosperity for all (Mies 2014, xxiii). Other than the French Neo-Marxist Anthropologist Claude Meillassou, who had understood unpaid female subsistence work as an ally of capitalist exploitation because it reduces the reproductive costs of (male) labour, these ecofeminists point to the subversive character of female subsistence work:

> Women have been the main buffer for the world proletariat against starvation imposed by the World Bank's neo-liberal regime. They have been the main opponents of the neo-liberal demand that "market prices" determine who should live and who should die, and they are the ones who have provided a practical model for the reproduction of life in a non-capitalist way (Federici 2005, 222).

Also in Rwanda, it is mostly women who are engaged in subsistence-related activities. Their lived realities however are much more complex than Federici's romantic version of an ultimately "female" subsistence producer who lives in harmony with nature. Exactly this rather essentialist and universalist amalgamation of women and nature reveals a weak point found in many, especially older, ecofeminist arguments. As other critics have also pointed out, their arguments tend to reproduce the structural and binary logic ecofeminists try to offend: male bias versus female bias, the public versus the domestic etc. (Gaard 2011; Molyneux and Steinberg 1995; Utzeri 2017, 135).

Exiting the cage of this structuralist thinking in terms of **binary oppositions** was also an important step forward made by feminist anthropologists. Stivens (2005, 423) concludes:

> When feminist anthropologists asked why women's contributions to economic activities in both non-capitalist and capitalist societies had often been rendered invisible, they soon found they needed a complex rethinking of paradigms and concepts: the core concepts used to theorise the links between gender and economy – "public", "private", "household", the "domestic" – were all deeply problematic.

In consequence, there emerged a wide range of detailed ethnographies that provided in-depth studies of how gendered power relations as well as meanings of gender are culturally and discursively shaped. A good example is Moore and Vaughan's (1994) "Cutting down Trees", which provides a

18 Albeit the Rwandan marshlands are state-owned and in many cases put under the control of local cooperatives – two characteristics that do not really fit into the classical enclosure model – several cases in this work point to the new restrictions that severely limit farmers opportunities to make of these lands. The new cooperative setup mainly is about incorporating marshland production into a global market. In some cases, Rwandan marshlands have been given to private investors or leased out to international companies.

19 Mies (2014, xxiii) writes: "The goal of the *oikonomia* was not the accumulation of money but the satisfaction of the basic needs of all members of the household. This is what subsistence means." And a page later she notes: "Today, the subsistence perspective is not only a romantic idea; it is a necessity".

critical analysis of agrarian politics and the debate on malnutrition in Northern Zambia. While the Zambian government regarded the traditional slash and burn cultivation system as the main cause of malnutrition in the rural areas (because male labour migration had caused the traditional system to collapse), Moore and Vaughan show that this official explanation completely disregards the existence of stable village gardens where women play a crucial role as agricultural producers. In contrast to the situation portrayed in the official government discourse, they argue that rather than being caused by men's absence from the slash-and-burn cycle, malnutrition was due to women's increased workload caused, among other things, by the introduction of new and more labour-intensive crops. "**The multiplication of labor**" is also the central concern of Guyer's (1988) study about the Beti of Southern Cameroon, where men's new commitment to commercial cocoa cultivation provoked a rearrangement of agricultural labour patterns and gender relations. And a third example, of particular interest for this dissertation, is Carney's (1988, 1992; 1993) analysis of gendered struggles over meaning in the context of marshland transformation in the Gambia, where internationally funded irrigation and modernisation schemes induced men to redefine marshlands as communal household land to gain control over the output as well as over the female labour force.

What all these contributions have in common is that they analyse the construction of genders along processes of historical and agrarian change and thereby link gender with global dynamics of power. Moore notes:

> Feminist anthropology is more than the study of women. It is the study of gender, of the interrelations between women and men, ideologies, economic systems and political structures. Gender can no more be marginalized in the study of human societies than can the concept of "human action" or the concept of "society". It would not be possible to pursue any sort of social science without a concept of gender (H. L. Moore 1988, 6).

With this statement Moore marked the transition from "the anthropology of women" to "feminist anthropology". This work is situated within feminist anthropology. My intention is not to simply study women in the Rwandan marshlands or to make women's agrarian production visible. The aim of this study is to understand how agrarian change in the marshlands challenges at the same time as it evokes a particular understanding of gender and how this understanding of gender materialises in personal, economic and political relationships. I hereby argue with Stivens who claims that "[g]ender is a key social relation shaping the material flows of production, consumption and exchange, and is in turn shaped by those flows" (Stivens 2005, 323).

What does gender mean in the Rwandan context? As post-colonial feminists have urged, there is no such thing as a universal concept of gender. Based on the example of the non-gendered Yoruba family, Oyewumi (2002) has criticised the way some "White feminists" generalise about women's

worldwide oppression by carelessly applying their Western conceptions of the "housewife", the "nuclear family", or understandings of "motherhood", to any other context. Oyewumi argues:

> Even a category such as mother is not intelligible in white feminist thought except if the mother is defined first as the wife of the patriarch. There seems to be no understanding of the role of a mother independent of her sexual ties to a father. Mothers are first and foremost wives. This is the only explanation for the popularity of that oxymoron: single mother. From an African perspective and as a matter of fact, mothers by definition cannot be single (Oyewumi 2002, para.12).

One may argue about Oyewumi's generalisation of the so-called "African" perspective. Nevertheless, her post-colonial critique is very important. Also in Rwanda, constructions of genders and what "gender" truly means is something highly situational and context-specific. Furthermore, the lived realities of gender are intermingled with other criteria such as age, marital status, education, ethnicity, household composition and social status (Doss, Summerfield, and Tsikata 2014, 3, 8, 14; Verma 2014, 67; Villamor et al. 2014). "Intersectionality" is the scientific label for this approach that

> (...) challenges us to look at the different social positioning of women (and men) and to reflect on the different ways in which they participate in the reproduction of these relations. As we do this, intersectionality serves as an instrument that helps us to grasp the complex interplay between disadvantage and privilege (…) (Lutz, Herrera Vivar, and Supik 2011, 8).

Thus, the old, Western dualism between women and men provides only a very limited understanding of the dynamics at play in modern day Rwanda, where new modes of gendered identities interfere with what has been labelled as "traditional" gender norms and where "gender equality" has been made a political parameter, both welcomed and contested. We therefore must understand the new reconfigurations of gender in post-genocide Rwanda as part of the country's political and agrarian transformation process. Nevertheless, this work employs terms such as women and men. I do speak of widows and wives, of girls and boys. I do so for an analytical purpose. Gender is a social construct, timely and flexible, but as such it also is a social fact which is found in Rwanda's new laws and policies and which impacts upon the lives of those who have contributed to this work.

1.4.3 Law, State and Governance

Be it the new agrarian policies in the marshlands or the country's outstanding gender politics, we currently observe in Rwanda tendencies toward ever-increasing regulation. These tendencies of regulation include the afore-mentioned new laws and legislations as well as other written documents such as forms, announcements or codes of conduct that declare specific values and principles. Rwanda's post-genocide regime, it seems, builds sovereignty through the successful regularisation of Rwandan everyday lives, from where to wear shoes to which crops to plant (Ingelaere 2010a).

Legal Anthropologists have described this accelerated dynamic of lawmaking and regulation, which has also been observed in many other parts of the world, as the "(hyper) juridification of politics" (Benda-Beckmann, Benda-Beckmann, and Eckert 2009, 6–7; Eckert et al. 2012, 2–6; Goodale 2017, 205). **Juridification** describes the phenomenon whereby state power is justified and built around a new body of laws, policies, and, globally speaking, international regulations and conventions.[20] This new global "juristocracy" implies, as Jean and John Comaroff argue, a "fetishisation" of law. Fetishisation here is understood in the sense that "the law" is "(…) objectified, ascribed a life-force of its own, and attributed the mythic capacity to configure a world of relations in its own image" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 33). As I will show in this work, the fetishisation of law can particularly be observed in Rwanda's marshlands. Rural smallholders who today enter these state-owned lands enter with it a precisely mapped territory, "fenced" by a complex set of regulatory frameworks, rules and prescriptions. If they wish to use these lands, they have to follow the rules, or at least they will have to pretend to do so.

The juridification of Rwanda's marshland politics proceeds under the pretext of increasing economic productivity and fostering rural development. It can, however, also be understood as a way of making these state assets more **"legible"**, as Scott (1998, 2) would say. According to Scott, environmentally rough places such mountains, deserts, the sea or, as he writes, marshlands tend to be illegible and therefore are more likely to become "non-state spaces" – spaces that lie beyond the government's access and control (Scott 1998, 187). With reference to Scott, I argue that the new cooperative setup as well as the state-aspired environmental transformation in Rwanda's marshlands are fundamentally about converting them into legible, easily governable and exploitable "state-spaces" (see chapter 5).

At the same time, we must acknowledge that these processes at the national level cannot be detached from the international sphere where fancy terms such as "good governance" are used as a criterion to separate the so-called "strong states" from the pitied "weak states", without actually going into detail about what "good governance" truly means.[21] It therefore comes as no surprise that Rwanda's national politics are closely tied to **international processes of lawmaking** such as the 1995 Beijing declaration on women's empowerment or the Ramsar convention on wetlands, to

20 Blichner and Molander (2005, 5) provide a useful distinction between five dimensions of juridification: "First, constitutive juridification is a process where norms constitutive for a political order are established or changed to the effect of adding to the competencies of the legal system. Second, juridification is a process through which law comes to regulate an increasing number of different activities. Third, juridification is a process whereby conflicts increasingly are being solved by or with reference to law. Fourth, juridification is a process by which the legal system and the legal profession get more power as contrasted with formal authority. Finally, juridification as legal framing is the process by which people increasingly tend to think of themselves and others as legal subjects."

21 Rwanda is a perfect example of this two-fold nature of "good governance" where, on the one hand, the government is praised for its success and firm control over its people and resources, while on the other hand there exists severe criticism about the RPF-government's increasingly authoritarian rule.

return to the subject of this work. Furthermore, the Rwandan marshlands have become a popular action ground for various international NGOs and investors who generate their own "soft law" or "project law" (Li 2009). Such terms describe binding procedures, regulations or principles that are defined by powerful non-state actors and that are not represented in the national law.

All these examples confirm that anthropologists, today, must understand law or rather lawmaking as an ongoing and dynamic process. As Goodale clarifies, other than the former "Anthropology of *law"* (italics in original) which mainly was about describing social norms, comparing cross-cultural patterns of social order and understanding the "true nature" of customary legal systems, the more recent studies that devote themselves to a post-Cold War "*Anthropology* of law" (italics in original), consider the processes of lawmaking within a globalised, neoliberal world and as "(…) a key mode of contemporary world-making" (Goodale 2017, 6). And since the state is maybe not the only but a central junction where these processes of lawmaking are negotiated, simply because lawmaking is fundamentally part of governance,[22] we need to have a close look at the state and its laws in order to make truly sense of what is happening in Rwanda's marshlands and of how people behave on the ground.

Yet what is the state? In the earlier anthropological works the state mostly appeared as one form of political organisation. Following the evolutionist way of thinking common at that time, Morton Fried (1976), for instance, proposed that societies move from being egalitarian societies, to rank societies, stratified societies and, lastly, states. The Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology defines **the state** as "[a] society characterized by autonomous political institutions, sovereign control of territory, centralized appropriation of surplus, and support of authority through legitimate force" (Winthrop 1991, 272). As we see from this definition, the state is characterised by three major aspects: first, its territory; second, the existence of a centralised form of governance; and third, the legitimate use of force by the latter.

For other state theorists in Anthropology who, as I noted before, have come to look at the state as a phenomenon within a globalised world, this understanding of the state has severe limitations. According to them, the sovereignty of the modern nation state has become "**unbundled"**, as Saskia Sassen (1996, 7) argues.[23] "Unbundled" means in this context that supranational legislative bodies and international organisations increasingly interfere with "national" state affairs. This interference does not necessarily sabotage or weaken the state's sovereignty, but reconfigures state power within a global context. As Sharma and Gupta put it: "Sovereignty (…) can no longer be seen as the sole

22 I here follow Engel's and Olsen's (2005, 10) understanding that governance "(…) encapsulates complex dynamics of shaping binding rules, procedures and the behaviours in different social spaces."

23 Interestingly and counterintuitively. the neoliberal deregulation which provokes the "unbundling" of national sovereignty and the juridification of national politics are part of the same process. The von Benda-Beckmanns and Eckert (2009, 6–9) discuss this paradox as "simultaneous deregulation and juridification".

purview or 'right' of the modern state but is, instead, partially disentangled from the nation state and mapped onto supranational and nongovernmental organizations" (Sharma and Gupta 2006, 7).

This is where we must return to the question of what state power is. While earlier state theorists understood power as something that was possessed by someone and asserted over a population, postmodernist thinkers have come to conceptualise **power as a relation**. James Ferguson for instance, inspired by the Foucauldian notion of power,[24] writes:

> [T]he state is not an entity that "has" or does not "have" power, and state power is not a substance possessed by those individuals and groups who benefit from it. The state is neither the source of power nor simply the projection of the power of an interested subject (ruling group, etc.) Rather than an entity "holding" or "exercising" power, it may be more fruitful to think of the state as instead forming a relay or point of coordination and multiplication of power relations. (…) "The state", in this conception is not the name of an actor, it is the name of a way of tying together, multiplying and coordinating power relations, a kind of knotting or congealing of power (Ferguson 1994, 272–73).

Instead of speaking of "state power" Ferguson therefore proposes to speak of "bureaucratic" state power. The growing regularisation of everyday lives in Rwanda thus can be understood as the symptom of a new form of state sovereignty creation by regularisation and **bureaucratisation**. According to Sharma and Gutpa (2006, 13), "(i)t is through the daily routines of proceduralism and precedent setting that social inequalities, such as those of class and gender, are produced and maintained". Be it standing in the line of the sector office to apply for an ID card, planting the seeds provided by the sector agronomist, or making sure that enough women are voted into the cooperative's committee – it is through these every-day acts that the Rwandan state is not only experienced, but *performed*.[25]

Interestingly, this performative conception, in a sense, has already been formulated by Malinowski, who once wrote: "The true problem is not to study how human life submits to rules – it simply does not; the real problem is how the rules become adapted to life" (Malinowski 2013, 127). The idea that the rules or laws "become adapted to life" exhibits the **processual and relational understanding of governance** we find among many legal Anthropologists today, with the fundamental difference, however, that other than Malinowski, they no longer disregard the surrounding political and global environment that shape all these processes of adaptation.

The processual understanding of the state is also expressed when Lund argues that "[t]reating the 'state' as a finished product gets in the way of understanding it". And he continues as follows:

24 Foucault says that power is not something one can possess. It is not negative and repressive, but productive. Power is relational and can only exist between people. At the level of a society, power relations expand like a dynamic mesh between a societies' subjects, constantly moving with their different positionalities. See Foucault's theoretical reflections on power in "Truth and Power" (Foucault and Rabinow 1984, 51–75) and in "Dispositive der Macht: Über Sexualität und Wahrheit" (Foucault 1978, 125–27).

25 Performativity as a theoretical concept in social sciences was introduced by Judith Butler, who is known also for her contributions in theorising gender (Butler 1988, 1999). The state is performed rather than created because it enfolds its reality between the "actors" and the "spectators", whereas creation is a one-sided process.

> The state is always in the making. Political authority is (re-)produced through its successful exercise over an important issue in relation to the social actors concerned. (…) [T]he ability to entitle and disenfranchise people with regard to property, to establish the conditions under which they hold that property – together with the ability to define who belongs and who does not, and to establish and uphold rank, privilege and social servitude in its many forms – is constitutive of state power (Lund 2016, 2100–2101).

I find these considerations most suitable when trying to understand how the state works and materialises in Rwanda's marshlands, even if we do not give it (the state) a definite form.

1.5. Thesis Outline

This work starts with a rather detailed outline of the methodological implications of doing research in a highly politicised, not to say authoritarian context such as Rwanda.

Chapter 2 thus tackles the fundamental question of what it means for anthropological research, if access to the field sites, and even casually talking to people (and anthropology is a lot about casually talking to people) is strictly controlled. How can we expect people to speak their own minds, if they fear that we or our research assistants could be spies? What measures must we take to safeguard our informants and our friends and the valuable data they have shared? Basically, this chapter provides a very strong argument in favour of anthropological field work, not only because of its long-term engagement, but also because of its self-reflexive focus on building relations and its rich and versatile toolbox. Apart from a clear description of my research setting and the different methods and techniques I used in the field, this chapter also deals with ambiguities and emotional stress during the research process.

Chapter 3, provides a historical perspective on Rwandan marshlands since the late 19th century. How did marshlands look in former times? By whom were they accessed and used? Looking back into the history of these particular lands reveals that marshlands were not unused or "empty" lands. Rather, we see that marshlands have long been highly contested spaces. Contested not only by the different regimes, each of which has tried to control access to these lands and shaped them according to its own interests, but also locally by different communities and families. Towards the end of this chapter, I provide a short "gendered" marshland history which shows that even though women are more or less invisible in most of these old and male-biased reports on marshland, there are several indicators of women's active participation in marshland agriculture and other marshland-related works going back much further into the country's past.

Chapter 4 zooms in on the history of one specific marshland in my research site, called Kajevuba marshland. Drawing on the memories of local farmers and old project reports I sketch the history of this marshland: How the Kajevuba papyrus swamp was transformed into agricultural land for a

promising horticulture project. How local farmers, among them many women, took up this new opportunity and got involved in this project. How farmers' lives developed and their homes prospered due to the marshland's great fertility. And then, the first signs of decline: fatigued soils, the donors leaving, the international market disappearing. It is a chapter about development politics in the marshlands, its successes and failures. But even more so, it is a chapter about farmers: about their memories and aspirations, and their belief that the good old times could come back, their flickering hopes when a new project comes and their growing frustration over repeated failures.

Chapter 5 focusses on and describes modern-day marshland politics in Rwanda. Part of the government's marshland politics is the supposedly new cooperative approach. What is the political idea behind the implementation of cooperatives in Rwanda's marshlands? How is this cooperative approach linked to the county's agrarian vision of a green revolution for Rwanda and what does this mean for marshland cultivators on the ground? By tracing the case of a marshland cooperative and relating its story to other marshland cooperatives I have studied, I confront the government's "official" version of cooperatives with local farmer's perspectives and experiences. What do cooperative members think about the cooperative setup? Do their stories confirm or rather challenge the government's proclamation of cooperatives as an autonomous grassroots movement for economic and social development?

Throughout all these chapters, gender pops up as an analytical lens from time to time, yet it is not the dominant perspective. This changes in the following two chapters, which are strongly related to each other. **Chapter 6** provides a feminist analysis of Rwanda's political discourse on gender equality and women's empowerment in the marshlands. What are the arguments that are used by government officials to legitimise the quota policy as well as other measures in the marshlands? What is the ideological ground of these arguments and how do local marshland cooperatives deal with the new demands and regulations? By drawing on first-hand data from several marshland cooperatives, I show that first, the cooperatives have found their own strategies to comply with the government's regulations at least superficially. Second, the stories provided by three different women working in the marshlands show that the government's envisioned pathway toward empowerment is not a well-paved track for all women. Instead, the government's narratives and measures evoke a very normative understanding of what an exemplary modern Rwandan woman looks like.

Chapter 7 addresses the gendered division of labour in the context of marshland agriculture. It shows that the gendered division of labour is closely linked to gender roles and norms that are reproduced in a broader context of rural life. The analysis provided in this chapter thus goes beyond the marshland cooperative context and attempts to give justice to the complexities of lived realities. The insights about the localities and temporalities of gender in Rwanda are crucial in order to

understand why and under what conditions some women may truly benefit from marshland cooperatives, and why at the same time, many others, men and women alike, are left out of the government's current gender equality and modernisation approach.

Finally, **chapter 8** brings together the different threads of analysis presented in the previous chapters and discusses them on the basis of one specific case. It is the case of a foreign investment project in Kajevuba marshland, which was one of my main research sites. The investment project depicts an accelerated dynamic of what is currently happening in Rwanda's marshlands. By juxtaposing perspectives from the different parties involved – the cooperative and its members, state agents, as well as the investor and his workers – the chapter discloses the complex dynamics and frictions that may occur when such an agricultural investment project fails. In particular, I am focusing on the implications the investment project has for rural livelihoods and the lives of female farmers on the ground. Apart from legal frameworks both at the international and local level, also power imbalances, the state's role and governance performance in the realm of agribusiness, and the gender-specific outcomes in such large-scale investment projects will be addressed.

Chapter 2: From "Research Haven" to the Ground of Facts – Ethnography in a Politicised Context

Over the past two decades, Rwanda has become a magnet for foreign researchers and international development organisations alike. Many of them are attracted by the country's genocide history. However, Rwanda's high popularity among researchers cannot be attributed solely to the shocking events that have resonated around the world in 1994. Several other conditions make Rwanda a comparatively convenient research site, as Ingelaere (2010a, 47) writes: "The relative regime stability, the good security situation (the absence of war and other forms of physical violence), and the efficient administrative structures constitute necessary prerequisites for most research activities". Ingelaere goes as far as calling Rwanda a "research haven", just before he then objects to this idea by stating: "Yet the knife cuts both ways. The fact that the state apparatus functions as a well-oiled machine results in the omnipresence of its ears and eyes and substantial control over what can and cannot be studied" (Ingelaere 2010a, 47).

The following chapter discusses the peculiarities and ambiguities of doing in-depth fieldwork in Rwanda. For this dissertation I spent a total of 12 months in Rwanda. My stays were split into an exploratory field trip of two and a half months in spring 2014, a "holiday" trip of about a month in autumn the same year, and two major research stays from January to July 2015 and from January to March 2016. As several scholars have pointed out, Rwanda clearly is not what the literature calls a "weak state" (Purdeková 2015, 18; Ansoms, Wagemakers, et al. 2014, 249). Instead, it is marked by firm control, exercised through a neat net of power which covers the country's thousands of hills like intense humidity, more palpable than visible. The omnipresence of state power has severe implications for anthropological research. As I elaborate in the coming pages, the government controls access into the field, for example when it comes to seeking an official research permit. It subtly paves the paths one is supposed to follow and veils what one is supposed to overlook. Furthermore, ubiquitous state power and repressive measures are evoking mistrust and fear that shape the kind of questions one may ask and the answers that will be given. This chapter shows how, des-

pite these hardships, anthropological methods are particularly suitable for producing knowledge in a highly politicised research environment such as Rwanda.

2.1. Corollaries of a “Safe Place”

A certain sensationalism had guided my preparations for the first, exploratory field trip to Rwanda. “It is so clean!”, I had been told, or: “You don’t even think it is Africa!”. I was highly curious about the country’s multifaceted image which combined scenically soft hills with a horrific past, and a very dark history with the spotlights of contemporary success, and I was excited about going to see the country with my own eyes. Ingelaere’s critical remark about Rwanda’s suitability for research hit the nail squarely on the head, at least in my case. In the first few days after my arrival in Kigali, I highly appreciated the general mood of safety. I felt secure enough, even after nightfall, to use public transport. For someone who grew up in a European country where the possession of weapons is strictly regulated, only the heavily armed security guards lurking on every corner of the street were emitting an aura of discomfort.

Five days after I arrived in the country, the tables were turned and the meaning of safety took on a new dimension. “You want to get on a local bus to see the rural areas?” The Rwandan country coordinator[26] looked at me with astonishment and disbelief at the same time. “But this is not how things work in Rwanda. As part of this project you have to inform us about all your activities and whereabouts. We are responsible for you!”, the tall man in a perfectly tailored African fabric shirt rebuked me. His fingers were busy on his Blackberry phone, while I shrank into the soft seat he had offered. Having received clear instructions on the matter of getting all documents together to apply for my research permit, I left his office frustrated and intimidated (FN_2014-03-04). The next day I was mollified. “If you need to get out of Kigali, we can assist you with a car and a driver to show you around”, he told me, just before we headed to the meeting with the Director General to discuss my research project.

An essential part of anthropological research is fieldwork, which Peters (2009, 1322) incisively frames as “(…) deep immersion in social situations and long-term involvement with social groups (...)”. The idea of such an approach is to acquire a profound and genuine understanding of life on the ground. Anthropological fieldwork includes getting close to people and plunging into their lived realities. It is about meticulous observation, and first-hand experiences through participation. As Hastrup and Hervik (1994, 3) write: “There is no way to substitute a phone call for fieldwork; most of the relevant information is non-verbal and cannot be ‘called up’, but has to be experienced as performed”. For me, personally, fieldwork was about leaving my comfort zone, at least to a certain

26 The country coordinator of the project that funded my research. The country coordinator’s task was to coordinate and facilitate research in Rwanda.

degree. In my somewhat naive and presumptuous understanding, fieldwork was exactly about getting on this very local bus, being squeezed between people, bags of goods, gifts and clucking chickens. I wanted to see the “real” Rwanda and inhale the “authentic” and “ordinary” rather than the artificial perfume of the spacious 4x4 that had been provided by my project’s partner institution. Already I was tired of the driver’s long talks about the government’s recent achievements. Instead, I longed to puzzle over animated conversations while trying to pick up some new phrases in Kinyarwanda. I wanted to get closer.

In “Getting close to Rwandans since the Genocide”, Thomson (2010, 25) follows de Lame’s (1999, 37) footsteps as she writes:

> I tried to live, as much as a white foreigner possibly could, as ordinary Rwandans live (...). I walked everywhere, often barefoot, and took public transportation only when I had to go any extended distance. I traversed distances of less than 10 kilometres on foot (...). This gave me a certain cachet as it became evident to many people that I was ready and willing to travel considerable distances on foot over steep hills, on hot humid days, as well as during the rainy season to meet them where they lived and in the context of their daily activities.

Not only did people acknowledge her convergence both in terms of physical distance and in terms of lifestyle, but Thomson’s diverse involvement in local everyday life ranging from firewood collection and cooking tea to listening to people’s stories and sharing their emotions gradually led her to discover stories that were carefully shielded from the “public eye”. While creating bonds and personal relationships with informants is commonly practised in anthropology precisely because personal matters are rarely entrusted to a complete stranger, such an approach proves to be even more relevant when doing research in a highly politically controlled country like Rwanda. Building relationships is the key to trust. Thomson’s (2010, 25) strategy, to “(…) let trust and emotional engagement be the foundation of the research process (...)”, therefore sounded very reasonable to me. But this insight also became part of a dilemma when I was considering my own research situation. The meeting with the Director General of our partner institution had been my second daunting experience within a few days. The “iron lady”, as she was informally called, had asked me about my research objectives and looked at me with sharp eyes and a huge smile. “A social anthropologist...” she repeated, uncomfortably hissing the word “social” between her teeth. Briefly she explained that as a science institution they were interested in “real” research and that given my discipline’s background, it would be hard for them to guarantee the scientific quality of my work. Nevertheless, at the end of the short meeting, she asked me to send them my research outline.

Let me use this situation to elaborate a bit more on the broader framework conditions of my work. My research was part of a project on sustainable marshland use in four East African countries. It was a rather extensive project that comprised University departments from different German and

African Universities as well as other state institutions and NGOs working on marshlands. The project had been planned as a transdisciplinary and international science project, in the first place. However, the funding institution (the German Federal Ministry of Education) demanded that a social science perspective be added to the initial project proposal. This partly explains why the Rwandan project partners were surprised, finding themselves dealing with a social anthropologist. Not only had they expected to host German PhD students from the fields of natural sciences; they also felt betrayed by the project leaders, who had not consulted them in this decision. In addition, the partner institution’s reluctance in supporting my qualitative in-depth research may be attributed to a more general attitude, which espouses the idea that development must be science-based and can best be measured in terms of “numbers”. By “numbers” I mean quantitative representations, which can be compared and computed into indices and which serve as the “hard facts” many donor institutions need to justify their spendings. Even though this perspective, which largely entails an uncritical use of statistics as “objective truths”, has been challenged from various sides,[27] the value of numbers prevails throughout much of the development universe. In Rwanda, as in many other countries of the world, statistics therefore play an essential role in the development planning and policy-making.

Obviously, my research would not provide such computable numbers and therefore was of low value for the Rwandan project partners. However, being bound to work with them by the requirements of the project, I found myself in an awkward position. I needed to find a decent compromise between serving the official interest in gaining the partner institution’s support for the government’s research permit, while creating enough freedom to follow my own research interests.

2.2. Prelude: Research Politics, Papers and Permits

This early insight into Rwandan research politics was the beginning of a long and wearing process. First of all, it was about familiarising our partner institution with anthropological concepts of epistemology. I edited and re-edited my research proposal and followed our partners’ advice to include a focus on cooperatives’ contribution to national unity and reconciliation. While waiting for their

27 In his book “Poor Numbers”, Morten Jerven (2013), for instance, critically reflects upon the quality and reliability of statistical data in African development politics. “In most African economies, the unrecorded economy is so large and therefore so economically important that to leave it unrecorded is unsatisfactory. However, its inclusion in the national accounts has been constrained by the availability of data. This has resulted in a variety of innovative accounting practices at the individual statistical offices” (Jerven 2013, 11). Desiere, Staelens and D’Haese (2016) discuss the issue of manipulation in the process of modelling and data analysis and show how a selective choice of agricultural data has supported the success story of Rwanda’s green Revolution, while other data sources would have indicated a much lower performance. An Ansoms et al. (2017) challenge the validity of household survey data as long as there is no clear qualitative understanding of how power relations impact upon the construction of poverty. Jane Guyer (2004, 131–51) demonstrates how an anthropological approach that dismantles the household unit can help to make better sense of survey data. “Data can tell ‘a truth’ without that being either ‘whole’ or ‘nothing but’ the truth, let alone reflecting directly and in their own terms the realities of those who furnished them” (Guyer 2004, 147). Scott (1998), argues that formalising and homogenizing methods such as statistics are essentially part of a high modernist state approach to making the population more “legible”.

feedback, I was trying to get all the documents for the research permit ready: a police clearance, several recommendation letters, a translation of my intended interview questions, and an ethical clearance letter which, oddly enough, I had to seek from the medical faculty because there was no such thing as a social-science ethics board at my home university[28].

Several authors have reflected upon their challenges in getting a permit for their research in Rwanda (Gebauer 2015; Schräpel 2015; Leegwater 2015). But also among the many graduate students I met during my stays in Rwanda, the most central topics of debate all seemed to be about possible partner institutions that would easily provide affiliation letters, exchanging ideas about how a research proposal could be linked to government policies to make it look more attractive, or calling each other’s attention to certain terms that should better be avoided.[29] Such conversations provided tactical moves, but even more so, they were reassuring and served as emotional relief to counter growing frustration. There were two rather common strategies for bypassing the bureaucratic and time-consuming procedure: either by working under the guise of one of the many non-governmental organisations (NGOs),[30] or, in cases where research focussed on urban topics, by conducting ones’s research secretly and using the international flair of Kigali as a perfect hideout.[31] Since my research was part of a big project, affiliated to a well-known government institution, neither strategy offered a definite solution. However, I adopted both strategies, to some extent, so as not to waste the valuable time of my first exploratory field trip. I got in contact with local and international organisations which were working on women’s rights or doing projects in marshlands. They sometimes offered me the chance to accompany them to their rural project sites, which helped me to get a better understanding of the current situation in the more remote areas off the beaten track. Several institutions shared interesting documents with me, or provided contacts to other relevant sources. The networks I established during this time opened access to a suitable research site in Rutunga, a rural area North of Kigali, where most of my in depth research took place (see section 2.3 below). Apart from that, I

28 While many universities nowadays offer or demand social science research to be reviewed by an ethics board, the situation in German-speaking universities is less institutionalised (Dilger 2015). According to Dilger this comes with several advantages regarding the anthropologist’s flexibility within the research process. He furthermore provides some critical arguments about the highly formalied and very bureaucratic procedure which is nowadays demanded by US ethics boards. However, in the case of my research, the urge to provide an ethical clearance caused quite some confusion because the application form was designed by the (medical) ethics board and requested details about intended “treatments” or “patient’s risk and possible side-effects” which my research proposal obviously could not provide.

29 “Ethnicity” is one of these terms that has been officially “abolished” by the government (Ingelaere 2010b) A good example for the difficulties to conduct research on ethnic relations in Rwanda is the work of Paluck (2009).

30 In many cases NGOs would facilitate access to rural field sites. The local administration and rural population would consider these researchers as NGO workers and ask no further questions. However, usually such an approach comes with certain restrictions because NGOs themselves might be co-opted by state institutions or at least careful to not spoil their relations to the government (Gready 2010, 641).

31 To stay in Kigali, the “centre of knowledge construction” (Ingelaere 2010a, 45) can work fine for short-term research that predominantly seeks input from officials and representatives of Kigali-based organisations. Yet, even within Kigali space is highly segregated and researchers may easily draw suspicion when they are investigating in a “wrong” neighbourhood or when they work on critical issues such as forced displacement.

travelled around Rwanda, took long walks through neighbourhoods, visited local markets and tried to engage with the local population, though always being careful not to draw too much attention or raise suspicion. By the end of my first trip to Rwanda, I had gained many new insights and ideas, and in spite of the rather discouraging first meetings with my partner institution I felt well prepared to draft a first research proposal and to tackle the application process for my research permit.

At that time, in 2014, I had to seek my permission for research at the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). The MINEDUC functions as a supervisory authority on the national level, so to speak, and maintains an overview of the various research projects that are carried out in Rwanda. Additionally, it reserves the right to charge application fees.[32] These measures are, I believe, justified, not least from a postcolonial point of view. Why not collect a comparably moderate charge as compared to the researchers’ likely much higher gains from her or his findings? I am referring here to the debate that evolved around the term “scientific colonialism” (Galtung 1967), which describes the phenomenon of (mostly Western) researchers who feel entitled to appropriate and export data from other countries (former colonies or poor countries of the Global South in most cases) for free. Furthermore, I think that each country should have the opportunity to know what kind of (data) material will be extracted and what it is going to be used for. These are, amongst others, necessary prerequisites to assess possible negative consequences and to prevent exploitation at the expense of human beings or the environment. In the Rwandan case for example, the granting of research permission is tied to an ethical clearance certificate. In this way, the research permit serves as a means to assure compliance with ethical standards which, given the county’s genocide history, truly is a matter of utmost importance. Anthropologists who were trained well after the discipline’s crisis of representation in the 1980s[33] are usually familiar with such considerations of research ethics and reflexivity. However, the actual problem was that my theoretical understanding of an emancipatory and “strong” postcolonial state inevitably bounced back from my personal experiences with authoritarian state censorship in the process of obtaining my research approval. I could not help feeling at the mercy of the state apparatus and closely observed by the ears and eyes of the “well-oiled machine” (Ingelaere 2010a, 47).

Matters became complicated even further when my application coincided with the release of a disputed BBC documentary[34] that publicly challenged the official version of the genocide. The political situation in Rwanda grew even more electric. My second field trip was drawing closer and I was

32 In 2014, these fees varied from 20 US$ to 200 US$ and were graded according to the researcher’s country of origin, education level, institutional background and financial resources. I my case, no fees were charged.

33 One of the groundbreaking works in this regard is the anthology “Writing Culture” (Clifford and Marcus 1986) which fundamentally challenged anthropological epistemology and has stimulated substantial debates within the discipline.

34 I am referring to the documentary “Rwanda’s Untold Story” directed by John Conroy, which has caused a lot of debate inside and outside the country.

still waiting for one last document: the affiliation letter that would grant me official support from our research partner. My backup plan to go back to Rwanda despite the pending process and to meanwhile benefit from the long wait by taking intensive language classes in Kinyarwanda was once more hampered by an e-mail from our Rwandan project coordinator:

> This is not the first time you hear that you need a research permit before engaging in any research or research related activities including learning the language. (…) As you have already sensed, insistence to carry out further activities in Rwanda without the permit might create misgivings (…) and jeopardize the whole process (E-mail, 2014-09-18).

Since, my air ticket was booked and the visa paid for, I decided to go to Rwanda on “holiday” for a few weeks. Retrospectively, this decision to go to Rwanda and try to discuss the matter in person was an important turning point at this early stage of my research. During a casual meeting with one of the prospective Rwandan PhD candidates, I learned that the slow progress in my research application was related to some internal project issues: I would not get the needed affiliation letter as long as their PhD-scholarship students were not officially approved by the project leadership. Finally, after several months of serious doubts and frustration things started rolling and on Christmas Eve a one-line e-mail informed me that my “research clearance certificate” was ready to be picked up.

Not even a month later, I was back in Rwanda, and hurried down from the small office on the 4th floor of MINEDUC to the immigration office in the neighbouring building. The offices were about to close and I wanted to request my research visa, now that I was finally holding the long-awaited research permit in my hands. The queue number machine was still on. I sat down, rolling the small paper with the black number between my fingers. Once more, I glanced at my “Permission to Carry out Research in Rwanda”. The permit was printed on ordinary paper, yet two big blue stamps and a file case number gave the document an official look. Then it was my turn. The immigration officer was scanning through the pile of papers I had handed over to him. “This is a copy; I need the original”, the officer said firmly. I looked at the police clearance which I had thoughtfully requested during my last winter holiday stay in Austria (my country of origin). “This is the original”, I protested, “they were using black ink for the stamp, but it is the original. It is not exactly the same black, you see?”. The officer took back the clearance, closely examined and rubbed the stamp and put it down with the other papers. “These passport photos are not allowed”, he finally said. “Why?” I asked, looking at the two biometric passport photos I had carefully attached to the visa form. “The background is not white enough”, he said, and sent me off to make new pictures. While I was walking to the car park, where the officer had indicated a small photo studio, I was evaluating whether the entire situation reminded me more of George Orwell’s *1984* or Kafka’s *The Castle*.[35]

35 A good friend of mine remarked about this comparison, saying that hassles with unreasonable immigration officers are quite common around the world. She is right. What reminded me of these two books was not just the Newspeak-like proclivity for acronyms or the fact that I was spending so much time in different offices seemingly without get-

On the day I moved to my rural field site, in February 2015, the first heavy rain of the season fell. It was a magic moment. Together with my research assistants, which I will introduce at a later stage in this chapter, I had been buying food at the local market when the clouds literally exploded. Crowds of people quickly sought shelter under the iron sheets of the small shops bordering the market place. Their excited chatter mixed with the clatter of rain. Amused, they shouted their comments about the scene of some sellers who were trying to save their goods from the pouring water. On our way back home, one of my assistants said: “They think you are a good omen, because you came with the rain”.

2.3. Research Setting

For my research I had chosen a rural site called Rutunga, situated in the very northern corner of Kigali Province (see figure 1).

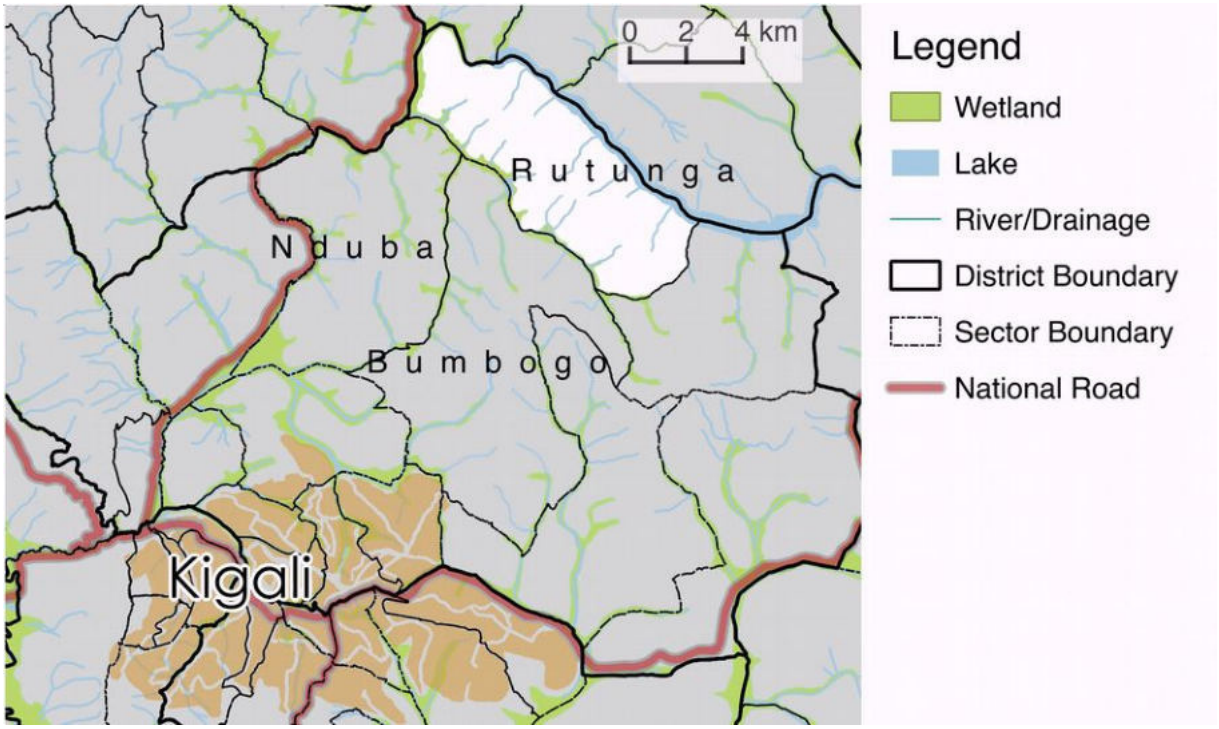


Figure 1: Map of Rutunga *©Veronika Steffens*

Rutunga Sector comprises a conglomeration of a few hills. In the North, Rutunga Sector borders the South-Eastern shore of Lake Muhazi (see picture 10), which is a common weekend resort for the Kigali elite. In the South, it is bordered by Kajevuba marshland, which is one of the central sites of this research. The sector’s western edge flanks the national road from Kigali to the neighbouring country, Uganda. This road is an essential vital line for the Rutunga area and many other rural areas along this road. It not only supplies Rutunga villagers with goods from town and from the Ugandan

ting anywhere. What really reminded me of these books was the way they illustrate how power is exercised over subjects. This was a recurring experience that goes far beyond the particular situation in the immigration office.

border; it also serves as a harbour of trade for locally produced vegetables, such as green beans, aubergines, tomatoes, and green peppers. “Vegetables make people very rich in Rutunga!” one of the local cell chiefs (M_CC_2015-03-13) briefly explained, and indeed, most of Rutunga’s inhabitants live from agriculture and trade with Kigali.

For me, the good road connection to Kigali made Rutunga a quite accessible rural field site. Public transport is available in more or less regular intervals and takes about 25 minutes from the Kigali-Nyabugogo bus station to the Rutunga turn-off. From there a network of mud roads, narrow trails and steep shortcuts connects the commercial centres and homesteads which are spread all over the hills. Here motorbikes are the most convenient means of transport up and down the steep and busy hills of Rutunga.

2.3.1 Rural Life and Agriculture in Rutunga

Despite its proximity to Kigali, Rutunga is a rural area where most families live from agriculture. According to a conversation with the local land notary, the majority of families rely on plots of far less than one hectare (M_RLN_2015-06-17).[36] The cropping scheme is diversified and precisely timed to make optimum use of the small fields. During the two rainy seasons from March to May and in October and November, shades of green cover the hills. The people of Rutunga till their fields in the hillsides. The fields are prepared manually with hoes and hands. Mechanised agriculture is rare, which can be attributed to the steep hills, the narrow paths and small plot sizes that make the use of machines difficult and dispensable. Mechanical pumps for irrigation however are used in some parts of the marshlands. Terraces prevent soil erosion, and are bordered by elephant grass[37] which has become one of the main food sources for animals since the zero-grazing policy has restricted the use of open pastures.

When the rain ceases and the plants bow under the weight of fruit, the vibrant colours fade. Only a few banana trees, river fringes and the marshlands preserve their fertility, like green lifelines. In the coming weeks, beans will be harvested, beaten and stored, sorghum will be cut and *ikidage* (sorghum beer) will be brewed. It is the season of weddings, when families celebrate and share their harvest. If the harvest was a good one, and the family’s food provision over the dry period is guaranteed, people will venture out and look for a good market to transform the surplus yield into cash. Cash is needed nowadays not only to buy oil, salt, sugar or a drink from the local centre; the major expenditures are spent on children’s school fees, compulsory health insurance, security taxes, elec-

36 It is very difficult to find official statistics on land distribution in Rwanda. What is commonly found in the more recent national statistical reports is the average plot size. This, however, says little about the actual distribution of land and land-related inequalities. Although the land on the hills of Rutunga has been registered, I was denied access to this data. There exists, however, district-level data on the size of land areas cultivated per household. In Gasabo district the average is 0.8 ha; the median however is much lower; 0.15 ha (GoR and NISR 2012, 64).

37 *Pennisetum purpureum*

tricity, or in some cases hired labour. If ever money is left over, it will be invested in livestock or saved for construction purposes. Iron sheets are bought to repair the roofs and the fences and animal shelters are fixed. The drought continues into August and September, food reserves will come to an end and the fields of sweet potatoes and other root crops that feed the family over the dry months will finally be harvested. Now the marshlands become the centre of events. Households that own a plot in the marshland have continued their agricultural activities during the dry season. As members of marshland cooperatives they are working down in the valley, close by the river that marks the border with the neighbouring hill. It is strenuous work. The fields are usually far away, the soil is hard to prepare and the water outlets require a lot of care to avoid potential floods or insufficient water supply. If everything goes well, by August these households can look down on a rich yield that will supply their families beyond the dry season up until the next uphill harvest. In some other marshlands, clay is extracted to make bricks (see picture 11). These dried bricks will be piled up into cube-shaped ovens to later be burned and sold to Kigali. A person forms between 1,000 and 2,000 bricks a day and earns 3.5 RWF per brick[38] (FN_15-05-2015 and FN_18-02-2016), but their own homes usually are made out of mud bricks which are not burned and are much cheaper (see picture 4). Income from these activities in the marshlands will help the families to avoid spending their last savings, and it might fuel ideas for future investments. When the short rainy season starts in October, people breathe a sigh of relief. They shake off the dust of the dry season and quickly start preparing the fields around their homesteads.

The idea of villages is rather new to Rwanda. In Rutunga agglomerations of houses are detectable but not typical for rural life (see picture 10). The hills of Rutunga correspond in many ways to the one hill among a thousand that de Lame chose for her important ethnographic work on Rwanda. In her characterisation of the Rwandan hill through space and time she explains:

> Dwellings scattered over the hillsides bespeak agnatic and clientele relations and, more recently, access to purchased property, connections whose visibility often presupposes previous acquaintanceship with the inhabitants and that exceed the physical limits of a hill. Modern facilities are set in the center of these landscapes and may give the illusion of structure. (…) Pre-colonial space was constructed through exchanges, with no indication other than footpaths converging on the enclosures of the rich and powerful, the locations of which were changeable. Poles of convergence of exchanges were somewhat stabilized during the colonial period and the First Republic. The creation of small market centers and the building of places of worship added poles of attraction other than the courts of chiefs and subchiefs. During the Second Republic, the creation of poles of rural development became pivotal to development policies, but these poles were then superimposed on a space still largely structured by relations between families, friends, traditional craftspeople, and so on. The anthropologist who settles on an ordinary hill may participate in the existence of a few of its families, and soon finds that life there is not confined to the valley, a geographical entity but with permeable social boundaries. Rwandan society is structured by the ordered interaction of the units, smaller than in earlier times, in which people live and through which they connect with the wider world (de Lame 2005, 13).

38 An income of 3,500 RWF/day is already quite good. A day’s pay for agricultural labour was at 1,000 RWF.

My fieldwork experiences in Rutunga reminded me in many aspects of this description de Lame provides from her own fieldwork in the late 1980s. Social life still centres around the bars and shops (see picture 2) of the commercial centres or inside the plurality of different churches, and culminates in local festivities such as weddings, baptisms or funerals. People meet on market days (see picture 1) or chat to each other while queuing in front of the sector office. They give each other a casual nod during public gatherings regularly held by the authorities, and might launch into discussion afterwards about the new regulations that have been presented. The children meet at school or at the well where they gather and play before taking home the water tanks for the evening meal and showers. But the heart of rural life still beats in the seclusion of the small enclosures in people’s homes far off these little centres, down the hill surrounded by banana trees (see picture 3) and in the fields of sweet potatoes, beans, cassava, and sorghum. Extended family bonds still mark frontiers. “This is all one family”, a young man explained with a sweeping gesture over the crest of a hill. Certain structures seem to endure like elements of a parallel universe in a rapidly changing environment. Yet it is hard to resist the current of time. And these old structures that still remain, now slowly fade, giving way to a new vision of modern, rural life.

2.3.2 Changing Times in Rutunga

Rutunga was not one of these very bad places, where a lot of killings had taken place during the infamous three months in 1994. This is what I was told. Yet the **genocide** too has left its marks on the hills of Rutunga. Weathered signs bearing the word “JENOSIDE” at lake Muhazi remind of those who were thrown into the lake and died. I had listened to the accounts of genocide survivors, how they had fled over the lake to Uganda. I had met families which had lost children and children who had lost their parents. I had talked to widows and orphans. And even though they rarely touched upon this issue, and emphasised the importance of looking forward into the future, and not back, the genocide was still pertinent in their stories and in Rutunga life. It was around, not just in the weathered genocide signposts, but in the gaps in people’s narrations, in the absence of family members, in the Tigist camp at the shore of the marshland and its prisoners, who had built the new terraces and the road along the lake Muhazi.

In 1996, two years after the genocide, a new ***imidugudu* policy** was introduced into the rural areas of Rwanda. As the name *imidugudu*, which means “villages”, already indicates, the policy was aimed at grouping people together in village-like entities. The idea was to provide better access to electricity, water, education and health services, as a member of a local NGO explained to me. But the true advantage of the policy and its implementation remains a controversial issue.[39] In Rutunga

39 Long distances from the villages to the fields have created an additional burden for many families, female-headed households in particular. Agricultural output has decreased due to the difficulty in transferring compost to the fields. People who live in villages have complained about cases of crop theft, now that they are living far from

the *imidugudu* policy has had as a consequence that specific areas, usually close by the Sector’s central road were determined residential areas. It was not as bad as in other sectors where people were forced to destroy their homes, but the construction of a house outside these residential zones requires permission from the authorities. While the elder generations often refuse to settle in the new villages because of the emotional bonds with their families’ lands and to the history of the place, many of the young people of Rutunga, especially those who seek a living outside the agricultural sector, do not generally object to the idea of moving into the villages. They acknowledge the several advantages of living close by the road, yet they groan about the high costs of building land, which is way more expensive than what they can get by selling the family plot they inherited (if they did inherit anything at all). This comes with far-reaching consequences on the ground. Building or at least being able to rent a home in these new settlement areas is regarded as a condition for formal marriage. Marriage, or more generally, starting one’s own family, in turn, still marks a person’s entry into adulthood. Unaffordable costs for both one’s own home and a formal marriage ceremony therefore force young couples into so called “unlawful” marriages and cohabitation arrangements (Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014, 202–3). This also has effects in terms of women’s land rights, since “illegally” married couples cannot claim joint land titles or community of property, which give women the right to object to the sale of land (Bayisenge 2015, 30–31).

Rutunga is a history-charged place. “This place here is the origin of Rwanda” I was proudly told by an old *umudugudu* chief (M_UC_2015-04-06), and my subsequent literature research proved him right (Grohs 1990, 66). The village chief was wearing his Sunday clothes for our meeting. After giving me a short introduction of the different names of kings who had lived here, he was trying to bring alive a mental image of the former king’s palace situated on the hilltop, where now stood the buildings of a primary school. He showed me around the school yard, pointing to where the royal drums had been played. He led me to the place where he and the other children had checked on the pots that were rumoured to predict the rain and which, as he noted, were destroyed during the 1959 revolution. Then, we walked down the hill to a spring that flowed from a rock. I was told the story of how the king’s hunters had become thirsty, and he mimicked how the king had struck the rock with his bow to make water run out of it. Then the village chief stepped aside to make way for some people who had come here to fetch water from this dignified spring.

Very few places in Rutunga have running water, and despite the fact that today straw-thatched *nyakatsi* homes have been replaced by mud-brick houses with iron sheets, the general living conditions are modest. In 2012 electricity came to Rutunga and the black power cords are now rapidly

their fields. In some cases people refused to move into villages because of the emotional value of their family heritage. On a more general scale Newbury (2011) draws a line to Scott’s analysis of villagisation in Tanzania and the Soviet Union. She argues that the *imidugudu* policy was an authoritarian top-down approach to make the rural areas more legible.

extending into the more remote areas of the hills. However, many homes still sit in the dark because they cannot afford to buy “*ewasa*”[40] as the pre-paid electricity is locally called.

Despite the fact that Rutunga officially belongs to Kigali province, it is very rural in its appearance. Most people make their living from food production for self-use and for trade in the Kigali markets. However, an ongoing transformation from a rural environment towards a more peri-urban and at some point in the future probably even urban environment can be clearly observed. Kigali is growing quickly and the city’s arms reach out into the surrounding rural neighbourhoods. In the past decade Rutunga has become an attractive residential area among city dwellers who work in Kigali but prefer the peace of the countryside and the cool breeze from lake Muhazi. Wide roads have been drawn across fields which some time in the future will lead to prospective residential areas. Direct public transport between the Rutunga uphill area and Kimirongo market in town is already planned. In addition, the implementation of the Kigali Master Plan has led to waves of massive expropriation and displacements in several of Kigali’s suburbs. Many city dwellers are now looking for alternative places to live near the town. According to residents of Rutunga, the demand of land has exploded and the prices for a small building plot of 20 to 30 square metres have increased dramatically from about 200,000 RWF in 2013 to more than a million RWF in 2018. Agricultural land too has become a valuable resource. People from town have started to rent fields in Rutunga. Most of these people have left behind their own gardens in other parts of the country to find a job in Kigali. Life is getting more and more expensive in Rutunga and at night when the city lights shimmer distantly some of Rutunga’s youth make plans to leave the hill and try their luck in town.

The population of Rutunga is young. According to my own calculations based on *ubudehe* statistics from 2012, 43.9% of the population are minors, i.e. below the age of 18, and 88.6% of the population is below 50. In the following I investigate further into the data provided by the *ubudehe* statistics.

2.3.3 Ubudehe and Poverty in Rutunga

Ubudehe[41] is a social classification system. It was developed by the population in the context of the participatory poverty assessment that was launched by the government in 2001. Communities were called together to map their villages and to discuss the conditions and indicators of poverty and wealth. On the national level, this process resulted in a scheme of six categories based on criteria

40 In reference to the Energy Water and Saniation Authority (EWSA).

41 Before, *ubudehe* had existed as a cultural praxis of collective work and mutual support, for example when a house was constructed, when fields were prepared or when joint solutions for community problems were sought (Shah 2011, 53). The revival and redefinition of *ubudehe* by the post genocide government can be understood within the larger framework of the country’s rehabilitation process (Golooba-Mutebi 2006). Poverty reduction and decentralisation were among the priorities in the second phase of genocide rehabilitation that had started in 2000.

such as the possession of land or livestock; access to adequate accommodation, clothes and regular food; the ability to work or sell surplus at the market and access to education.

I was given access to these *ubudehe* files by the Rutunga sector office. The files included data about each household member’s, sex, year of birth, and ability/inability to work, with reasons such as “goes to school”, “is old”, “is sick” or “is handicapped”. The files I was given contained the *ubudehe* classifications of 2010 and 2012 for each household as well as the total number of people living in a household. With all these additional indicators the *ubudehe* files turned out to be a rich resource to obtain deeper insights into Rutunga’s demographic development and the social composition of the population. However, despite these qualities one must be aware of the fact that the data are prone to high fluctuation in population because of Kigali’s growing urbanisation. As the Rutunga Registry officer noted during one of our meetings, many of the newcomers in Rutunga were not yet registered (I_RRO_2015-05-11). Furthermore, I found typos and gaps in the data file.

In 2010, 3,056 households were recorded in the *ubudehe* files of Rutunga, with a total of 13,739 household members (inhabitants). By 2012 the total number of inhabitants had increased to 17,550 in 3,957 households. In recent years the numbers have jumped – to 19,850 inhabitants in 4,508 households in 2018 (Information of Rutunga Sector Officer 2018-06-22).

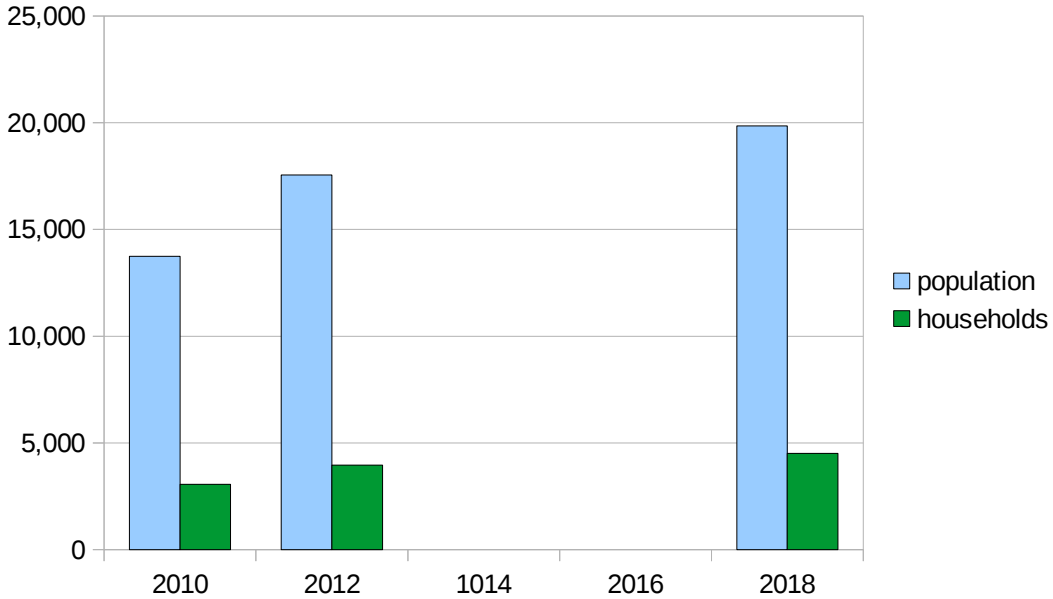


Figure 2: Demographic development of Rutunga between 2010 and 2018

The steady rise of Rutunga’s population accounts, among other things, for the high level of migration from Kigali, as previously noted. With a total surface of 42.6 km² the population density in Rutunga has increased from 323/km² in 2010 to 466/km² in 2018. Yet Rutunga remains among the sectors with a low population density as compared to most other, much more urbanised sectors within Kigali Province (GoR and Ndizeye 2013, 4).

Let us turn back to the *ubudehe* files. As we see below (figure 3), in 2010, most households were classified in category 3 as “poor” (~42%) or category 2 as “vulnerable” (~36%). However, if the two lowest categories, the most vulnerable and the vulnerable, are merged, they constitute slightly more than half of Rutunga’s households in 2010. We can gather from these data that very few households in Rutunga belong to the higher and wealthier categories. In 2010 one single household was classified in the highest category, the “money-rich”. Two years later, in the 2012 *ubudehe* this one household was downgraded into a lower category, which left Rutunga with not a single “money-rich” household. Comparing the data from 2010 and 2012 shows that this single case reflects upon a general trend: In 2012, the number of households in the higher and wealthier categories had dropped while the number of vulnerable households had jumped up from 9% to 54%. This increase was not only driven by the fact that households have become poorer. Migration and the high number of vulnerable households that had settled down in Rutunga between 2010 and 2012 have contributed to this considerable rise of vulnerable households. In 2012, about 900 additional households were classified under *ubudehe*, as compared to 2010.

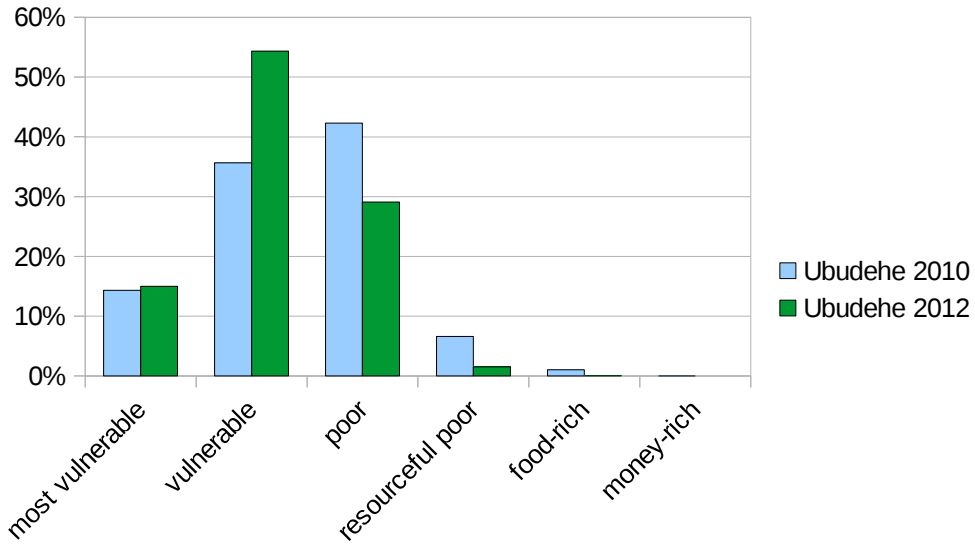


Figure 3: Distribution of ubudehe categories in Rutunga, 2010 and 2012

With regard to female-headed households, which have increased from 924 in 2010 to 1,194 in 2012, the two diagrams below (see figure 4) illustrate that female-headed households are considerably poorer and more vulnerable than male-headed households. While the percentage of vulnerable households seems to be more or less independent of the sex of the household head, the above noted discrepancy can mostly be attributed to the high number of most vulnerable female-headed households, and the much higher share of poor, male-headed households.

The classifications of *ubudehe* became a central tool for development organisations and the government programs alike to reach households of the lower categories. In addition, the vulnerable and

most vulnerable households were released from paying the fees for health insurance or other administrative taxes. Of course, these economic advantages made downgrades into lower *ubudehe* classes very attractive, which also might have impinged on the poor outcome of the 2012 classification.

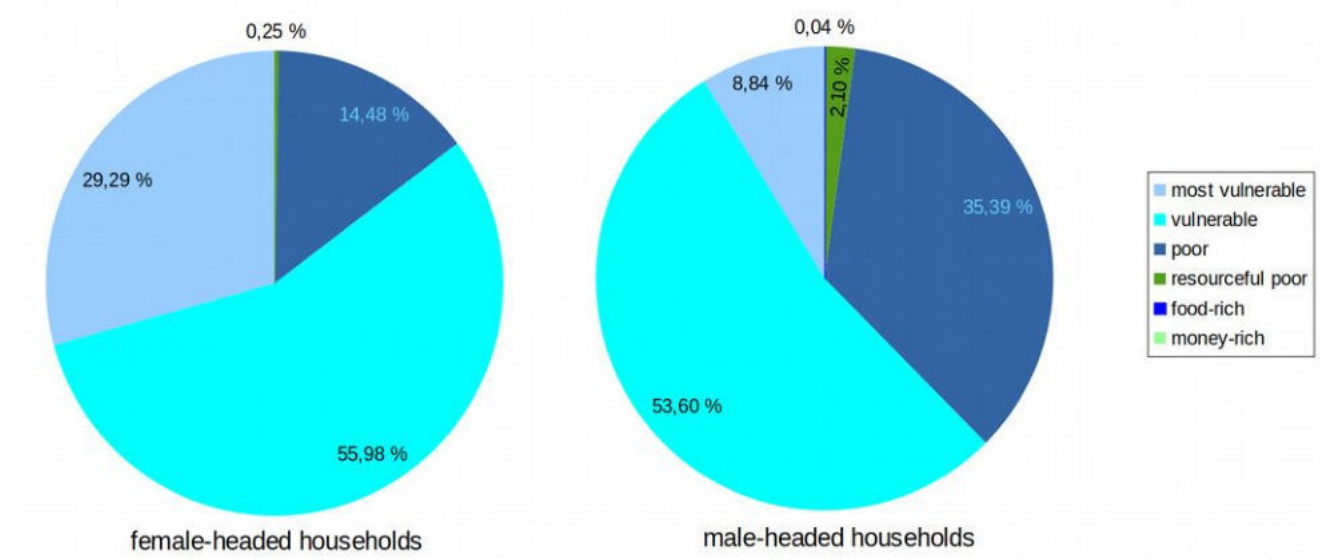


Figure 4: Distribution of ubudehe categories 2012 for female- and male-headed households in Rutunga

In 2014 the *ubudehe* scheme was reorganised by the government into four instead of the former six categories. The new categories and the rising incidences of wrongly classified households had been leaked to the press and caused a country-wide turmoil, which is why the release of the 2014 *ubudehe* data was withdrawn and postponed. This was also the reason why I could not access the more current *ubudehe* data from 2014. Anyway, the comparability of the data has become difficult due to the new classification system.

In Rutunga the new classification was subject to suspicion and frustration among several local families I met on a regular basis. They were confused about the new classes and felt misrepresented. “I was put into the third category just because I am wearing glasses!” a member of a marshland cooperative complained. Several more people in the cooperative shared this view. They claimed they had been wrongly classified and now were charged further fees that they could not afford. “What are we supposed to do?” a woman asked. “We were ranked into a higher category and now our kids no longer get free education. We cannot afford the school fees. Isn’t it better, then, if kids work in the fields to earn some little extra income?” and a discussion evolved about the growing number of children working in fields instead of going to school (M_BF_2015-07-10).

However, the cooperative members had not always been so clear and frank about their personal perceptions. Getting them to trust me and talk to me in such an open way was the result of a longer process. A process that, in many ways, resembled a balancing act between complicity and compli-

ance: complicity with the local farmers and compliance with the state authorities’ ideas about my research.

2.4. First Steps on the Ground: Local Hierarchies and Administration

Before setting foot into the “real” field, I was advised by my co-supervisor to introduce myself to the local authorities to inform them about my research, before they started to wonder about my activities. Gebauer (2015), for example, writes that she had to follow a meticulous introduction procedure through the vertical administration (from district level to cell level) whenever she needed to talk to local villagers. This need, to first go through the formal and informal hierarchies on the hill before seeking direct contact with local peasant families, has already been described by de Lame, who researched Rwanda about thirty years ago:

> Once I had taken the first steps (…) it became feasible for me to play on my access to one or the other of the local or national elites to make my stay more pleasant. There is a yawning gap between that elite and the peasants who interested me most: it would have been impossible to move in the opposite direction (de Lame 2005, 34).

In the late 1980s, when her research took place, de Lame had to seek official authorisation for her research as well. “In the field, both sides are cautious”, she writes,

> In Rwanda, the usual wariness is compounded in the face of such an unusual visitor. The anthropologist cannot be put in any known category: missionary, cooperation worker, volunteer or other. Conversely, her presence in this rural setting requires an official authorization and therefore implies a tie with the authorities at the central level, since no formal consent is demanded of the local authorities (the burgomaster or *secteur* councillor) (de Lame 2005, 33).

Despite such resemblances, what is utterly different in her account, compared with today’s situation, is the fact that the local authorities (on sector and cell level), at the latest since the 2006 territorial reform, act as the elongated arm of the state power. “The executive secretary is the most powerful person at the sector and cell levels. He or she is appointed by the central authorities in Kigali and mostly comes from outside the sector”, Ingelaere (2011, 69) writes. He argues that this new local governance structure silences the “people’s shout” rather than strengthening their voices against the “ruler’s drum” – a common metaphor used in Rwanda to express the centralisation of power.

Thus, in recognition of these conditions, the first act of research was to pay visits to the sector- and cell-level authorities, whom Ingelaere (2011, 69) calls “the backbone of the local government”. Thomson reflects about the relevance of such visits:

> At first I scoffed at the idea of wasting my time talking to these officials, but I learned quickly that the local people themselves would not speak to me without my having paid the requisite courtesy visit. In effect, the research permit from the ministry protected the local official, who needed to know that I had central permission to be in his neck of the woods, and the official permission from the local official protected the ordinary folk (Thomson 2010, 23).

Similar to Thomson’s experience of what followed these “courtesy visits”, I was largely ignored – at least on the surface – by the local authorities. Yet, in contrast to Thomson who was regularly asked for her permission letter, which she “carried (...) at all times” (Thomson 2010, 23), I was asked for my research permit only on rare occasions and exclusively by government officials or representatives from government institutions.

The newly gained liberty to wander about the hills “freely” and to engage in conversation with “ordinary folks” felt like a major milestone achievement after the wearing process of obtaining research permission. However, seeking exchange with locals soon proved to be more complex than initially foreseen. The problem was not so much one of getting in contact with people in the first place. The local officials willingly provided contacts to the leaders of marshland cooperatives and even assisted me in arranging the first meetings, probably also to keep a close eye on my investigations. The real difficulty was in creating an atmosphere of trust in which the members of the marshland cooperatives would confide in me and share their personal views and would provide accounts that challenged the public transcript, rather than following the official laudation of the government’s success.

2.5. Public Transcripts of Four Rwandan Marshland Cooperatives

The Rwandan marshlands are state property, and with the new land law, local farmers were encouraged by the government to become members of so-called marshland cooperatives. Five cooperatives were officially known in the marshland areas of my research site. Four of them were agricultural cooperatives, while the fifth cooperative was producing clay stoves and was no longer active. So I was left with four agricultural cooperatives. While I will refer to the biggest cooperative by its true name, “Abakumburwa”, using pseudonyms only for its members, I have invented new names for the three small cooperatives, to make sure that their members’ identities cannot be traced.

The **Abakumburwa cooperative** operated on an area of about sixty hectares in Kajevuba marshland (see map on page 59). At the time of my fieldwork in 2015 and 2016, they counted more than 300 members from three sectors adjacent to the marshland. The cooperative had emerged from a vegetable-export project in the 1970s, and many of its members looked back on a long history of cultivating in this marshland (see chapter 4). Apart from several breaks before and during the genocide, they had become used to working this land collectively, yet only in 2010 had the cooperative become officially recognised by the Rwandan Cooperative Agency (RCA). The entry fee which at my first encounter with this cooperative was set at 10,000 RWF, but later on lowered to 7,000 RWF. The members of the Abakumburwa cooperative were mainly involved in vegetable production, especially green beans and aubergines. Most of the produce was sold to Kigali or to local retailers.

As a relatively well-known and nationally recognised cooperative, they received regular financial and technical support from state-led development programs. By the time of my research, they had just started a joint venture with a foreign investor, which I will write about in detail later (see chapter 8).

The three other marshland cooperatives, in contrast, were much smaller. Unlike the Abakumburwa cooperative, they had never made their status official at the RCA. Thus, strictly speaking, they were to be called “associations”.[42] However, I learned about this difference only at a later stage of my research, because they themselves as well as the local officers commonly referred to them as cooperatives.

The **Bright Future cooperative** consisted of eighteen members – eleven women and seven men – who cultivated on three hectares of marshland. The cooperative had emerged from a development project that was launched by an international NGO. In 2006, they were granted some marshland by the local government (Sector). They had wanted to become professional cultivators, but later on, when the external support had stopped, they changed their vision and divided the land into individual plots of four ares each. Only a small area was kept as a collective plot for common cooperative activities. They mostly cultivated vegetables and root crops such as aubergines, cabbages, beetroot, and sweet potatoes, which they partly sold at the nearby markets and/or used for home consumption. Additionally, the cooperative was struggling to comply with the government’s new Crop Intensification Program (CIP),[43] which obliged them to cultivate maize in one out of three cultivation seasons[44] (see chapter 5). A cooperative member could have a maximum of two plots, depending on her*his labour capacity. They usually had a fixed day for cultivation and they arranged special working days for common cooperative activities such as cleaning the drainage channels or discussing future activities. While all men, apart from one young one, were married, most of the female cooperative members were widowed. Each member had to contribute a yearly share of 750 RWF/year. The initial entry fee was 50,000 RWF in 2015 – a relatively high fee that resulted from earlier achievements and the cooperative members’ financial contributions over the past years. Apart from their agricultural activities, the cooperative also functioned as a saving and lending association.

42 According to the latest cooperative policy, the term “cooperative” may be only used for cooperatives registered under the RCA (see chapter 5.2). In this work I do not adhere to this official distinction. I will speak of “cooperative” unless the formal status is relevant for my argument. The issue of the terminological fuzziness of the cooperative concept will be addressed several more times in this work (see pages 102, 211).

43 The CIP is a government program which was introduced in 2007 to boost agricultural production. On the basis of scientific investigations, seven priority crops were selected and attributed to certain regions according to their “agro-ecological zones”. Additionally, improved seeds were distributed (in a first phase for free) to the cooperative farmers who would also receive subsidies for fertilisers. Ideally these crops then had to be planted in a structured, and well organised way, using monocropping techniques and a synchronised production setup for each task (Huggins 2013, 96; Kathiresan 2012, 22). For more information see chapter 3.4 and chapter 5.

44 The agricultural year in Rwanda is divided into three seasons which vary regionally. In the region of my field site, season A is from September to January/Feburary. Season B (the rainy season) starts in February/March and season B (the dry season) starts in May/July. They usually had to crop maize in season A.

The **Vegetable for Peace cooperative** had formed in 1997. At that time, soon after the genocide, the rural population faced poverty and access to land was a great issue. The cooperative had emerged out of the necessity to cultivate more land and so the local authorities had granted them use rights for two hectares of marshland. Some members had cultivated in this marshland already before the genocide. By that time, they were cultivating there as individuals or families. Now, as a cooperative, they had a common cooperative plot besides the members’ individual plots. Initially they had started with 30 members, but by the time of my research, the number had decreased to 17 – eleven men and six women. The cooperative cultivated different vegetables such as cabbages, aubergines, French beans and green peppers. As in the Bright Future cooperative, the harvest was mostly sold at the local markets. However, when the yield was a good one, they would organise transport and trade larger quantities to Kigali markets, which was more profitable. They also cultivated sweet potatoes to restore the soil, which, I was told, was getting fatigued from time to time. However, unlike the Bright Future cooperative, they were not obliged to crop maize, probably because their marshland was more remote than that of the Bright Future cooperative. The entry fee for this cooperative was 200,000 RWF. They had a collective working day once a week.

The third small cooperative was the **Sweet Salvation cooperative**. It had 19 members (more or less gender balanced), who were working on a marshland area of 2.5 ha. In contrast to all other cooperatives, they had not split the marshland into individual plots, but were cultivating sugar cane on the entire area of their marshland. They hired additional workers for the task of planting, but met as a cooperative to do the weeding and harvesting. At harvest time, they would inform the children in their neighbourhood to come down and buy their sugar cane at 100 RWF for three pieces. This had proven to be more profitable than the cultivation of vegetables, which they had done in the former time. They saved their money in the cooperative’s bank account, and once it reached about 1.5 million, each member would obtain an equal share. As I was told by the men of the cooperative, they had worked in this marshland already before the genocide. After the genocide, they became a cooperative and took the “ladies” on board, most of whom were widows. The entry fee for this cooperative was 100,000 RWF, and as with the other two small cooperatives, the members had a common working day once a week.

The introductory meetings with the three small cooperatives took place at the cell office. This was the location suggested either by the cooperative presidents themselves or by the cell leaders when they had arranged the meeting for me. At this first encounter, which was usually attended by the president and a few cooperative members (mostly the cooperative leadership), I asked some general questions about how the cooperative had come into being, about the cooperative’s activities in the marshland, how the cooperative was organised, how many members it had, and what surface area the cooperative’s marshland plot covered. Furthermore, I wanted to know how they had gained

access to the marshland in the first place and what kind of crops they were growing, and I was interested in getting an idea of the members’ social backgrounds and personal motivation for being part of a marshland cooperative. Each meeting was recorded, and followed the classical etiquette: after introducing myself and my assistant, I explained my research interest. Then, the cooperative members would introduce themselves and the president would reply to each of my questions. Other members only would talk once they were given the word by the president, or towards the end of the meeting when it had become more informal.

The information the cooperatives provided in these introductory meetings was broadly a replay of the government's vision of how cooperatives **should** work. Yet my visits to their marshlands a few weeks later revealed a very different picture: There was a yawning gap between the policy discourse and the cooperatives’ effective functioning – a gap which will be further elaborated in the coming chapters of this work.

2.6. Intimate Truths: A Habit of Secrecy

Such “adjusting encounters” as my first visits in the marshland were quite common experiences during my fieldwork. Several other authors (Ingelaere 2010a; Thomson 2010; Thomson, Ansoms, and Murison 2012; Bouka 2012; de Lame 2005; Purdeková 2015) have reported about the ambivalence between public image and the lived reality in Rwanda. Not only the state apparatus, but even ordinary Rwandans are well-trained, not to say “disciplined”, in repeating the official government discourse of success. There is a term in Kinyarwanda called *ubwenge* that captures this kind of public performance, which is deeply rooted in Rwanda’s history:

> Ubwenge is both an overall principle structuring behaviour and display, and also a specific way of communicating. In the traditional organization of Rwandan society, speech acts did not correspond to reality alone, and what one said did not necessarily correspond with what one thought (Ingelaere 2010a, 54).

One may argue that this is not a specific characteristic of Rwandans, yet I do not know any other place where this principle is performed in such an elaborate way. Like the population of no other country that I have encountered, Rwandans are proficient in keeping a clear line between the public and the private sphere. This can be seen, for example, in a set of rules that relate to the public space, such as the prohibition of eating food. Even small children could not help giggling when my unwitting visitor unpacked his *irindazi*[45] outside the shop and took a lusty bite. *Ubwenge* also is an essential part of people’s reservation or “caution” towards strangers. It finds expression in what de Lame calls “secrecy”:

45 pl. *amandazi* is a deep-fried sweet dumpling eaten as a snack.

> Secrecy, emphasized by both Rwandans and by foreigners, contributes to the aura of mystery surrounding this culture. “Secretion” indeed, is an object to be studied by the anthropologist who then understands, more prosaically, why people refuse to give information or genuinely do not remember. (…) Secretion, because it is quite diffuse in Rwanda, is also pervasive. In this cultural universe, for lack of a spatially structured community, the circulation of goods gives boundaries to social spaces, as do the retention of secrets and the circulation of information. All sorts of imaginary representations of secrets definitely marked ruling class culture, but similar expressions may be found in specific hillside habits, where outsiders are kept at a distance, in particular by using linguistic codes. The anthropologist who respects the local rhythms is accepted on the hillside but is still a stranger on the neighboring hill. (…) Secrets are a preferred tool for forging an identity, both individual and collective. The custom of concealing one's personal name indicates how the preservation of integrity through secrecy should be interpreted (de Lame 2005, 14f).

De Lame further elaborates on how the Rwandan habit of secrecy has been shaped throughout history. Some of her observations are no longer accurate. Migratory movements, the war, the genocide, as well as the government’s *imidugudu* policy[46] have profoundly altered the traditional hillside setting. Yet several aspects of secrecy pertain, such as the way how people make use of proverbs (Ingelaere 2011) or employ a whole range of narrative techniques such as contradictions, silence or rhetoric questions which are applied to hide one’s opinion within the larger public discourse or to evade the panoptical eye of the state (Bouka 2012, 118).

Getting close to Rwandans therefore is not only a physical matter. It is about becoming familiar with the subtle tactics of *ubwenge:* about making sense of the gaps in people’s narrations, reading the silence of a missing answer, understanding people’s sudden change of topic, explaining the vagueness of how certain terms are used, or evaluating commonly used proverbs[47] or catchy phrases such as: “Gender equality is not about women, it is about women and men!” Individual stories that sounded overly similar made me suspicious, at the same time as I was struggling to make sense of incoherent statements. Often it was months later, while listening to an interview or scanning through my notebooks back home, when suddenly a peculiar answer would open up a new way of understanding. As Thomson (2010, 21f) writes: “A careful look at what may appear to be trivial matters – remaining silent, laughing at the wrong moment, or playing dumb – can provide important insights into the dynamics of power in contexts of coercive state authority”. In a nutshell, this is all about learning to read what Scott calls the “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990). At the same time, getting close is also about creating a confidential atmosphere that makes people feel safe to express

46 *Imidugudu* (ag. *umudugudu*) is the Kinyarwanda expression for villages. It also is used as an administrative entity below the cell level. The new *imidugudu* policy, which is also referred to as villagisation policy, aims at resettling people into village-like agglomerations as opposed to the traditionally dispersed settlement scheme in Rwanda. The new village pattern is supposed to facilitate access to water, electricity, health service as well as other infrastructure (Ingelaere 2014). Furthermore, the policy serves to “liberate” arable land for agricultural intensification (Ansoms 2009, 303). However, the *imidugudu* policy is contested (Sommers and Uvin 2011; Pottier 2006; C. Newbury 2011).

47 The use of Kinyarwanda proverbs is very common and has contributed to the language’s ambiguous character. There is a reason why researchers such as de Lame or Thomson equipped themselves with a book of proverbs rather than a dictionary (de Lame 2005, 37; Thomson 2010, 27).

their views as well as building personal relationships and trust, which is equally important. I share this perspective with de Lame (2005, 33) who writes:

> In the field, as elsewhere, people must get to know each other. Ethnography is always the story of a relationship. Without deconstructing that history, it is nonetheless important to give the reader an idea of its general tenor. Identification and power are the two issues on which the relationship rides.

During fieldwork, I was regularly told lies, and I was not always aware of this, especially in the beginning. As time went by, I stopped getting frustrated over my failure to win people’s confidence. Instead, I came to understand lies as valuable indicators of how the production of knowledge works in Rwanda. Fuji (2010, 232) argues that lies in their various forms of expressions contain valuable metadata and “(…) constitute data in their own right”.

As Ingelaere (2010a, 42) writes, “(…) in a society in which daily life itself is politicized, it is difficult for an observer to interpret or gain a balanced understanding of the social milieu”. Anthropologists here definitely have tangible advantages as compared to short-term researchers or journalists who may be critical of the idealised image of Rwanda but rarely have the capacity to encounter more than the surface layer. Anthropological knowledge construction draws on insights that are gained over a longer period of time. It does not exclusively rely on the spoken word but is based on a more holistic sensual experience of what one has seen, tasted and smelt, performed, experienced, listened to and felt. Purdeková (2015, 21) concludes about the value of anthropological fieldwork in highly politicised research contexts: “Observation and participation allow for reading of behaviour in its context and can uncover the way in which power is mapped onto relations, spatial arrangements procedures and protocols, moods or speech”.

In order to put this methodological understanding into practice, I had decided to go for a combination of different methods. In the following section I will point out how these different methods or “tools” helped me to break the ice and dig deeper into the ground of facts.

2.7. Tools and Techniques of Investigation

The use of different methods not only serves to increase the confidence in one’s data by means of triangulation (Lund 2014, 226f), it also compensates for the possible loopholes each method usually has. The **introductory meetings** and **focus groups** with the cooperatives served as a good entry point into research and provided basic information about marshland management and the cooperative members’ perspectives on marshland policies or prevailing gender norms. Yet they were not the right framework to address issues such as conflicts within the cooperative. **Personal conversations** with cooperative members offered more space for talking about sensitive issues, such as personal relations or problematic power dynamics inside the cooperative. These conversations usually took

place in the person’s home and gave valuable contextual information about the socio-economic background of the cooperative members. On the downside, it is more difficult to draw general conclusions from such individual accounts, as compared to the statements in group discussions, which are subject to direct contestation. After a while, I realised that more relevant even than this inside view of cooperative members were the outsider perspectives of those who were not (or were no longer) part of a marshland cooperative. In such cases, a **narrative interview** approach proved expedient to trace underlying mechanisms of exclusion from marshland cooperatives as well as the transformation of gender role patterns. To complement these different narratives that would often stretch back to a time before the war and the genocide, I started to look out for historical documents. I visited different **archives** and collected old policy papers and project reports, newspaper articles and teaching material related to my research’s key issues: gender, marshlands and cooperatives. Throughout that time, I arranged and conducted **semi-structured expert interviews** with local-level representatives as well as with officials from different government institutions and NGOs. These interviews served to provide me with a clear idea about the official narratives and the public enactment of the government’s success story. Interestingly, yet not surprisingly, lower-ranking officials adhered to the official government discourse more carefully than did high-ranking officials. I could then contrast these “official” versions with the lived realities of Rwandans on the ground. My **stay in Rutunga,** and my partial incorporation into the local community, certainly constituted the most valuable source of data. Observing daily routines, anticipating local highlights such as weddings, community meetings, local elections or religious festivities, and getting used to the rhythms of rural everyday life converged into a multifaceted, often highly contradictory image that I sketched down in my notebooks and field diaries.

2.7.1 Focus Groups and Interactive Methods: Shaking off the Masquerade

After the introductory meetings with the marshland cooperatives which I have already outlined in the section “Public Transcripts of Four Rwandan Marshland Cooperatives”, I visited the cooperatives in their marshland fields and started to arrange meetings for focus groups. Over the past forty years or so, focus groups have gained in popularity among social scientists, because they provide rich and detailed content data (H. R. Bernard 2006, 233–39). In most cases, focus groups are combined with other methods and often – though not in this work – they are used as a complement to or in preparation for a survey. My choice fell to focus groups because I was expecting, through them, to gain a better understanding of rural life and marshland agriculture and to collect different attitudes towards gender norms in Rwanda. In addition, I liked the idea of focus groups, at this early stage of my research, because, as Morgan (1996, 133) writes, “(…) they allow participants to exercise a fair degree of control over their own interactions”. Thus, I figured the focus groups to be a

good framework within which the other participants and I could get to know each other better and to become comfortable with each other.

Usually, focus groups follow a specific “factorial design” (H. R. Bernard 2006, 236). For my research women and men of each of three small cooperatives were grouped separately. Every group was met twice so that in total twelve focus groups of about three hours each were conducted. Since three hours of pure discussion is quite a long time, I incorporated several breaks and interactive methods to ease the debate. For the latter, Feldstein and Jiggin’s (1994) “Tools for the field: Methodologies Handbook for Gender Analysis in Agriculture” provided a very inspirational source.

The first round of group discussion involved focussing on the gendered division of labour. It started with an icebreaker for participants get know each other a little better. I asked the cooperative members to line up according to different criteria such as body size (first of all, to become familiar with the concept of lining up), how far away from or how close to the marshland they were staying , for how long they had been working in the marshland, their age and how many members they had in their household. My assistant and I participated in this introductory play, which regularly caused amusement and incentives for discussions, for instance when I was asking the cooperative members to take a step to the front if they were widowed and a step back in case they were unmarried, and they became curious about my own background. I was also asking them about other income activities apart from farming.

After the introduction, which took about half an hour, we launched into a **discussion about different activities, tasks and responsibilities** of the cooperative members. This approach was inspired by the study by Butler Flora (1994) and helped me to illuminate often neglected “invisible” work done in the female domestic sphere as well as gender-specific working patterns. I asked the cooperative members what they had been doing the day before, what kind of tasks they were doing on a regular basis or only once/few times a week/month, which activities were done in the rainy season or in the dry season, and also what kind of activities they did in different locations such as at home, on the hillside fields,[48] in the marshland, or in community places (the centre, the church, the market, the sector office) to pay justice to the temporal and spatial relatedness of these activities.[49]

48 I decided to include the hillsides into my investigations, because I had realised that there is a close link between marshland and hillside activities.

49 It is important to note that the reported activities differed in detail. While some would simply state that they “went to the fields”, others would further specify what they did in the fields. In some cases activities were not remembered or considered worth mentioning, and only once the activity was brought up by one member was it also put forward in the subsequent accounts. I had decided to ask for the activities performed on the day before our meeting, expecting that participants still had a clear memory about that day. But of course answers differed a lot depending on whether that day was a Sunday or a normal working day. However, these difficulties triggered little explanations and discussions which in the end were very helpful to understand the relatedness between activities and time.

Following a short break, we played an interactive game about the agricultural production, processing and marketing in the marshlands and on the hillside fields, so-called **“activity profiles”**. This approach was following a method explained by Holcombe (1994, 98). Since many of the cooperative members, in particular women and old people, were illiterate, my assistants had helped me to prepare drawings which showed different steps in the cultivation process, from preparing the ground, sowing seeds, applying manure etc. up to harvesting and processing the yields. By means of a little quiz I made them familiar with the drawings and asked them to sort the activities according to the order in which they were performed. This posed a challenge because some activities, such as watering or clearing the water outlets, were done several times and the order also differed from crop to crop. Then, the cooperative members were asked to choose two crops, one that was typically grown in the marshland and one that was grown on the hillside. In a second step, they had to place different varieties of beans beside each activity to visualise whether this activity was done more by men or women, and on some occasions also beans that represented children’s help were added. When there was still time, we did another round of crops. This exercise led me to a more differentiated understanding of the labour division in the processes of agricultural production and often triggered discussions about gender-specific role patterns and peculiarities about the marshlands as compared to the hillsides.

The second round of focus groups took place at the home of one of the cooperative members. It started with a **transect walk** (Schönhuth, Kievelitz, and GTZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit 1995, 47–49) where the cooperative members would show me around the homestead and lead me through the surrounding hillside fields. Unfortunately the marshlands were too far away to be included in these walks. To deal with this situation, the marshlands were added on the **resource map** (Buenavista and Butler Flora 1994) which we drew together after the transect walk. In these resource maps, we captured the agro-economic systems of households and mapped the relationships between the homestead and the marshland and other important places and institutions similarly to how it was done by Lightfood, Feldman, and Abedin (1994). Since all these participatory methods were conducted in groups separated by gender, I could later compare the outcomes and see what kind of gender-related differences emerged from these maps. Following a short break, the second round of focus groups was closed with a more general **discussion about gender identity and gender equality**. I introduced this discussion by saying: “The last time we talked a lot about the different activities that women do and that men do at home, in the fields and around Rutunga, but what actually is a woman/man?” The discussions stimulated by this question usually revealed very personal perspectives upon traditional gender role patterns and how they were about

to change. The discussions also revealed a lot about the relationship between women and men and outlined positive as well as negative perceptions of the government’s gender politics. When the cooperative members’ attentiveness waned, I asked them to get up and participate in a little **game about gender and spatial time allocation** I had developed myself.[50] Based on the insights from the first round of focus groups, I had prepared sheets that represented typical places where time was spent: at home, on the fields, in the centre/the market, at a friend’s place, at church. I spread out those “places” on the ground and asked the members to move to the one place where they spent most of the time of their day. I participated in this game, while my assistant took pictures, and we discussed the results before moving on to the place where we spent the second greatest amount of time of the day, and so forth. Then, I asked them to “switch gender” and repeat the whole procedure in their new gender identity, which usually provoked a much more homogeneous and stereotypical image of gender roles.

All focus groups were voice-recorded and for each of them I was accompanied by one of my assistants, who helped me with the translation and documentation of the focus groups.[51] What we also did with some cooperative members, while waiting for the others to arrive, was to fill out **day activity clocks**. This time-allocation method was taken from a “Field Level Handbook for the Socio Economic and Gender Analysis Program” by the FAO (Vicki Wilde, SEAGA Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Programme, and FAO 2001, 82–84). It is a relatively simple technique that opened many opportunities for further discussion. The day-clocks are of a different quality than the statistical tools of time allocation that originated from the hunter-gatherer studies (H. R. Bernard 2006, 425). The cooperative members were asked to visualise their activities of the previous day in a clock-like format. The day-activity clocks thus represent activities as they were retrospectively perceived and remembered and not the activities that had actually taken place. But the cooperative members liked this way of visualising their activities over a day and for me it was helpful to get accustomed to the various rhythms of rural life.

Having spent substantial time on these focus groups, I increasingly set out for individual visits and interviews. These not only included cooperative members, but also people from outside the cooperative context. What really surprised me about all these different meetings and interviews in various contexts was the fluency of how most Rwandans adapted their appearance and behaviour to the given situation and purpose of the meeting. Changing like chameleons, they acted differently according to whether we met “officially” at the cell office, “casually” on the way to the market or in their fields or “privately” in their homes.

50 Thanks here to my friend Doro Born for her feedback and valuable ideas in developing the method.

51 Retrospectively, it would have been better to work with at least two assistants, one for the translation, another one for the documentation, such as taking pictures and notes.

2.7.2 Visiting and Interviewing People in their Homes: Truth and Ostentation

I gained some of the most valuable insights from visiting people in their own places. Such visits can be a good opportunity for creating bonds on a more personal level. Methodologically speaking, there are several further advantages to meeting people and doing interviews in the environment in which a person is most confident: her or his home. The first, great advantage relates to the above outlined, highly sensitised, political context of Rwanda. Shielded from the public eyes and ears, the most straightforward answers were given in the intimacy of the private sphere, where my informants felt confident and safe and where the public image clashed with the lived realities too obviously to preserve the masquerade. The latter points to another great advantage of meeting people in their own homesteads: getting a glimpse of different places and homes all over the hill was extremely helpful to better contextualise and understand my informants’ stories. To walk down the steep path that leads to a home and to slip at the very spot I had been warned of before, to refresh myself at the streamlet where water was fetched and to breathe the air of their habitat with its traces of smells of food, animals, perfume or sweat, let alone the way I was introduced to the different household members and neighbours, were thick details. These details offered a more vivid understanding and often provided answers before even asking the question.

I soon came to understand the Rwandan home as a relatively reliable imprint of a family’s socio-economic status.[52] For example there are typically two kinds of bricks that are commonly used in my research site: burned clay bricks, and soil bricks which are bigger in size, but only sun-dried and therefore much cheaper (see picture 4). Nowadays, better-off homes usually have electricity and a cement floor inside the house, whereas soil ground is found in modest homes. This difference accounts for the small but subtle distinction between *gukoropa* and *gukubura*: “Those who have a good floor mop, but us, we are poor. We don’t mop, we sweep!” I had been told in a discussion with female cooperative members of the Bright Future cooperative (FG_BFW_2015-05-25). Glass windows and painted walls are indicators of prosperity, while poorer households use wood or metal sheets to cover the small holes that serve as “windows” and use pieces of cloth instead of doors inside the place. “Homes”, de Lame (2005, 127) writes, “even more than clothing, afford an opportunity for ostentation, and the use of ‘modern’ goods indicates that the household has access both to cash and to the new know-how, without relinquishing the traditional signs of wealth”. Ostentation in particular applies to the *uruganiriro*, meaning “conversation room”, which is the first room of a house to which visitors are led and offered a seat. Mostly these rooms are nicely decorated. Pictures and posters are pinned to the walls, paper chains curl down from the ceiling and heavily upholstered

52 This insight is also used by household surveys which nowadays often include information about housing characteristics, (i.e. materials used for walls, floors and roofs) (NISR and MINECOFIN 2012, 15). Even though I consider such observable indicators valuable data to contextualise research findings, I would be reluctant to draw definite conclusions from a more standardised approach as is done in such surveys.

chairs and crochet tablecloths invite guests to linger. Poor families offer a wooden bench, while they make themselves comfortable on the carpet. During the first visit, one rarely gets to see much more than exactly this conversation room. “Hurried investigators will see what people want to show them”, de Lame (2005, 15) writes about how the Rwandan habit of secrecy is entrenched in the configuration of homesteads. Only once you have become a familiar face, you might as well be led to the backyard, which preserves a microcosm on its own. It is the realm where most of the daily home activities take place: where animals are kept and fed, where food is prepared and the children are washed. The backyard equally offers space to sit down, listen to the radio and relax.

Yet even the intimate sphere of a person’s home is not free from curious neighbours (Bouka 2012, 112) or family-related dynamics of power and secrecy, as the following incident demonstrates. I had set out to meet an elderly woman, who had complained about her husband’s behaviour. She and her husband were both members in one of the cooperatives I was working with and I had met them on several previous occasions. A few weeks earlier, one of my assistants and I had accompanied them on their way to the market. As we were walking up the hill and chatting about the upcoming wedding of their son, her husband decided to hurry ahead because he had several errands to run at the market and it was already getting late. This was the strategic moment the woman choose to confide in my assistant. In a low voice she reported how her husband was abusing and beating her. She wanted to share her story with me in more detail, but her husband exercised strict control over her whereabouts and carefully watched her movements. So we agreed to meet at their place in the afternoon when her husband would not be around. On the agreed day, we came to see her. As foreseen, her husband was not around and we started to talk, but just few minutes into our conversation her husband suddenly entered the room. We switched the subject and we soon left under the pretext of visiting the newly married couple to whom we had promised some wedding pictures. Any further attempt to meet the woman on her own failed, because her husband had become suspicious. This case clearly shows how patriarchal power relations within a household may impact upon a woman’s opportunity to speak out freely. It challenges the perception of the household as a “neutral”, “egalitarian” and “harmonious” entity and as such it is consistent with the feminist critique of the “unitary household model” which still lies at the heart of many agrarian policy debates (Razavi 2009).

When visiting and interviewing people in their homes, I employed various interview techniques. In some cases, for instance when I intended to find out more about a specific investment project in one of the marshlands (see chapter 8), I opted for semi-structured interviews following a set of open questions. In other cases I opted for a more narrative interview approach, especially when I was more generally interested in a person’s take on marshland agriculture and how this was related to that person’s biography.

2.7.3 Narrative Interviews: Lost in Translation

Narrative interviews aim at generating “(…) subjective statements about events and biographical processes” (Diekmann 2004, 449). They are a very common tool in biographical research (Schütze 1983). In the context of my research, I was interested in how personal histories are reflected in the way the marshland was used and exploited at different times. Thus, these narrative interviews disclosed a lot of life stories, but also individual perspectives on the local marshland history.

As the name suggests, the narrative interview functions in such a way that it tries to evoke a narrative flow. Thus, it is a very open interview technique that entails a three-stage[53] process (Diekmann 2004, 450). In the first stage, the interviewed person is made familiar with the procedure and a question is asked in order to stimulate a long response about a certain subject. For this work, I decided to ask my informants about an early childhood memory related to the marshland. This question usually triggered an extensive account either about what the local marshlands had looked like in earlier times and how they had transformed, or about the course of one’s life. This extensive account or “narrative flow” already represents the second and major stage of the narrative interview.[54] At that stage, the interviewer is supposed to avoid interrupting a person’s story. Instead, the informant should be encouraged to keep on talking and expressing her or himself. When the narrative flow has come to an end, the interview enters the third and last stage, the so-called stage of “inquiry”. Now the interviewer can ask about unclear aspects or go deeper into an open detail. Sieder (2001, 154–56) distinguishes between “immanent” and “exmanent” questions. While the former style of question directly relates to what a person had been saying before, the latter brings up new topics that have not been discussed before. I very much appreciated the detailed associative accounts and life histories these narrative interviews provided for my research, although it is clear that such a retrospective account is always biased by the present and fabricated to some extent (Schütze 1983, 284). During my research, this aspect found expression when for example older farmers would glorify the marshland’s famous vegetable project from the 1970s as compared to the difficult state of the marshland today (see chapter 4.2).

Another, more generally hindering issue was the fact that my Kinyarwanda was not good enough to thoroughly follow an account. My language skills were just good enough to manage everyday life in Rutunga. My vocabulary was well developed at least in what concerned agriculture-related activities and foods. Yet once the topic of conversation moved in another direction, I got lost. This became a challenge most especially in the context of narrative interviews. To compensate for this lack, I

53 This is a rather arbitrary classification. Sieder (2001, 150), for instance, distinguishes between seven phases which largely follow the same procedure.

54 I recorded this stage of the interview, but I did not always record the subsequent stage of inquiry which took place in a separate meeting. For a more detailed reflection about using or not using voice records, have a look at the section “Ethical Considerations: Anonymity and Surveillance”.

decided to split up the narrative interview and do the stage of inquiry in a separate meeting. This way I could go through the translation at home and think of interesting questions to ask at the next meeting. Furthermore, I trained one of my research assistants in different techniques to stimulate narrative flow and encourage interviewees to continue talking. However, during the first narrative interview, we accidentally developed a good way to deal with that problem: my assistant started to take notes in English about what the person was saying on a pad which she had placed on the arm-rest right next to my chair. This way, I could easily glance at her notes and think of a good question to initiate a new account.

Such a technique, of course, requires an assistant who has high language competences and who, over and above that, is a fast writer. This, however was not the case with all my assistants. But then again, language skills alone are not enough to make a good assistant. What then are the best criteria for choosing a research assistant? This is a central question for most anthropologists in the field today, especially but not exclusively for those who lack the required language skills to conduct research on their own.[55] As additional observers, helpers, linguistic and often also cultural interpreters, assistants shape a researcher’s opportunities to access and assess the field. While this very essential role of research assistants has been neglected in the anthropological literature for all too long, more recent contributions have started to openly address this issue and have critically reflected upon the methodological implications of working with assistants or interpreters (Gujar and Gold 1992; Sanjek 1993; De Neve 2006; Paluck 2009; Gupta 2014; van Soest 2020, 55–65). Assistants might be talkative and good networkers and thereby open up new doors for one’s research (Begley 2012; Gupta 2014), but they might also give their own answers and interpretations, instead of sticking to what a person has said. They might provide valuable contextual information and make the researcher aware of cultural specifics and language details (van Soest 2020, 60–63), but they might also miss out on other important details which they do not consider themselves as important or relevant. Their presence might loosen up an interview situation, but can also impact negatively upon a person’s willingness to share her*his opinion if she*he does not trust the assistant (Norman 2009). Working with an assistant therefore requires careful consideration and constant reflection about how the research situation was influenced by this “triangle” composition. Apart from language skills, the assistant’s personal background and attitudes, belonging, gender, level of education, age and even physical condition can also impact upon the research process.

For my research, I was working with three primary research assistants, and each of them had very different qualities. My main assistant during my first field stay in Rutunga was a young school

55 At German universities, a PhD should be finalised within about 3 years. Accordingly, most scholarships provide finances for three years, despite the fact that most PhDs take much longer. Given these temporal and financial restrictions, it is hardly possible to learn the local language well enough to work without assistants.

graduate. She came from a middle-class Kigali family and she was an excellent communicator. Her family’s links to the Kigali establishment proved to be very useful in arranging meetings with government officials and getting through telephone exchanges. She was well-structured, intelligent and committed, but she was mostly not available during the weekends and she was not used to walking long distances. This restricted my opportunities to engage in casual conversations along the trail. The other assistant was a young man in his mid-twenties. He was born in the Eastern Province and was raised by his grandparents. As a young adult, he had decided to move to Rutunga where some of his relatives lived. By the time I moved to Rutunga, he was in his last year of secondary school. As a local, he provided me with valuable information about my research site, but because of his education his time availability was very limited. During my second stay in Rutunga he became a full time-research assistant. I knew that could totally trust him, but his level of English sometimes imposed a constraint on my work. My third assistant was a university graduate with a technical background. He was a bit younger than me and had mastered various languages. Before I decided to hire him as my assistant for my second stay in Rutunga, he had done some interview transcriptions and therefore was familiar with my research. He was polite and had a fine sense for people and situations. He was able to work autonomously, which I generally appreciated, but which also caused trouble in a case where he was making important decisions without my prior consultation.

However, most such inconveniences are manageable and, at least in my case, this research would not have been possible without the great support and valuable input from my assistants. A good briefing, preparing them well for different situations in the field and giving regular feedback, can make up for most shortcomings. From my own experience in Rwanda, I can tell that reliability and trust are among the most important requirements a research assistant must have in such a politicised context, not least because of the researcher’s ethical responsibilities in the field.

2.7.4 Ethical Considerations: Anonymity and Surveillance

The researcher’s responsibility towards their informants, to protect them and to guarantee their anonymity in cases where identification might cause serious harm, is the first out of seven major ethical obligations as formulated in the 2009 American Anthropological Association’s code of ethics. Given the sharp-eared environment of my research, the protection of those who engaged with me and shared their stories was a serious concern. It proved to be difficult to completely hide my informants’ identities, simply because wherever I went, a dozen curious eyes were following my paths, were seeing me and my assistants enter certain homesteads and leave again. There was no point in deluding ourselves with promises of absolute anonymity. I could promise to use information with care and discretion or to substitute names to preserve their anonymity in writing, but there was no way of completely hiding their general involvement in my research.

In several of her articles, Thomson (2010, 2012) describes the meticulous precautions she took, from blacking out names in records and using password-protected files to the destruction of sensitive material, in order to ensure her informants’ as well as her assistants’ protection. My own procedures in that matter were less elaborated. I carefully considered the use of records in my study. While in the beginning, most interviews and large parts of the group discussions were recorded, at a later stage of my research, I proposed records only for specific occasions such as expert interviews or for the first part of narrative interviews that offered vast opportunities for answers. This was the result of several previous experiences, where recording had been accepted by courtesy and had negatively impacted upon the interview atmosphere. Most unrecorded interviews as well as casual conversations in the field were first noted down in two separate versions by my research assistant and myself and collated in a second step – a technique inspired by Burnet (2011, 307). This procedure was helpful in order to ensure an almost identical and accurate replication of what we were told. Throughout this work I refer to and even “quote” this kind information which, in some cases, was more reliable and substantial than the information I was given in recorded interviews. An overview of the interviews, meetings, focus-group discussions and personal conversations that have informed this work is provided in the appendix (see page 256). To protect my informants, my assistants and I developed communication codes like “the woman in the blue dress” or “the milk lady”. These codes, of course, were traceable but at least they were less explicit than using a person’s name. Having heard stories of bugged computers I started to feel more comfortable using my mother tongue for electronic field notes and conversation protocols, hoping that German was less decodable. Whenever I left my rural home, I took sensitive data with me or hid them at a place unknown even to my research assistants. Such strategies might sound paranoid but as long as they reduced the risks of harm, I gladly adhered to these measures.

The narrative interviews and people’s accounts of the history of the local marshlands had made me curious about the different political approaches in the Rwandan marshlands over time, and I started to look out for historical documents.

2.7.5 Historical Research: Untying Ariadne’s Thread in Rwandan “Archives”

A historian and good friend of mine once showed me with pride the dark traces of dust on his archival gloves. These white cotton gloves that would protect delicate material from human sweat remained to me for a long time the epitome of archival work. Entering this new field with very limited experience, my approach was a rather intuitive one. To find out more about Rwanda’s marshland history and gender relations in times before the genocide, I searched out for documents containing relevant keywords such as marshland, wetland, marais, lowland, gender, women, agricul-

ture, or cooperative. After a while I was able to focus my search on more specific topics such as a particular marshland project that existed in Rutunga the 1970s.

Going back in time meant entering a Rwanda that only partially corresponded to the Rwanda I had become used to. Places had changed just as their names and references had. Administrative boundaries had been redrawn, and responsibilities had shifted (see figure 5).

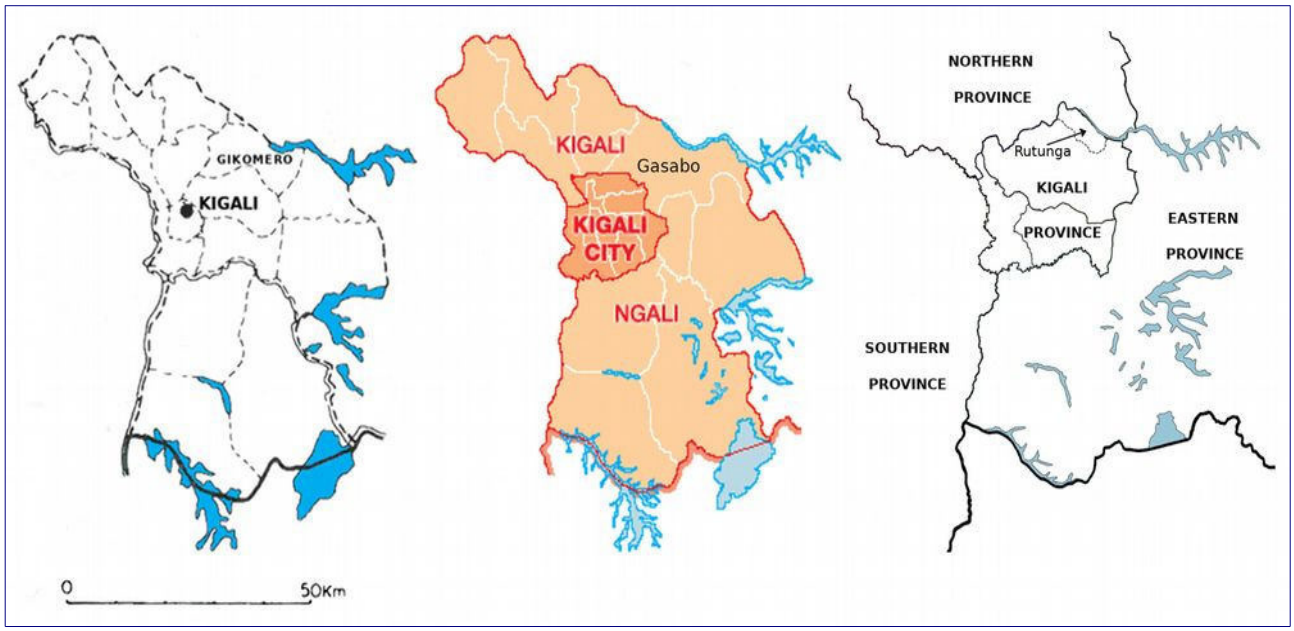


Figure 5: Shifting administrative boundaries of my research site. On the left: Boundaries of Gikomero commune before the administrative reform of 2002 (adapted from Bart and Bart 1993, 8), in the middle: Prefecture Kigali-Rural with Gasabo commune after 2002 (adapted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/-Provinces_of_Rwanda [14-03-2019]), on the right: Districts of Kigali Province with Rutunga Sector according to the current administrative boundaries since 2006 (own map).

In fact, Rutunga sector is a rather recent administrative unit that has been used only since the implementation of the territorial reform in 2006. “Practically overnight, most localities and major towns took on new names, some of which were inspired by pre-colonial Rwanda”, Ingelaere (2011, 69) writes referring to this reform, which was tied to a general overhaul of the local governance structure. In my field site, mostly it was elderly people, the village chief for example, who made use of these former designations. He would speak of Gikomero and Kigali Ngali (the former prefecture Kigali-Rural) and in his stories about the place he would regularly revert to the French terminologies, which are no longer officially used.

I researched the “archives” of the Agricultural Information and Communication Centre (CICA) at MINAGRI, the FAO library and the National library of Rwanda. The latter had only recently moved into a fancy new building and many shelves were still empty. I have put “archives” in quotation marks because despite the fact that public officials from these institutions officially referred to these places as archives, to me they rather looked libraries that contained some historical material like

government or project reports. My impression was improved by the loose access policy of these archives as opposed to what I had heard of other archives. This was confirmed when the CICA officer, a French-speaking woman with red hair braids, explained in a firm voice that in the library they were harbouring old reports while the “archive” with personnel files and correspondence was stored separately. Within seconds her welcoming helpfulness transformed into scepticism when I asked her for the personnel file of a former MINAGRI employee who had given me his file number. “These are not relevant for your work”, she stated, which was her elegant solution for refusing my request (C_CICAL_2015-06-11). In hope of finding old pictorial material from my research site I also visited a nearby minor seminary (FN_2015-05-17 and FN_2015-07-13) which had been founded by the Salesians in 1956. This visit provided me with some interesting details for my research but unfortunately not with the anticipated photographs. Apart from these efforts on site, I was able to request document scans about marshland development in the late 1980s from the FAO library in Rome, and even online I found some research-related documents.

My attempts to obtain first-hand material such as old project reports, pictures, maps or policy documents were not always successful. Regularly access was denied and it was proposed that I should check out other institutions first, where I would find what I needed. I this way I was sent from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Rwandan Agriculture Board (RAB) to the Rwandan Food and Agriculture Organization, to the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), and once even a consultancy firm. It started to become a repeating pattern that I was cordially received, and officers “mm-mhed” and “ee-ehed”[56] understandingly while I was explaining my request, but in the end, they would again send me to check out a different place or link me to their special contact who would help me out (FN_2015-06-22). While I was wending my way through the labyrinth, seemingly spinning in circles, my most patient research assistant helped me to browse through endless documents of the CICA library’s accessible part. This was an ordeal, for the library’s online system was down and the document numbers of the paper catalogue were outdated. But we finally succeeded in finding an old report of a marshland project in the area of my research with interesting maps as well as several old annual reports of the “Ministère de L’Agriculture et de L’Elevage“ that emphasised the former importance of my research site for marshland horticulture. Furthermore, we found some other interesting policy documents about the cooperative movement in Rwanda and women in Rwandan agriculture. Slightly easier was my search for old documents in the FAO library. Upon my third visit, the librarian even surprised me with a project report of high interest for my research. This report also referred to some old video footage. Overly excited about the chance to see not just old photographs but actual moving pictures from Rutunga, I asked the librarian about

56 Common sounds used in Kinyarwanda language to demonstrate active listening.

that video tape, yet she was quick to tell me that they no longer had these old-fashioned video players and that she could not allow me to borrow the tape to watch it somewhere else.

One of the core problems about my archival research was that I was looking for files dating from the first and second Republic. Due to the civil war and the genocide, archival collections from before 1994 are very limited. As I was told on several occasions, (and in some cases probably also as an excuse to get rid of this annoying anthropologist who was asking too many questions), a large part of the archival records has been lost and what remained was in very bad shape (C_FAOC_2015-06-11 and C_GO_2015-06-24). Tough (2003) writes:

> Approximately half of the records held by the National Archives were destroyed. Most of the damage was deliberately inflicted as an act of retribution. This may sound odd but arises from the fact that the National Archives had formed an integral part of the National Sports Stadium. Tens of thousands of Tutsis had been brought to the Stadium to be murdered by the Interahamwe militia, so the buildings in the Stadium Complex had become an object of hatred and a symbol of oppression.

Olaka also points to the loss of archival collections that goes far beyond the National Archive. According to him, the destruction of material also had political implications:

> [T]he destruction was especially pronounced in archival collections in government departments because there had been a systematic effort to try and hide evidence of the existence of systematic atrocities that had been committed by successive regimes that had been in power (Olaka 2015, 1).

Both quotes leave no doubt that researching Rwandan archives for pre-genocide documents is a complicated matter. On the other hand, with regard to more recent government documents the Rwandan government’s ICT performance is outstanding and numerous recent reports as well as statistical and spatial data are accessible online. Yet there are certain limitations to these documents, as a befriended researcher told me, since for the most part these reports are accessible precisely because they do not challenge the county’s success story (C_RS_2015-04-21).

2.8. Conclusion: Leaving Sense Behind

The chapter has put a lot of emphasis on the difficulties and constraints anthropologists face in a highly politicised and controlled research context. For me personally, putting this chapter down on paper (and it was one of the first chapters I wrote) has helped me to deal with the intense and emotional experience of my fieldwork. This has probably left the reader with a certain unease. However, by tackling several of the pitfalls, and by providing possible ways to deal with intense state control, I hope to have encouraged and inspired future researchers who will experience similar situations. This chapter has also built upon the learned lesson that enduring the emotional roller-coaster ride of field work will be rewarded. Long-term involvement and close engagement with the local community offers various ways to overcome the previously outlined obstacles.

CHAPTER 3: LOOPING DEVELOPMENT – A SOCIOPOLITICAL HISTORY OF MARSHLANDS IN RWANDA

As noted in the introduction, marshlands play a prominent role in Rwanda's post-genocide development discourse. They are said to be the county's last remaining source of un(der)developed land (GoR and MINAGRI 2004, 18). As can be expected, the Rwandan government has high hopes for the development and exploitation of these-state owned assets. Over the past decade, vast areas of marshland have been transformed into modern sites for large-scale production. Marshland development projects promise prosperity and growth for the country's population, which is still recovering from the genocide.

The coming chapter shows that this supposedly "new" reception of marshlands is in fact very old. By tracing back the history of Rwandan marshlands until the late 19th century, I demonstrate that Rwandan marshes look back on a long history of multiple forms of use and that the Rwandan state, (together with external support) has, for the most part, shown keen interest in managing these valuable land resources.

One might ask why there is a need for this historical perspective. Admittedly, the historical perspective in a way intruded on my work – albeit, I now find, in a very positive way. What initially aroused my interest to Rwandan history was the way ordinary Rwandans were talking about the past: "Before, the citizens used to cultivate in the marshlands in a disorganised way, but today, the government helps us to work together and form cooperatives!" they would often explain; or: "In former times, women were sitting at home and had no say, but today, women in Rwanda stand up for their rights". And while there was hardly ever specification about what "former times" they had in mind or which "before" they were referring to, there was no doubt that "today" stood for the time after the genocide. The official discourse on Rwandan history was thus divided into two clear-cut sections: the difficult and hard times before/during the genocide versus the great advantages of modern-day life that had begun after the genocide, where the "past" primarily served as a contrasting medium to highlight the current government's great achievements.

However, the more time I spent in the country, the more inconsistencies emerged that challenged this clear historical picture. There were farmers who told me about their first marshland cooperative in the 1970s; an article drew my attention to Rwanda's women's movement in the 1980s, and a development worker explained to me over her meal that when she and her husband had come to work in Rwanda in the 1980s, terracing had just become the latest trend. These and other incidents urged me to reconsider the past.

As Eric Wolf has argued and shown in many of his books, a historical lens may help to "(…) locate the peoples studied by anthropology in the larger fields of force generated by systems of power exercised over social labor" (Wolf 1997, ix),[57] and he further notes: "These systems are not timeless, they develop and change. It is thus important to understand how they unfold and expand in their reach over people in both, time and space" (Wolf 1997, ix). Rwandan marshlands are a rewarding topic of research to witness how such systems of power have evolved. Throughout their histories, marshlands have been transformed and access to them has been shaped by various forms of power, be it the power of local elites, high modernist state power or globally linked systems of colonialism, capitalism or patriarchy. I soon realised that without considering the historical context, my own understanding of Rwandan marshlands and the way access and labour has been organised in these state-owned lands would remain very narrow.

The primary question of how marshlands in Rwanda were used historically soon brought up a series of more difficult questions: how was state power asserted in the Rwandan marshlands? How did marshland regulations impact upon the local population? How were such regulations linked to processes on a more global scale? Were such regulations gendered or did they have an impact on local gender relations? What forms of resistance emerged against such (top-down) regulations? Who were the ones who benefited from the marshland? Or, in other words: How were marshlands created as spaces of privilege and exclusion? These all are questions of governance.

Despite these clear entanglements between Rwandan marshlands and politics, most of the works that provide historical information about the use of marshlands do so from a topological, technical perspective (Gourou 1953; Leurquin 1963; Deuse 1966; Delepierre and Prefol 1973; Cambrezy 1981; Ford 1990). They provide interesting agrarian studies of marshlands, but they do not pose the social question and say little about the political context in which the intensifying use of Rwandan marshlands took place. Other wonderful works which have linked Rwanda's agrarian policies and land tenure reforms to questions of rule and power hardly deal with Rwanda's particular marshland

57 Precisely because history may offer a new and more nuanced understanding of existing power relations, historiography is subject to political manipulation. Good evidence for the making and remaking of Rwanda's history is provided in Pottier's book "Re-imagining Rwanda" (Pottier 2002).

history in more detail (Jefremovas 2002; D. Newbury and Newbury 2000; C. Newbury 1998; Pottier 2002, 2006; Verwimp 2013; de Lame 2005; Ansoms 2009; Huggins 2017).

One exception is the French geographer Lydia Meschy (1973, 1974, 1989) whose works from the 1970s and 1980s offer a more profound analysis of the social history of a Rwandan marshland in the country's South. Already in the late 1980s, Meschy (1989, 129–30) called upon a historical perspective on marshland use as she writes:

> It is, nowadays, widely accepted that marshland development is a clear evidence of how a high population density impacts positively on agricultural development [Boserup 1970]. This position, however, tends to forget that marshlands have never been excluded from agricultural use. The historical perspective alone can avoid this kind of mistake.[58] [i]

Her insight that marshlands have long been part of the local farming system is all the more urgent today, because the current political debates on large-scale land deals and agrarian intensification experiments in the marshland tend to neglect these local histories of use. Not just in Rwanda but over large parts of the African continent marshlands are wrongly labelled as "empty" or "virgin" lands (Ansoms 2013, 17). Such descriptions leave, as Peters (2013, 547) rightly notes, "(…) worrying space for discounting existing use and different categories of users". However, the problem with Meschy's work is that it misses out the more recent developments in Rwanda's marshlands.

This chapter is an attempt to merge the existing literature into a more holistic understanding of Rwandan marshland history. Rather than providing a meticulous chronology, I want to illustrate how marshlands have been shaped by the various regimes in power. How they have become spaces of appropriation and exclusion, of wealth and exploitation.

3.1. Papyrus Swamps: Insights from Precolonial Travel Literature

In May 1894, the German count Gustav Adolf von Götzen traversed the marshes of lake Muhazi, on his way to meet the legendary ruler of Rwanda, *kigeri* "Luabugiri".[59] His book "Durch Afrika von Ost nach West", which is based on detailed records and diary entries of his adventurous journey, bespeaks Götzen's admiration of the rich fauna and flora he observed:

> Today, we noticed numerous cattle herds (sanga cattle with huge horns) on the pastures. The lake further down is teeming with ducks, geese, herons and ibises. Judging from the many spines lying around everywhere, porcupines must be very common here. (...) The population density is very high. Livestock are well catered for, because on several occasions we saw beautiful water troughs which were worked into the clay soil (Götzen 1895, 163–64).[ii]

58 This chapter contains many quotations in French and German. In order to facilitate the flow of reading, I have translated foreign language quotations into English. The original quotations are listed in the endnotes.

59 In the common literature known as Kigeri Rwabugiri (1865-1898). See (Jefremovas 2002, 64ff).

As he leaves the lake behind and continues his journey towards the king's residence he continues, lauding the environment of Rwanda:

> So far we had come across wonderfully cultivated lands and mountain slopes, which were rarely hard to climb. We had passed through seemingly endless and deep, dark banana groves as well as lush meadows. We had been impressed by the high population density and were full of admiration for the neatly planted fields of beans with large vines instead of beanstalks here and there, the sorghum fields in which were scarecrows – copies of bow hunters. Now suddenly, we were standing in front of mighty mountain ranges whose tops were wrapped in clouds and whose slopes appear in deep black colour (Götzen 1895, 168–71).[iii]

Von Götzen was not the first European who set foot on Rwandan soil,[60] yet he was the first one who spent considerable time in Rwanda. His mission was a colonial one, but he was also an explorer. His paths were guided by the spirit of discovery, conveyed on many of the book's pages.

Von Götzen obviously was eager to unveil some truth about the mysterious kingdom of Rwanda, that hitherto had remained a rather dull spot on the maps of earlier explorers. Stories were known about a feared ruler who had installed feudal-like state structures and who had successfully defended the empire from outer intruders;, about a fire mountain that spat ashes and smoke; about dwarves who lived in trees, and about amazon warriors (Götzen 1895, 147, 154; Honke 1990, 83). "A mosaic of various kinds of information and a mixture of poetry and truth convey the image of a country which perfectly illustrates Africa's myth of the dark continent," Gudrun Honke (1990, 84) critically reflects upon the emergence of such myths. The strategic secrecy around Rwanda at the neighbouring royal court of Karagwe, as well as the mystifying tales told by Arab traders, Honke further argues, very likely served the political and economic interests to minimise European influence in the region (Honke 1990, 85). However, she equally notes that precisely because of these stories, explorers like Von Götzen had become curious about Rwanda. With all these stories in mind, Von Götzen was clearly surprised and highly sceptical about the fact that wherever he reached he was received peacefully by the local governors. There were no fearsome warriors who tried to prevent Von Götzen from penetrating further into the country. Instead, the true obstacles for him and his heavily packed caravan[61] were environmental constraints: the rain and the heat, the rivers they needed to cross, as well as the swamps or marshlands that were covered with reed and papyrus, which harboured alligators and the potential risk of catching the dangerous fever (Götzen 1895, 168).

60 The first European who crossed the border to Rwanda was Oscar Baumann. He entered Rwanda in September 1892 but he only stayed for three days (Honke 1990, 87).

61 During his passage through Rwanda, Von Götzen's caravan consisted of about 300 men, women and children often packed with heavy loads of cloth and glass beads for trade as well as tents, guns, food and scientific tools. For more detailed information about Von Götzen's caravan see (Götzen 1895, 2–5). For a more general account on caravans also see Honke (1990, 90–94).

It is interesting to read one of the first written texts about Rwanda, although it also feels odd to start this chapter by quoting a European colonial writer, as if the colonial intrusion marks the "beginning" of Rwandan history. Of course, Götzen's writings are far from neutral. His book reads like many of the novels of travel literature at that time, bearing the unmistakable melange of spectacularity and exotisation, judgement and susceptibility. With all these typical traits of Orientalism (Said 2006) it offers a biased glimpse of Rwanda at a time shortly before effective colonisation. In a way, these romantic depictions of the country's fertility and wealth, about the impressive scenery, as well as sympathy with "(…) the poor Negro, who is completely alien to such impressions and who has no sense at all for the beauty of environment" (Götzen 1895, 171),[iv] mark the beginning of a more direct occidental influence in this part of Eastern Africa.

What do these early writings of Von Götzen's tell us about the **swamps or marshlands** of Rwanda? Primarily, the marshlands recur as savage places (see picture 5): muddy and densely covered with papyrus, for example when he writes:

> On the second day, (…) under conditions of inclement weather, we reached the Kibaya stream, which had flooded a 50m-wide tangle of papyrus. In addition to the steep and slippery mountain slopes we had to climb, we now had to find a passage through the swamp in which humans and animals often got stuck (Götzen 1895, 157).[v]

Furthermore, the marshlands appear as the habitat of wild animals and birds: "[The crossing of the river] was followed by enjoyable days of hunting. Various kinds of waterfowl were frolicking in the Nyavarongo wetland" (Götzen 1895, 168).[vi] Apart from animals they are also described as rich in vegetation. During his visit to the king's place, Von Götzen observed how the reeds from the marshy valley were used to roof the royal palace (Götzen 1895, 180) Thus, marshlands served as a source of construction material, reeds and also clay soil for the previously mentioned water troughs "worked into the clay soil" (Götzen 1895, 164).

Apart from these few paragraphs, the Rwandan marshlands are not given any particular attention in Götzen's accounts. It seems as though they were not used for cultivation, at least not in any noteworthy sense. Oral history accounts collected by Meschy (1989, 139) from the valley of Akaboti river in Southern Rwanda, similarly report that in the precolonial time, agricultural fields were situated up in the hills whereas the marshlands down in the valley were commonly used as a dry-season pasture for cattle herds. The water troughs mentioned by Götzen as well as the more general literature on Rwandan history largely support this perspective (Jefremovas 2002, 76; Gourou 1953, 76). In many cases, the literature links the discovery of Rwandan marshlands for cultivation to the intensifying demographic pressure during the second half of the 20th century (Cambrezy 1981; Leurquin 1963; Meschy 1989). Still, as noted above, Meschy does not fail to mention that marsh-

lands have always been a part of the Rwandan agrarian system as she states, and that a historical perspective is needed to overcome such a narrow understanding (Meschy 1989, 129–30).

In this historical perspective, when we look back at the time when the Rwandan statehood was primarily based on asserting power over people rather than land, marshlands were managed by lineages. In general, these lineages were the dominant organisational form in ancient Rwanda (Jefremovas 2002, 62; Meschy 1974, 39–40). Land was distributed by powerful lineage elders according to their own rules of customary tenure. Newly reclaimed land usually belonged to the person who had occupied the land in the first place (Boone 2014, 233). When in the second half of the 19th century King Rwabugiri effectively established a more centralised system of rule, the power of the lineages eroded. Marshlands and other common lands were systematically appropriated by newly installed local chiefs, who were under the direct authority of the king. Officially the king claimed ownership over all land (Bayisenge 2015, 25). De facto, access to land was regulated by the local chiefs, and tenure rights no longer automatically belonged to the first occupant of the land. In Eric Wolf's terms, this process marks the transition from a kin-ordered mode of production towards a tributary mode of production: the transition of marshland as common lineage land into the property of the chiefs (Wolf 1997, 79–100). This however, does not suggest that the lineage system has not remained of importance in many other spheres of rural life in Rwanda, for, as Wolf rightly noted, different modes of production may coexist.

In a political sense, marshlands have often marked the spatial division between different lineages and petty kingdoms, and, in later periods, between the chiefdoms or provinces of the central state. Like a natural stencil, the hills and valleys defined the political map of Rwanda. De Lame writes: "In colonial times, with a few nuances, essentially owing to the contours of this specific place, the hill, bounded by valley, constituted the visible, identifiable limit of a small social and political unit, with its chief or notables living on the hilltop or high above the floor of the valley" (de Lame 2005, 30). Even today, administrative boundaries often run along marshlands and rivers.

It is hard to draw a general picture of precolonial marshlands in Rwanda. Environmental conditions and patterns of land use vary strongly within in the small country. David Newbury points to the fact that marshland areas and lakes often constituted so-called "micro environments" within the "ecological kaleidoscope" of precolonial Rwanda (D. Newbury 2001, 262). Furthermore, many of the historical accounts on precolonial Rwanda tend to convey a simplistic and often imbalanced image of marshland use and tenure. Their history was adjusted to the dominant political discourse of the early 20th century, Meschy (1989, 129) argues, and rhetorically asks: "Who remembers, that in the 19th century the inhabitants of these two countries [Rwanda and Burundi] used the lowlands as back-up fields and that they knew a slope irrigation system?"[vii] And Von Götzen's novel too only offers a

rough and selective picture of the marshlands, which might reflect the fact that he did not travel the country during the long dry season. A year after Götzen's visit, in 1895, Kigeri Rwabugiri died. The same year, rinderpest drastically reduced the number of cattle. Meschy reports on the consequences of this event in Southern Rwanda:

> The land freed from the presence of cattle was not converted into fields. The political leaders took advantage of the weakened lineage claims on the lowland and turned them into pastoral land of their own – igikingi. While the herds gradually recovered, access to pastures was now bound to an annual contribution of cows or heifers that Tutsi and Hutu herders were obliged to offer to the political leader. The use of slopes and shallows – gukomaubwatsi – was restricted during the last months of the rain (April-May) to ensure optimal grass coverage in preparation for the dry season. This new management of pastures that prioritised the herds of Tutsi administrators and rich breeders imposed a specific calendar for cultivation in the lowlands. Plowing and sowing was to take place in January so that the harvest would be finished by July, before the herds would enter the pastures. Back then, sorghum, beans and sweet potatoes were planted on one-meter-high ridges and grouped in the least flooded areas. If the chief allowed cultivation in the dry season, the crop had to be protected from the herds, because there was no compensation in case of damage: the cows had priority all over the valley (Meschy 1989, 141).[viii]

Far into the colonial period of Rwanda, access to and use of marshlands would centre around the dominant figure of the local chief.

3.2. Reclaiming the Marsh: Colonist Visions and Local Exploitation

In 1898 German colonial rule was installed in Rwanda. While Jefremovas characterises the German colonial period in Rwanda as reserved, hardly interfering with the new king's affairs (Jefremovas 2002, 66), there definitely were intentions for a more active, not to say exploitative rule in Rwanda. Such interests clearly find expression in a thesis on Rwanda's geography by August Vetter. About ten years after Götzen's first visit, when Rwanda had already become part of German East Africa, Vetter praises Rwanda as a country of abundant water and he concludes in the final paragraph of his thesis about the options for European settlement in the new colony:

> Because of the country's magnificent and temperate climate due to its high altitude, Rwanda is an ideal place for European settlements, especially because the sky is cloudy during the time of agricultural production from October to mid-May. According to Kandt, the most suitable areas of settlements will be the districts on either side of the rift valley, which have many springs and large and fertile tree populations. The extensive pastures on the plateau will permit intensive cattle breeding. In addition, the Wahutu will serve as an intelligent population, easy to lead. They will bow to a language and country-knowledge-based colonisation and they will provide plenty of very cheap labour (Vetter 1906, 99).[ix]

Whatever Vetter may have understood under this particular form of "language and country-knowledge-based colonisation", I very much doubt that the Rwandan population was so fond of their new colonial situation. In any case, cheap labour was definitely needed. In 1907, Kandt, whom Vetter refers to in the quote above, had laid out the first plans for a new colonial residence which later became Kigali, the country's current capital. Under the growing demand for construction material,

not just for the new residence but also for missions and roads, human exploitation in the form of unpaid labour service called *uburetwa* intensified (Jefremovas 2002, 67). Some of these roads still exist today.

German colonialism took the form of indirect rule. It was exercised through the royal power system and their local chiefs, and hit the poor peasantry hardest. As Vidal (1974) notes about this early stage of colonial rule in Rwanda, the rural population was largely impoverished. Most peasants were obliged to sell their labour force. Often men would do the *uburetwa*, whereas women farmed the family land (Vidal 1974, 63). At the same time, the local chiefs managed to accumulate power, land and resources in their own hands (Jefremovas 2002, 67, 77).

Not much is known about the use of marshlands at that time. An oral history account collected by Vidal indicates that marshlands were already used for cropping sweet potatoes:

> Our informant Nyamuburwa, born around 1890, is the descendant of a lineage of pioneers. According to him, his father knew a certain ease in his life. He was getting good crops and had even two cows. When the first chief came to settle down on the hill of Nyaruhengeri, his father got into trouble. He did not get along well with the new chief, because he refused to do corvée labor. Almost all his family patrimony was taken from him. Since, of course, it was dangerous to have a bad reputation among the authorities, neither his parents nor his friends helped him. To survive, Nyamuburwa's father had to work as a day-labourer. Around 1910, he no longer could work and Nyamuburwa and his wife were taking care of him. Nyamuburwa had inherited a small field, which allowed him to produce a hundred kilos of beans, a tiny banana plantation and a few plots in the swampland for the cultivation of sweet potatoes. (…) He and his wife cultivated their own fields and sometime succeeded in renting one or two fields in exchange for beer. But all year round, they were working for others (Vidal 1974, 63).[x]

This story of Nyamuburwa, his father and his wife not only shows how life changed under the influence of the new chiefs, but also indicates that already by that time, marshlands were used for the cultivation of sweet potatoes.

From exploitation and suppression by both the German colonial and the royal regime, suffered not only the Hutu and Twa, but also many poor Tutsi (Schmuhl 2000, 325). Schmuhl argues that while under the autocratic rule of Rwabugiri, social mobility had increased and ethnic labels had become less important, tensions soon revived under the pressure of colonial exploitation. The German colonial ideology was inspired by the racist Hamitic theory on Tutsi superiority. The privileged position of Tutsi in the colonial administration reflected this ideology and also the fact that in 1913 the government school were reserved for Tutsi children clearly shows how the German colonial rule actively contributed to the society's ethnic divide (Schmuhl 2000, 325).

The German colonial period in Rwanda was only short-term. Already during the first World War, the Belgians entered Rwanda and started to rule the country, which was officially recognised as the Belgium colony Rwanda-Urundi in 1925 (Jefremovas 2002, 66).

From Leurquin, who wrote about agricultural change in Rwanda-Urundi under Belgian colonial trusteeship, we know that on the 7th of November 1924, even before Belgian rule was officially recognised, an anti-famine ordinance[62] was put in place that devoted the marshlands to the cultivation of sweet potatoes (Leurquin 1963, 47). According to Leurquin, this new measure was very much to the consternation of cattle herders who had used these areas as pastures during the dry season (Leurquin 1963, 47; Byanafashe and Rutayisire 2016, 277). A report by Sikkens and Steenhuis (1988, 51) makes reference to a meeting where pastoral chiefs were threatened to comply with these new regulations:

> At a meeting of the pastoral chiefs in October 1925, the colonial administration warned them that the first time a famine occurred because of damage inflicted by herders' animals to cultivated fields, the administration would purchase food for the farmers using animals belonging to the chiefs as payment. These sanctions were later applied.

The ordinance, however, was only just the beginning of a new era of colonial rule in Rwanda and of what would later turn into what Jefremovas (2002, 68ff) titles "the time of the whip". It is a time that saw the expansion of colonial power through granting authority to local chiefs and weakening the royal elite's control. While Jefremovas argues that in the beginning, most of the reforms initiated by the Belgium colonial administration had been in favour of the peasantry, the colonial authorities soon realised that their influence was limited without the control of the state apparatus. The situation in the marshlands is a typical example: as Meschy explains from her case study in Southern Rwanda, the new colonial ordinance which called upon each family to grow sweet potatoes in the marshlands was to be implemented by the influence of the local chiefs. These wealthy chiefs, however, who from their privileged position in earlier regimes had accumulated a considerable number of livestock, did not have the slightest interest in putting this ordinance into practice. Instead, they needed these marshland areas as pastures for their own herds of cattle (Meschy 1989, 142). It is obvious that the slow progress of some of these early agricultural reforms under Belgian colonial rule can be ascribed to the lack of knowledge about clientele relations and local forms of subordination as they have been described by Catharine Newbury (1980). Leurquin's observation that many of the new regulations were abandoned once the colonial inspection ceased supports this point (Leurquin 1963, 53).

Based on these experiences, the Belgian colonial regime quickly learned how they had to act through the existing power setup if they wanted their regulations to be followed. To strengthen their position from within, the colonial administrators started to cooperate with the local elites. Internal rivalries were played off against each other and Belgian rule was fortified. Hutu chiefs were

62 Meschy writes that this anti-famine ordinance resulted from previous great famines that had hit the country during the first World War and that most probably resulted from the military conflict between the Germans and Belgium in Rwanda in this war context (Meschy 1989, 142).

replaced by Tutsi, and Hutu children were excluded from the new schools under missionary control (Jefremovas 2002, 69). The time of the whip also hints at the forced labour which was used to fulfil the colonial demand for coffee and other goods and which increased the gap between the local chiefs, mostly classified as "Tutsi", and the peasantry, predominantly identified as "Hutu". The exacerbated racialisation of these two social categories can be understood in this context as a colonial gambit to extend European influence within the ruling elite. The invention of a long tradition of a Rwandan feudal state to legitimise Tutsi supremacy and to naturalise growing inequalities was just the first stage.

Today, this biased version of Rwandan history is no longer justified. As Schmuhl (2000) notes, far into the 18th and 19th century Rwanda was a "patchwork" of different petty kingdoms with various state systems. The centralised state structure as found by Götzen had been implemented only in the second half of the 19th century under the rule of Rwabugiri. Yet even under his expansionist and autocratic leadership, some small Hutu kingdoms had been able to operate independently while other influential Tutsi lineages were attacked to consolidate Rwabugiri's position (Schmuhl 2000, 318–19; Ntezimana 1990, 77). As a result, the pre-colonial lineage system reduced in importance and access to land and labour was based upon individual relationships between the newly risen local elite and the peasantry (Jefremovas 2002, 64–78). This change also concerned access to marshlands, which had formerly been lineage land but now belonged to the king and were administrated by the new local chiefs under his authority (Meschy 1989, 140). "The latter [the tributaries of King Rwabugiri] then tried to change these communal lands into pasture lands under their control. Access to these pastures dependent on their sole authority and was regulated in accordance with their own and the king's interests. These changes provoked strong resistance among the descendants of the first settlers – powerful Hutu and Tutsi lineages – who were all herdsmen" (Meschy 1989, 140).[xi] By that time, inequalities were not exclusively defined along ethnic lines (Vidal 1974). There were Hutu chiefs with large landholdings, just as there were poor Tutsi peasants. However, under the Belgian colonial rule, Hutu chiefs from the northern parts of Rwanda were replaced by Tutsi, and a racist segregation was introduced for certain schools, reserved for the Tutsi administration (Jefremovas 2002, 69).

Under colonial pressure and the rising power of the local chiefs new **marshland areas** were reclaimed. The colonial government facilitated the reclamation of marshes. Alone between 1934 and 1935, 44,000 ha of marshland were drained (Takeuchi and Marara 2000, 20). Gourou writes about this transformation: "[W]e are dealing with a population of hoe farmers, who can exploit both low and flat fields, c) it is only very recently that this population has discovered the great virtues of

valley bottom soils. These marshlands are the most fertile fields today. Thirty years ago, they were ignored or they only served as pasture in the dry season" (Gourou 1953, 76).[xii]

This statement raises two important questions: First, if it is true, as Gourou writes, that the fields in the marshes were particularly fertile, then why were they not cultivated in earlier periods? And second, why did the marshlands suddenly become attractive, and how was the access to these lands regulated during this early stage of marshland reclamation?

With regard to the first question, Gourou (1953, 65, 68) himself points to the danger of malaria in the swampy areas, which can be seen as one of the reasons why the hillsides were preferred to the valley-bottom lands. In general, the environmental conditions in the marshlands were harsh. Filled with water and covered with various sorts of plants, they were (and in some national parks still are) the natural habitat of wild animals such as snakes and hippos, antelopes and warthogs. These not only posed a risk to cultivators, but were also well-known for damaging the fields and crops on the lower hillsides. "On some hillsides close to the swamps, root crops like sweet potatoes and manioc are not grown, for they are the favourite dish of the wart-hog" Leurquin (1963, 44) notes. It is therefore understandable that the local peasantry was not keen to cultivate in this potentially dangerous zones. A few pages later Leurquin concludes: "Marsh cultivation has several advantages. It is practised at a season of relatively slack activity on the hillsides; it drives out the wart-hogs and the antelopes which damage the crops on the neighbouring hills, so preventing the cultivation of root crops and reducing agricultural yields" (Leurquin 1963, 63).

Another explanation for why marshlands were traditionally not cultivated may be attributed to the fact that agricultural production in the marshland is highly labour-intensive. The heavy and often clayey soil must be cleared of proliferous plants, ridges must be installed and drainage and irrigation channels need to be maintained on a regular basis. In this context Meschy also points to the lack of appropriate tools to work marshland soil in the pre-colonial era (Meschy 1989, 139–40). Only with the intensification of marshland cultivation under Belgian colonial rule was the traditional hoe[63] replaced with the currently used "Belgian hoe" (Meschy 1989, 143). Furthermore, with regard to the Rwandan settlement scheme (see chapter 2.3) agricultural production in the valley bottoms involved longer distances as compared to the hillside fields near the homestead. The extra workload of carrying the tools, seedlings, and manure down and the harvest up the steep hills might represent another reason why marshlands were less cultivated. In addition, as Meschy mentions, the microclimatic conditions of some marshlands were unfavourable (Meschy 1989, 139). The enormous difficulty involved in preparimg marshland soil for cultivation also explains why the tenure

63 For images of the traditional hoe and other tools see (Honke 1990, 47).

rights were originally often linked to the physical capacity of a family and usually comprised a rather small area of just a few ares (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 2016, 278; Ansoms 2013, 8).

With regard to the second question, the literature mostly links the gradually intensifying use of Rwandan wetlands for agricultural activities with demographic pressure and the issue of food shortages (Cambrezy 1981; Nabahungu and Visser 2013, 363). Already in Götzen's descriptions quoted above, Rwanda is presented as a very densely populated country. Within thirty years between 1948 and 1978 the population density more than doubled from 77/km² to 188/km² (Prioul and Sirven 1981). It is very likely that this considerable increase gradually pushed farmers into the lower lying areas and into the marshlands to supply their families with sufficient food. And this is how marshland development became a new issue within the colonial development discourse. However, what Gourou called "the great virtues" or marshlands in his statement was a very colonial perspective that was not shared by the peasants. *Shiku*, as the forced cultivation of sweet potatoes in the marshlands was called, had a very bad reputation (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 2016, 276–79). Deriving from *gushikora*, which means "hard working/cultivating with a lot of effort/force" the term *shiku* already indicates the true great virtues of cultivating marshland soil. Despite *shiku* being introduced to support the rural population and to fill their stocks for potential crop failures, the actual result was that the local farmers suffered from this colonial measure more than they benefited from it. Byanafashe et al. explain:

> (…) shiku simply referred to collective gardens for individuals who were grouped to work together. The individual occupants did not have rights of ownership on the plots which were given to them to cultivate. They were supposed to use it temporarilly [*sic*]. After harvesting, the plot belonged again to the village reserve (…) (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 2016, 276)

Often these *shiku* fields were far from the farmers' residences, situated close by the road in order to make sure that the colonial inspectors would be pleased to see the rich fields through their vehicles' windows, and to make them believe that all *shiku* fields looked as prosperous as the ones they saw. Many other *shiku* fields were less productive and often not even harvested. The peasants too had their ways to deceive the local chiefs by cultivating only one part of the field while covering the remaining part with dark soil to make it look "cultivated" (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 2016, 278). I mention these tiny details because they are good examples of the Rwandan art of illusion as discussed in the methods chapter. As I will demonstrate in later chapters, it is interesting to see how much this early approach of marshland development has in common with the current cooperative policy as it was introduced in the Rwandan marshlands after the genocide.

In 1949, under the guide of the FAO an agricultural inventory had plotted marshlands along with other agricultural land for the purpose of a ten-year plan (Leurquin 1963, 50–51). The interest of

reclaiming new marshlands exceeded the mere purpose of granting food security to the Rwandan population. The Belgium colonial government of course also had intentions to exploit the marshy soils. The 1950s saw the first colonial large-scale projects for rice and tea emerging in the marshlands of Southern Rwanda (Takeuchi and Marara 2000, 20).

By **1950,** 84,500 ha of the marshland territory of former Rwanda-Urundi were drained, and ten years later, in **1960,** the area of drained marshes constituted 107,857 ha (Leurquin 1963, 62). Compared with the currently known surface of marshland areas in Rwanda and Burundi,[64] these numbers indicate that by the end of the colonial trusteeship already about one-quarter of the marshlands were reclaimed.[65]

In the course of the late 1950s, political unrest and ethnic tensions in Rwanda grew. It is the time when the Pan-Africanist movement, which took a clear stance against colonial rule, inspired liberation movements all over the continent and spilled over into Rwanda (Verwimp 2013, 3). It is also the time when the highly influential Catholic Church and the Belgian colonial administration gradually changed sides and started to support Hutu claims for equality and liberation from the Tutsi ruling elite (J. J. Carney 2014, 121–74). In 1959, King Rudahigwa died. A few months later, the Parmehutu liberation movement was founded by Grégoire Kayibanda, who later would become Rwanda's president. Resentments against the Tutsi leadership were now expressed openly and culminated in the bloody 1959 revolution. Thousands of Tutsi were killed or fled the country. In 1960 the first municipal elections heaved Hutu representatives into the political administration.

3.3. Marshlands for Development: The Post-Independence Era

All these turbulences and conflicts ring the end of colonial rule in Rwanda. In early 1961, the "coup of Gitarama" abolished the monarchy and proclaimed a transitional government which was recognised by the colonial administration only four days later (J. J. Carney 2014, 156). A referendum held later in the same year ratified the transition into the Democratic Republic of Rwanda. This transition was again accompanied by several outbreaks of violence. Apart from men cattle were also massacred, since they stood as a symbol of Tutsi supremacy (Meschy 1989, 144). The Parmehutu expanded their lead and in 1962 Rwanda gained independence, with Kayibanda as the new president of the so-called "First Republic". Quickly he tried to expand his power by eliminating opposi-

64 Marshlands in Rwanda cover about 278,536 ha (~10%) of the country's surface (REMA 2009, 67). In Burundi, they cover about 120,000 ha (~4,3%) of the national territory (Nkurunziza 2009, 21). In 2009, 148,344 ha of Rwanda's marshland were under cultivation, which accounts for more than half of the Rwandan marshland areas (REMA 2009, 67).

65 It is necessary to note that different approaches in measuring marshland coverage in Rwanda have resulted in different estimates of the spatial expansion of marshland. Therefore, no definite conclusions can be drawn from such calculations.

tion parties. For the 1965 elections, only one legal party remained – which, of course, was Parmehutu, with its undisputed candidate, Kayibanda.

This break with the political order of the past and the increasing ethnicisation also altered the situation in the Rwandan marshlands. In a 1963 published work, Leurquin notes about the ethnic tensions in the valleys:

> In former times, during this season, the cows were pastured on the marshes and on sorghum stubble; after the first rains the fields, cleared of their coarse straw by brush fires, gave tender grass. Today the majority of marshes are under cultivation; the Hutu are vehemently opposed to any right of pasturage of sorghum stubble, and brush fires are severely regulated. Competition between man and beast is more and more open; it is much to the credit of the graziers that in such conditions the herds have not diminished over the years (Leurquin 1963, 77).

Leurquin's work focusses on agricultural change and hardly touches upon the political issues and violence of the previous years. Meschy however notes about the time of this political transformation:

> For the first time in almost a century, beans and sorghum returned to the valley. This was not caused by exceptional population growth, climatic anomaly or famine. On the contrary, in recent years, the harvests were good, the demographic pressure was curbed following the departure of some families, and the land shortage seemed less acute, thanks to the cultivation of pastures abandoned since the massacre of cows in 1960 – 1961 (Meschy 1989, 144).

Despite her otherwise very precise description of Rwandan marshland history, Meschy's narrative of the situation in the marshland around this time of political turmoil is very narrow. Describing the mass exodus and killings of the 1959 revolution as the "departure of some families" is way beyond merely downsizing the extent of this outbreak of violence. Only in a footnote does she clarify the context of these environmental conversions. However, Meschy makes an interesting point. She wonders why this conversion of cultural practices in the marshlands happens at a moment of relatively relaxed living conditions among the peasantry instead of being caused by the pressure of adaptation. It is obvious that this change is related to the political situation at that time, but her remark that the peasantry was experiencing an economic upswing at the time of the revolution hints at one of the central theories in Eric Wolf's peasant wars. According to Wolf's theory, a certain level of independence among farmers (through land possession or access to land sources), may be more likely to trigger revolutionary movements among the peasantry than a farmer's complete deprivation of any means of production (Wolf 1999).

However, the political event of independence eased access to the marshland only in the short term. Jefremovas (2002, 76) writes:

> Just after independence many families acquired access through land invasions, which quickly came to be regulated through the communes. Soon after, access to these lands was based on patronage. 'Ownership' had to be confirmed through the commune, so that even land gained through de facto

> occupation had to be retained through cash payments or through other services, and officials could transfer it as they deemed fit. (…) Marshland was often taken back by the commune and used for projects, given to cooperatives and other groups, or taken over by functionaries for their own use. Tenure over marsh and valley bottomland was always very uncertain.

To quickly summarise the most important changes of tenure rights in the marshlands, we see that before as well as after independence, access to and use of marshland was dependent on personal relations with the authorities. While during the Belgian colonial rule, forced labour was common practice in the marshlands with crop obligations and alternating plots, they had now turned into family plots for the dry season with a more independent cropping choice, but still very unsafe tenure rights.

During the 1960s, the government of the First Republic (1962-1973) launched some large-scale marshland projects. In cooperation with Taiwan, the Nyabugogo swamps North of Kigali were developed for rice production, as I was explained by an officer at the Rwandan Agriculture Board (RAB). Edouard had been working in the rice sector for a long time and he knew a lot about rice cultivation in Rwanda. According to him, rice production in Rwandan marshlands had been introduced already in the 1950s, by Arab traders in the Bugarama area.[66] Only later, in the 1960s, did the government come in and start to transform the Nyabugogo swamps. The Nyabogogo swamps are a vast area of swampland next to Kigali that reaches out far into the North. Kajevuba marshland, one of the marshlands of this study, is a side branch of Nyabugogo marshland. Edouard obviously was pleased to share his vast knowledge. With great care, he explained the history of the marshland, pointing to the different dates and institutions that managed the production of rice and later sugar cane in the swamp over the course of time (M_E_2015-06-22).

The government's great interest in marshland also finds expression in policy documents and the scientific literature of that time. A five-year plan for economic and social development (1966 – 1971), for example, stresses the importance of marshland acquisition in order to gain arable land (Baligira 2009, 44) and a first marshland inventory based on aerial fotographs was conducted (Deuse 1966; Delepierre and Prefol 1973). All over the country, marshlands were reclaimed. Ratcliffe, for example, writes about the history of a marshland located South of Kigali:

> In the 1960s, during Mao Zedong's fervent campaigns of agricultural expansion, Chinese farmers introduced rice in the region, converting the marshland into rice paddy fields. The Chinese leased the land, taught the local population to cultivate the rice (though for a time keeping the planting process to themselves), and bought the majority of the rice for consumption in China (Ratcliffe 2014, 46).

66 The dates in the literature slightly differ (compare Baligira 2009, 44 and Leurquin 1963).

It is remarkable to see how much foreign firms were involved in these early beginnings of state-led marshland acquisition in Rwanda. However, the local farmers hardly benefited from such international marshland projects. As Ratcliffe argues, those who profited instead were people with close ties to the government. Accusations of corruption were raised and soon the government of the First Republic entered a state of crisis. Jefremovas writes: "By the late 1960s and early 1970s it [the government] had concentrated access to resources, opportunities, and power into the hands of a tiny elite based in central and southern Rwanda" (Jefremovas 2002, 72). In 1973, a military coup under the lead of Habyarimana ended the First Republic (1962-1973).

Under the Second Republic (1973-1990) that followed the coup, pressure on land intensified. Kigali, which by then had become a flourishing centre of commerce rapidly grew (Ford 1990, 51). Under the steadily increasing demand for arable land, the Habyarimana administration tried to curb land pressure through large-scale deforestation (Ford 1990, 58), and by relocating farmers from the heavily populated Northern and Western parts of Rwanda into the less densely populated areas of the country. This kind of state-sponsored migratory movement came to be known as the paysannat programme (Cambrezy 1981, 53–57; Verwimp 2013, 121–26; Ford 1990, 53). In the first decade of Habyarimana's term of office, thousands of peasant families were resettled into organised paysannat settlement schemes.[67] Each family received some arable land to cultivate. Ford describes these paysannats as follows:

> These [paysannats] were cash crop-producing household units organized into government supervised cooperatives. The land itself was subdivided into equal-area plots aligned along linear access roads hugging the contours of the former Afro-montane bamboo belt (2,200 – 2,600 m), or just below it. (…) Other paysannats are located in the eastern savanna lands or in the coffee belt, the middle-altitude zones in the south-central parts of the country (Ford 1990, 53).

Many of these paysannats were founded in areas that used to be pastoral lands and several of the paysannats operated in the marshlands. Leurquin (1963, 44) comments on this transition from pasture land into paysannats as follows:

> This used to be stock raising country; but the cattle were driven out by sleeping sickness, from Moso around 1900, from Bugesera from 1955 onwards: the stock raisers with their remaining cattle departed for more healthy regions and were replaced in the more fertile spots by cultivators. This process of immigration was encouraged by the government, which created numerous paysannats during the last ten years of the trusteeship.

In Leurquin's account, the pastoralists' initial retreat from the pastures is illustrated as a consequence of adverse environmental conditions, namely the hazard of pests. However, the colonial anti-famine policy from the 1920s, the violent attacks against herdsmen during the 1959 revolution

67 The first paysannats of Rwanda date back into the late colonial period, but their number grew quickly after independence (Cambrezy 1981, 57; Baligira 2009, 44). Politically, the paysannat programme was therefore often, though wrongly, associated with the Hutu revolution (Verwimp 2013, 124). The resettlement into paysannats ceased during the late 1970s (D. C. Clay and Lewis 1990, 156).

and the subsequent legal limitations on the use of marshlands as cattle pastures clearly show the political motivation behind this transformation of the rural countryside. Rwanda's transition from a pastoral into an agrarian society, which is a very generalising characterisation, therefore needs to be understood in the context of political change. It is part of a power struggle over the definition of agricultural land. Verwimp (2013, 121) elaborates on this point:

> Under the predominant ideology of the Second Republic, which portrayed itself as a Peasant-State, pastoral groups were marginalized, and pastoral lands were converted into land for cultivation and into paysannats – the prime agrarian settlement scheme. Pastoralism as a way of life did not fit within the agrarian order of the Second Republic, which was built on a vision of hard-working smallholder peasants.

The marshlands became part of this "Peasant-State vision" and to make this point, I need to slightly adjust Verwimp's argument. My own research findings confirm the first part of Verwimp's argument about the anti-pastoralist attitudes prevalent under the Habyarimana regime[68]. However, my research, which focusses on marshlands, does not support the second part of the argument about the ideal image of the hard-working **smallholder** peasant. This ideal figure seems to be inapplicable to the marshlands and the high-modernist paysannat approach Habyarimana installed under his regime. Verwimp's analysis is correct to the extent that the vision of Rwanda under the Second Republic probably was that of a peasant society, but not in a romantic sense. We should not oversee that Rwanda's political agenda under Habyarimana was that of a modernist developmental state with an ambitious agrarian agenda.

Habyarimana's entrepreneurial spirit – which, by all appearances, was relatively uncorrupted – and his efforts in guiding the country into economic prosperity were highly respected among the international community. Rwanda was idealised as a model for Africa, and the President was "(…) the darling of the world community, the development agencies, and the media" (Jefremovas 2002, 1).Ford characterises this period as follows:

> In spite of the continuing undercurrent of ethnic friction and resentment, President Habyarimana's current civil administration has provided an environment of political and economic stability, openness to change, and a relatively liberal, pragmatic outlook that has encouraged entrepreneurial growth, and a considerable involvement by bilateral, multilateral, and NGO (non-governmental organization) donors in the modernizing of the society (Harroy, 1981; Godding, 1986). Sixty percent of the national development budget in 1983 came from external sources as either grants in-aid or long-term loans. This large input of foreign aid has increasingly become the single most important source of economic growth (Ford 1990, 53).

Developmental projects in the countryside flourished and the marshlands became hotspots for agrarian modernisation and development projects. Most money went to the North-Western regions

68 Verwimp specifies that Habyarimana was not against "cows" but that he disagreed the way they were traditionally held (Verwimp 2011, 399). Habyarimana reconciled cattle raising and agriculture by implementing a policy of stables (Mfizi 2006, 12).

where the President was born. While the Southern region, where the former President Kayibanda was born, hardly profited from such development investments (Pottier 2002, 35). Pottier notes about the Rwandan marshlands in the 1970s: "So essential to survival was their exploitation that access came to be regulated on a collective basis, i.e. through membership to cooperatives. Parastatal marshland projects were also launched" (Pottier 2002, 185). The Kajevuba marshland project, which is one of the case marshlands of this study and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, also was one of those big marshland projects implemented in this period.

It is interesting to note that this hype around marshlands in the Rwanda of the 70s coincides with growing interest in wetlands on a global scale. In 1971, the Ramsar Wetland Convention was signed. Despite the fact that the convention was originally designed for conservation and protection from human exploitation (Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013a, 16), Ramsar also drew increased attention to marshlands on a more general level. Marshlands moved into the focus of development debates, which were more interested in their agricultural potential rather than in the conservation aspect.[69] Wood et al. summarise the situation:

> During the last 50 years since independence in most African countries, there has been a significant drive for the transformation of wetlands, especially for cultivation. This has come in part from government agencies that see wetland cultivation as a critical way of achieving food security (Wood et al. 2001) or producing export crops but also from commercial companies seeking to develop profitable enterprises. This has been despite other conflicting government policies that have espoused the conversation of wetlands. (…) Examples of this expansion of wetland cultivation on a large scale can be found from around the continent including the development of rice cultivation in the inland valleys of East Africa, Sugar estates in many countries, irrigated cultivation of cotton in countries such as Ethiopia and the development of the dairy industry in Uganda (Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013a, 13).

The accelerated dynamic of marshland acquisition in Rwanda from the 1970s onwards, reflects this spirit. It also finds expression in several scientific publications (Cambrezy 1981; Meschy 1989) and policy reports (Sikkens and Steenhuis 1988; Lefrancois and Duxbury 1987). In the late 1980s, the FAO was eagerly involved in preparing a legal framework for the development and use of Rwandan marshlands (Pinho 1987; L. E. G. Bureau Juridique FAO 1988; Bureau Juridique FAO 1989). Whether due to the outbreak of the civil war or regime-internal disputes, the law has never been enacted. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that this legal framework anticipates many of the regulations that became central to the marshland management of Rwanda's post-genocide government. It already provided that marshlands should be worked by associations or cooperatives, even though it left a margin for individual use and private enterprises as well. The 1988 law draft envisaged crop restrictions – a lighter regime as compared to the currently conventional crop obligations under the

69 However much these approaches seem incompatible, both sides have recently made great efforts to find new ways that reconcile local livelihoods with marshland conservation (Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013a).

CIP.[70] It also provided a very centralised approach with a very limited bottom-up assessment and a relatively low tenure security. Contracts could easily be cancelled if the marshland was needed for a public purpose or if the land was not used "appropriately". The never-enacted legal framework also addressed environmental issues and the need for an environmental assessment prior to the development of a marsh. This indicates that already by the late 1980s the environmental degradation was a well-known fact among marshlands which had been drained in earlier decades.

Despite all these similarities, data from my own research as well as several accounts from the literature point to the fact that during the Second Republic, access to marshlands, the small marshlands in particular, was comparatively lightly regulated (Ansoms 2013; Ansoms, Wagemakers, et al. 2014). Apart from the marshlands that were used by paysannats or marshlands that were at the focus of the government's prestigious projects, most of the small marshlands were locally organised and used by farmers according to their personal needs. Meschy's characterisation of one of these small marshlands provides a fair picture of the typical Rwandan marshlands, which were often understood as the prolongation of a hillside slope reaching down to the small stream in the middle of the valley which marked the natural border between the two hills. They came to be known as a complement to the rain-fed hillsides, as important evergreen spaces for food production during the dry season. They were worked in patchworks of small fields which were autonomously cultivated by the families from each hill. Except for the most essential arrangements (e.g. clearing the outlets) there was not much cooperation going on between the farmers working their respective families' marshland plots (Meschy 1989, 131). Furthermore, Meschy notes an interesting point: Those who cultivated in the marshlands were not the most needy ones (Meschy 1989, 143). Jefremovas also elaborates on the access to marshlands during the Second Republic, and explains that being on good terms with the commune authorities as well as patronage relationships were essential for gaining the use rights of a marshland plot (Jefremovas 2002, 76). There must have been also regional differences for Meschy argues that despite these unsteady tenure rights, farmers often developed a sense of ownership towards their marshland plot. "From that time onwards, if peasants did not declare themselves as owners of the marshland, they behaved as such by including these lands in their inheritance as well as in their rentals and sales" (Meschy 1989, 143).

Overall, it can be said that against the backdrop of growing land pressure, marshlands had been turned into land for agricultural use far beyond the state's involvement in marshland development projects. Gradually the marshlands had been incorporated into the complex matter of the Rwandan

70 Crop Intensification Program. It is one of the central policies in Rwanda aiming at a Green Revolution-like modernisation of the country's agrarian sector. For each region certain priority food crops (rice, maize, wheat, beans, cassava and Irish potatoes) were assigned. In most cases, the cultivation of these crops in at least one of the major cropping seasons is mandatory. The CIP was accompanied with land use consolidation to facilitate the large-scale cultivation of these priority crops. For a critical discussion about the CIP see (Cioffo, Ansoms, and Murison 2016).

small-scale farming systems (see picture 6). They had become essentially part of the Rwandan cultivation cycle and extensively served as an important source of food. Nevertheless, neither the farmers' encroachment into these areas nor the large-scale development of marshlands could prevent the country from what followed: a war; the intensification of ethnic destruction which culminated in a genocide. In 1994 the Rwandan swamplands turned into hideouts of refugees and into tombs for those killed. I do not want to go into the genocide here. Little is known about the situation in the marshlands during the months of April, May, June and July 1994. What is clear, however, is that the genocide has left traces in the marshlands and among those who survived and continued working there.

3.4. Marshlands for Peace: (Marsh)land Policies after the Genocide

By and large, Rwandan agriculture politics since 1994 still centre around the sensitive issue of land and the crucial question of how this very limited resource can be exploited in a peaceful and productive manner. Rwanda is an agrarian society and since land pressure has generally been accepted as one – very critical – trigger of the genocide, among others, obviously a new legal framework was needed to regulate the tenure of this most essential but also conflict-burdened resource. This, however was not an easy task, in a post-war context. Migration flows all over the country and beyond, the necessity of societal rehabilitation and the repatriation of refugees who had fled the country in earlier ethnic unrests and now optimistically returned to Rwanda merged into new challenges. One of these challenges were property disputes caused by multiple claims to ownership. It took the post-genocide government ten years to come up with the 2005 Land Law, which determines the use and management of land in Rwanda.

Article 29 of this new law once again defines marshlands as state property: "Swamp Land belongs to the state. It shall not definitively be allocated to individuals and no person can use the reason that he or she has spent a long time with it to justify the definitive take over of the land" (GoR 2005, Article 29). The law text makes very clear that no one may claim any property right to a marshland plot and that marshland use rights should not be granted to individuals. This new regulation set an end to the previously accepted common practice of quasi-inheriting and selling marshland plots, which had resulted in marshlands attaining a private-property-like status.

Similarly to the agrarian exploitation known under the paysannats, the new Land Law provides that, apart from a few exceptions,[71] only cooperatives will be entitled to use the marshland. The fact that the rightful use of marshlands today is largely tied to the membership in a state-approved marshland cooperative is one of the major changes set in place by the post-genocide government. The official

71 From my own fieldwork as well as from other sources (Ansoms and Murison 2012), there is evidence that in some cases, marshland was given to or managed by influential people with good ties to the government or the military.

idea behind this new cooperative setup was to allow farmers to profit from the "economies of scale". As I will largely explore in the two coming chapters, cooperatives are not a new and revolutionary idea of the post-genocide government. What is new, though, is how these state-supervised cooperatives were made the paramount setup in the Rwandan marshlands.

In 2004, one year prior to the implementation of the new Land Law, the Ministry of Agriculture had formulated the first Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agricultre (PSTA), which was followed by two subsequent PSTAs in 2009 and 2013. These PSTAs are the leading strategy papers for the country's agrarian development after 1994. They are closely linked to Rwanda's Vision 2020 and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP).[72]

With regard to the marshlands, the 2004 PSTA recognises their enormous potential for the country's agrarian future by pointing to the "existence of 165.000 hectares of marshland of which 100.000 hectares can be developed and make agricultural intensification possible" (GoR and MINAGRI 2004, 18). The second PSTA specifies:

> Out of 165,000 hectares of marshlands, 93,754 hectares have been cultivated (57% of the total marshy surface area). However, as of 2006, only 11,000 hectares were developed so that they can be cultivated throughout the year. Other parts of the marshlands are cultivated without any technical study by peasants grouped into organizations or by cooperative groups supported by local or foreign non-governmental organisations. Such developments risk causing ecological disequilibria in the fragile ecosystems (GoR and MINAGRI 2009, 22).

This quote clearly speaks of high expectations, while criticising the non-state-led exploitation of marshlands. In the past decade, the government has invested a lot of (donor) money into modern marshland infrastructure, such as dams and irrigation systems, in order to develop marshlands into modern assets which would secure year-round production. Different state-led and international development programmes mostly in cooperation with the newly founded Rwandan cooperative agency, have trained the local population in cooperative management and leadership. The reintroduction of the cooperative approach perfectly fits into the government's overall attempt at reengineering rural space. The earlier mentioned *imidugudu* policy (see chapter 2.3.2) in combination with the Crop Intensification Program (CIP) (see also chapter 5.4) probably are the two most prominent examples of the government's reform agenda in Rwanda's rural areas.

At the same time, Rwanda's concerning environmental state has provoked policies with regard to "wetland" protection and conservation. The relevant institutions in this context is the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) under the custody of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MINIRENA). A wetland inventory was conducted by REMA in 2008, which mapped out the country's wetlands and classified them into three different categories (REMA 2011, 36–37).

72 The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) later became renamed the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS).

Some became protected areas; however, most wetlands were put under conditional use and only few remained in unconditional use. In the same year, Rwanda signed the Ramsar Convention. The access to Rwandan marshes is now regulated by the district authorities in line with these different categories. Adams et al. (2006, 12) argue that Rwanda was the first East African country to declare wetlands state property and effectively place them under governmental control. However, together with the now compulsory cooperative setup, the new mapping and administration of Rwandan marshlands can also be understood as a high-modernist approach to making these assets more "legible" (Scott 1998). Another change is noteworthy with regard to the management and exploitation of Rwandan marshlands. While heretofore the Ministry of Agriculture had played the dominant role in developing the marshlands, the 2005 Land Law has mandated marshland under the Ministry of Environment.

The institutional setup in Rwanda separates "wetland" protection from "marshland" development."Here in Rwanda, if we say the wetlands which are used in agriculture, they are marshlands", the Director General at the MINAGRI clarified (I_DG_2015-05-02). The institutional divide in Rwanda also reflects the two dominant, and often conflicting, paradigms in the global discourse on wetlands/marshlands, as discussed by Wood, Dixon, and McCartney in their introduction to the volume *Wetland management and sustainable livelihoods in Africa* (Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013a). According to them, the challenge remains in finding a political way of combining both approaches (Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013a, 21). In Rwanda, this challenge is acknowledged at least to some extent, by combining wetland conservation with alternative income strategies such as eco-tourism. Another example is the obligatory environmental impact assessment for each wetland, which is supposed to be developed for agricultural production as well as other regulations concerning the use of marshlands (GoR 2005, Articles 17 and 86). Yet, as I will show in the coming chapters, these regulations basically remain a top-down strategy and rarely involve farmers' active participation in the planning. They do not consider local user's needs and knowledge and therefore often fail to build the needed resilience for "(…) environmentally, socially and economically sustainable wetland livelihoods" (Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013a, 28).

Apart from characteristic terms such as "environmental impact" or "sustainability" which today run through most debates on agricultural development in the Global South, the concept of "gender equality" has also entered the stage.

3.5. Marshlands Places of Equity? A Gendered History

In 1999, five years after the genocide, a new inheritance law was introduced. This law promised equal property rights for legally married women (which means, for instance, that men were no

longer allowed to sell property without their wives' consent), as well as the right for daughters to inherit an equal share from their parents' patrimony. Also, the Organic Land Law from 2005, explicitly states that "Any discrimination either based on sex or origin in matters relating to ownership or possession of rights over the land is prohibited" (GoR 2005, article 4). These new laws have earned the Rwandan government a lot of international recognition in fighting women's tenure insecurity. It is noteworthy though that this new legal framework is not effective in the marshlands, which belong to the state. In the marshland, therefore, the government tries to promote gender equality via the new cooperative setup and through a system of quotas – an approach which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

All these recent efforts in getting women more involved, however, do not imply that in earlier times women were not actively engaged in the exploitation marshlands. Attentive readers might have noticed that, so far, I have not touched upon the issue of gender relations in Rwanda's marshland history. This has to do with the fact that it is hard to make out women as subjects in history, if as Newbury and Newbury (2000, 862) have argued, "(…) Rwandan historiography has virtually ignored gender issues". This also accounts for the existing literature on Rwandan marshlands, which, for the most part, is male-biased and gender-blind.

The invisibility of women in what Zeleza (2005, 209) creatively calls "malestream" African history, is a persistent issue and not only an African one. On a more general level, feminist scholarship has challenged the concept of history being the story of great men. Postcolonial feminists have shown how the colonial experience has altered existing power relations, and how genders were constructed to suit colonial expectations (Oyewumi 2002; Amadiume and Caplan 2015). Recent works have illustrated how African women were constructed either as inferior or exotic objects and how they were sorted into a world consisting of binaries: "In these prevailing binaries – rural/urban, private/public, peasant/proletarian, production/reproduction, formal/informal, resistance/collaboration, citizen/subject – either women occupy half of the 'dichotomy' or their experiences are erased altogether", write Allman, Geiger, and Musisi (2002a, 1) and question this colonialist and male legacy.

Most of the authors I have been referring to for this past chapter, were either male or white or both of it, and the few who have addressed women's role or gender role patterns rarely have done so in a critical and differentiated manner. There are some exceptions though.

Claudine Vidal's earlier quoted oral history account from the early 20st century, for instance, notes how Nyamuburwa and his wife both cultivated sweet potatoes in the marshland:

> Nyamuburwa had inherited a small field, which allowed him to produce a hundred kilos of beans, a tiny banana plantation and a few plots in the swampland for the cultivation of sweet potatoes. (…) He and his wife cultivated their own fields and sometimes succeeded in renting one or two fields in

> exchange for beer. But all year round, they were working for others. They gave their lord a basket equivalent to six kilos of beans and some little sorghum. Nyamuburwa cultivated almost every day outside because his wife also had to take care of the household and the family fields. This way he obtained enough to feed himself, reserve the seeds and to get two hoes one for him and one for his wife (Vidal 1974, 63).[xiii]

Many of Vidal's works on Rwanda are based on oral histories and often they include female perspectives (see Vidal 1991). The detailed and reflective accounts she provides, stand in nice contrast to the many technical reports from before the genocide which generically speak of "the peasant" or "le paysan", "stock raisers" or "pastoralists", "the Hutu" or "the Tutsi", without paying attribute to the (gendered) differences within these today very problematic categories. Through her approach she creates a more nuanced picture of rural dynamics, of power and subordination, and thereby deconstructs such categories, which in other works are taken for granted. Vidal also points to the intersection of ethnicity, class and gender in precolonial Rwanda, for example, when she presumes that in the regions of Rwanda where the royal centralised power was effective, about half of the peasantry had to regularly sell their labour force to sustain a living.[73] In most families, as with that of Nyamuburwa and his wife, primarily men would work on other people's farms while their wives would take care of the household and family fields. But in the poorest families, women as well as men would sell their labour (Vidal 1974, 62–64).

During the colonial era, forced *corvée* labour service, which also included the aforementioned *shiku* (see page 73) in the local marshlands, was extended. From then on, *corvée* labour not only concerned all adult (Hutu) men (Jefremovas 2002, 68) but also women. Jefremovas writes:

> With the intensification of demands and *corvées*, there was an increase in out-migration. The 1920s and 1930s saw a mass movement of men to Uganda and to the Belgian Congo and into the wage labor market. In 1939, to encourage wage labor, the Belgians allowed *uburetwa* to be paid in cash by contract laborers and waived public works obligations. However these exemptions were often abused because the demands on chiefs were not relaxed. The wives of migrants and contract workers were forced to fulfill *uburetwa* as well as to meet government labor *corvées* and obligatory cultivation requirements (Jefremovas 2002, 70).

Newbury and Newbury mention in this context that in the mid-1920s, a religious cult emerged among young women around lake Muhazi (situated close to my research site), much to the displeasure of the local chiefs, because they saw this cult as a way for women to withdraw from their labour obligations (D. Newbury and Newbury 2000, 862).[74] The Newburys conclude from this and other examples[75] that labour in Rwanda must be understood as a gendered phenomenon:

73 For a critical remark on this estimate see Pottier (2002, 13).

74 Unfortunately, I learned about this cult at Muhazi only after my visits to Rwanda, so that I could not further investigate this incident.

75 For example in the coffee industry where they argue that approximately 70 percent of the work was done by women – a fact which often was neglected in colonial reports (D. Newbury and Newbury 2000, 862).

> [L]abor was gendered by exclusion as well as by inclusive demands: many Rwandan men left to work in the Congo and Uganda, sometimes for long periods of time; in their absence, all the burdens of agricultural work, including required crop cultivation and sometimes even corvée labor, fell to the wives left behind. Yet domestic labor relations are one of the most "naturalized" of social functions; because these gender relations are portrayed as normal, the emphasis on state power obscures the political nature of such contradictory power contexts and economic fields of force. "Official" histories of Rwanda have left labor relations to languish behind the veils of clientship, "development," and the domestic domain, and historians have failed to bring gender into labor issues (D. Newbury and Newbury 2000, 862).

Meschy, in her study on the history of a Rwandan marshland in the country's South, writes that *corvée* labour in the valleys was abolished after the 1959 revolution. With regard to gendered labour patterns in the 1970s, she notes: "A channel – *umugende* – separates the ridges of two families [by that time it was common to prepare the marshland in from of ridges[76]; my note]. (…) When a ridge is ready, the woman and the children proceed immediately to cut sweet potatoes. The stems with a length of 20 to 40 centimetres are taken from the hill fields and immediately planted" (Meschy 1989, 135–37).[xiv]

The fact that Meschy speaks of "families" and "women and children" points to the fact that it was not only men who were actively engaged in the agricultural production in the marshland. At some point she even notes that when in 1974, the distribution of marshland plots was organised at the level of the commune, the allocation of these lands to childless peasants was considered a waste (Meschy 1989, 143). My own investigations about a marshland project in the 1970s (see chapter 4) confirm that in most cases marshland agriculture was practised by families and thus was subject to the gendered division of labour within a Rwandan household (see also chapter 7 on the gendered division of labour).

The fact that women actively contributed to the agricultural production, however, does not necessarily mean that they controlled the output. This might have been different in marshland projects that specifically targeted women. Bart and Bart (1993, 361–62) report about such a case of a women's marshland cooperative founded in 1976, for the purpose of improving their children's nutrition. A report on women in aquaculture (mostly fish breeding) also shows that women actively participated in marshland-related activities (Balakrishnan, Veverica, and Nyirahabimana 1993).

Another good example of women's engagement in the Rwandan marshlands outside of agriculture is provided by Jefremovas in her study on brickyards in the 1980s. From three case studies of women who ran brick-making enterprises she concludes:

> Women can, by indirect means, gain considerable power and enjoy substantial wealth, but they cannot easily safeguard that position. Playing the public roles of virtuous wives, exemplary widows

76 These ridges served to better control the flow of water in the marshland. According to Meschy (1989, 136), there existed different kind of ridges in the wet and dry season. Later on, this way of cultivating the marshland in these traditional ridges were considered to be out of date, and was prohibited in some cases (see chapter 4.5).

> and dutiful daughters, some women can control wealth and wield power. Other women, by living alone, can try to claim the right to control their own lives and manage their own resources. However, both are treacherous routes. Wives can lose their resources to rivals, widows to the husband's lineage, daughters to marriage, and single women to lovers or to their families (Jefremovas 1991, 390–91).

All these examples show for how much of Rwanda's history women have contributed to the agricultural exploitation of marshlands. Yet only starting from the 1970s have they became more visible and "directly" involved in (women's) marshland projects or enterprises. This, I assume, is not a coincidence, but related to the fact that "women's issues" became more relevant worldwide under the influence and spread of the second-wave feminism.

From a legal point of view, women's land rights in the marshlands not only in terms of access but also in terms of control over output have been neglected for the most part. As I will discuss at large in chapter 6, the current government's approach to female quotas in marshland cooperatives might be a first step in increasing women's visibility but still does not give women in patriarchal families a legal claim over their produce.

3.6. Conclusion: Resonating with the Beats of Development

This chapter has investigated into the sociopolitical history of Rwandan marshlands. It has traced how they were transformed from papyrus swamps into cattle pastures, then later on from cattle pastures into agricultural land for development, and how, more recently, they are being praised as the new implementation sites for an agricultural revolution, as spaces for post-genocide reconciliation and gender equality. As I have shown, all these processes of change in the Rwandan marshlands echo the country's political past. But they must also be understood within the context of global processes, such as colonial expansion, the rise of movements for national independence, the emergence of the developmental state and global debates about rural engineering and (environmental) sustainability.

Throughout the country's various regimes of power, whether royal, colonial or (pseudo-) democratic, whether in times of peace or war, a certain continuity remains: marshlands have always been subject to centralised governance. They used to be the King's land before they were defined as state property. As early as in colonial times, marshland agriculture was linked to food policies, crop obligations and *corvée* labour. Collective work in the marshlands, whether by *paysannats*, cooperatives or development projects, was always more common there than on the hillsides. This may explains why marshlands have been subject to the pursuit of power under each dominant regime and why local people's claim over these lands has been limited for a long time.

Nevertheless, most marshlands of Rwanda first and foremost have been of local relevance. They have served as cattle pastures and as spaces for food production in the dry period. They have been used for the extraction of construction material, and more generally valued for their rich flora and fauna. While some of them might appear as “savage” places in the sense that they do not correspond to the chessboard pattern of industrial agriculture, they are not “empty” or “vacant” lands. From this angle, it is more understandable why rural populations do not uncritically embrace the current government’s ambitious plans in the marshlands. They do not necessarily share the elitist vision about turning these supposedly “un(der)used” assets into highly productive zones for agricultural exploitation, because all to often they have experienced how in the end, they themselves were the ones to carry the burden of these visions.

The coming chapters will take up this issue and show how easily promising projects may turn into loss, when the marshland’s complex history and embeddedness within social structures is ignored. They will also demonstrate that up to the present day, the benefits gained from marshlands are bound to personal relations, connections to the government elite, and economic capacity. Gender here is one out of many social divisions that structure the access to and use of these valuable assets.

CHAPTER 4: KAJEVUBA VEGETABLE VALLEY – A CASE STUDY OF MARSHLAND DEVELOPMENT

While the previous chapter has dealt with the sociopolitical history of Rwandan marshlands on a national scale, in this chapter I now zoom into the history of one specific Rwandan marshland, called Kajevuba (see pictures 7, 8, 17 and 18), which also takes a central position in the later chapters of this work.

I now take up the marshland's history from the early 1970s, the time it was first developed for agricultural exploitation. By merging local farmers' perspectives and memories with old policy documents and project reports I try to create a vivid image of the marshland's past. I will show how the broader developments I have sketched in the previous chapter have changed rural lives on the ground. In this regard, the chapter deals with encounters: between the state and peasant families, between farmers and project leaders, between national policies, marshland environments and global development trends. The history of Kajevuba marshland provides insights into the lives of farmers who have gone through economic growth and personal disaster. It illustrates their surfing on the flow of donor investment and how they reached out for wealth and prosperity. However, it also tells a story of disenchantment, when projects fail or simply "end", when crops are washed ashore by recurring floods, when cooperatives collapse and farmers have to fend for themselves until the next project comes.

4.1. Positive Projections: New Land for a New Development

"Vallée de la Kajevuba" is the title, printed in large letters, of a ministerial field-site report from December 1971. Or was it May 1972, as the date stamp which partly covers the 1971 date indicates? It is a twenty-page-long MINAGRI project proposal for the development of a horticulture project in Kajevuba marshland. No author is named. The report starts with listing the essential facts: 80 ha of marshland situated in Gikomero commune; matter of expense: 16,716,000 RWF (=181,488,52 USD) (MINAGRI 1972, 1).

"It is called Kajevuba and it is a branch of the big marshland called Nyabugogo", I was told by Marcel. Marcel was an old resident of Rutunga. He had been recommended to me as a good informant because of his broad knowledge about this place. Now, we were sitting in his spacious living room and he willingly shared his memories about the past:

> When we were still children [in the late colonial period], they ordered the forests and wetlands to be cut down and to be cultivated. Before that, we cultivated in Nyabugogo. We would cultivate in May. My parents also cultivated there and we would go there as children to harvest, because in the wet seasons it would not be flooded like Kajevuba. Kajevuba has been exploited only recently and usually consisted of water and grass for weaving. They started to exploit it around 1970. 1971/72… something like that (I_M_2015-06-25).

Kajevuba is a side arm of the much larger Nyabugogo swamp. The planned drainage of the Kajevuba marshland in the early 1970s can be understood as part of the systematic development of the Nyabugogo catchment area, reaching from lake Muhazi down into the South until it joins the Nyabarongo swamps in Kigali (see figure 6). Over the course of the 1960s, under the Kayibanda regime, the Nyabugogo marshlands had been reclaimed for the cultivation of rice and sugar cane.

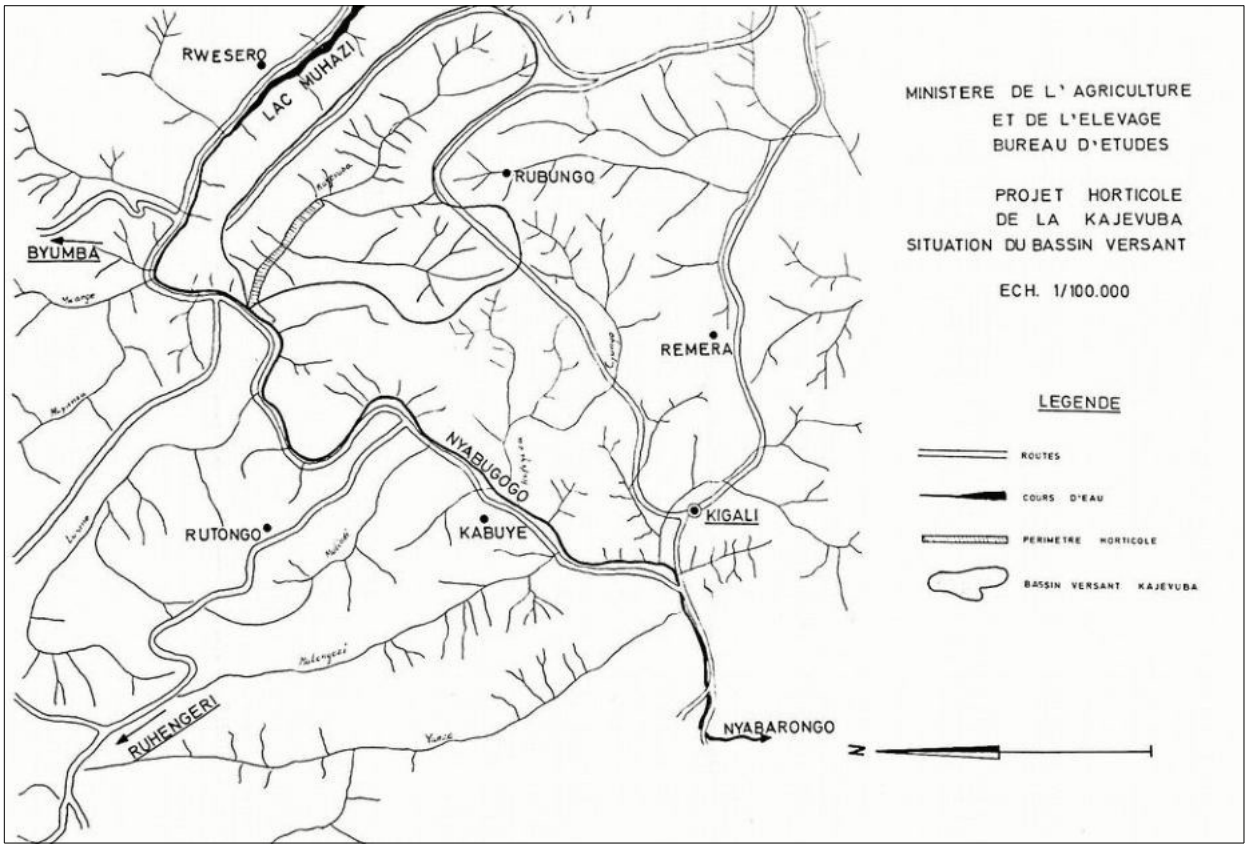


Figure 6: Map of Kajevuba and Nyabugogo marshland (adapted version from Minagri 1972, annex)

Yet, as the MINAGRI project proposal notes, Kajevuba marshland is not suitable for rice, nor for sugarcane: "[T]oo cold for rice, and too narrow for sugar cane", it states (MINAGRI 1972, 3). Instead, the report proposes to transform the Kajevuba marshland into a new asset for horticulture production. Marcel recalled:

> Rice was not working there. They had dug down and found that the soil was not suitable for rice because there is turf. And MINAGRI brought a project of cultivating vegetables. There were the World Bank I think… the project was financed by different institutions.[77] They started cultivating mostly pepper. The citizens cultivated and they became rich! (I_M_2015-06-25).

In the early 1970s, the production of export vegetables was a new approach in Rwandan agriculture. The report indicates that after a horticulture pilot project in Bishenyi marshland (Kamonyi District – West of Kigali), Kajevuba was the second project of that kind. The proximity to Kigali, the new *route asphalté* currently under construction, the climatic conditions, and last but not least the highly dedicated local administration all speak in favour of this project (MINAGRI 1972, 2–3). Vegetables would be cultivated for the European market, but they should also benefit the local population, as the proposal says: "(…) the production of (…) deformed and second-rate vegetables or fruits will be sold at the local market for a very reduced price. This will allow the population to buy these vegetables and to improve their nutrition in terms of quantity but even more so, in terms of quality" (MINAGRI 1972, 11).[xv]

The proposal report continues by describing the "condition du milieu humain" – the living conditions of the local communities around the marsh. It draws a rather modest image of rural life: Traditional patterns of land use are still prevalent. The production of industrial crops, including coffee, is very poor due to the steep hillside slopes. Family-run farms cultivate bananas, cassava, sweet potatoes, pulses and sorghum in the fields around the homestead. The pastures are overgrazed. Recently, some families have started to cultivate in the swamps. Income activities apart from traditional agriculture are limited to wage work in the Nyabugogo sugar cane fields, in the nearby mines or in the construction of the new Kigali-Byumba-road (MINAGRI 1972, 4, 9). Of course, this narrative serves a purpose. In the light of these simple, not to say poor, conditions, the proposal of a modern horticulture project in the marshland shines like a golden vision.

After launching into an analysis of the topographic, hydrological and climatic conditions of the swamp the report identifies the different aspects of the project: the organisational structure, the necessary infrastructure and logistics – a drainage and irrigation system will be installed to ensure proper watering of the seeds (see figure 7); a cooperative will be introduced to manage the joint production; and even storage facilities, as well as a car for transport are already mentioned in the project's description. The project proposal concludes by stating as follows: "Considering just two seasons of cultivation (…) a farmer with a plot of 10 ares will have a net profit of 8.415,8 RWF" (MINAGRI 1972, 20). It further states that these calculations are based on the most conservative price development and that very likely the effective profit will exceed this number by far.

77 The MINAGRI project proposal and MINAGRI annual reports mention the United Nations Development Program as well as the FAO as the main sponsors of the project.

Indeed, the envisaged vegetable project heralds a new era in the history of Kajevuba marshland and its surrounding areas. It not only transformed a papyrus jungle into to new farmland, it further had far-reaching consequences for the local population in many aspects of life.

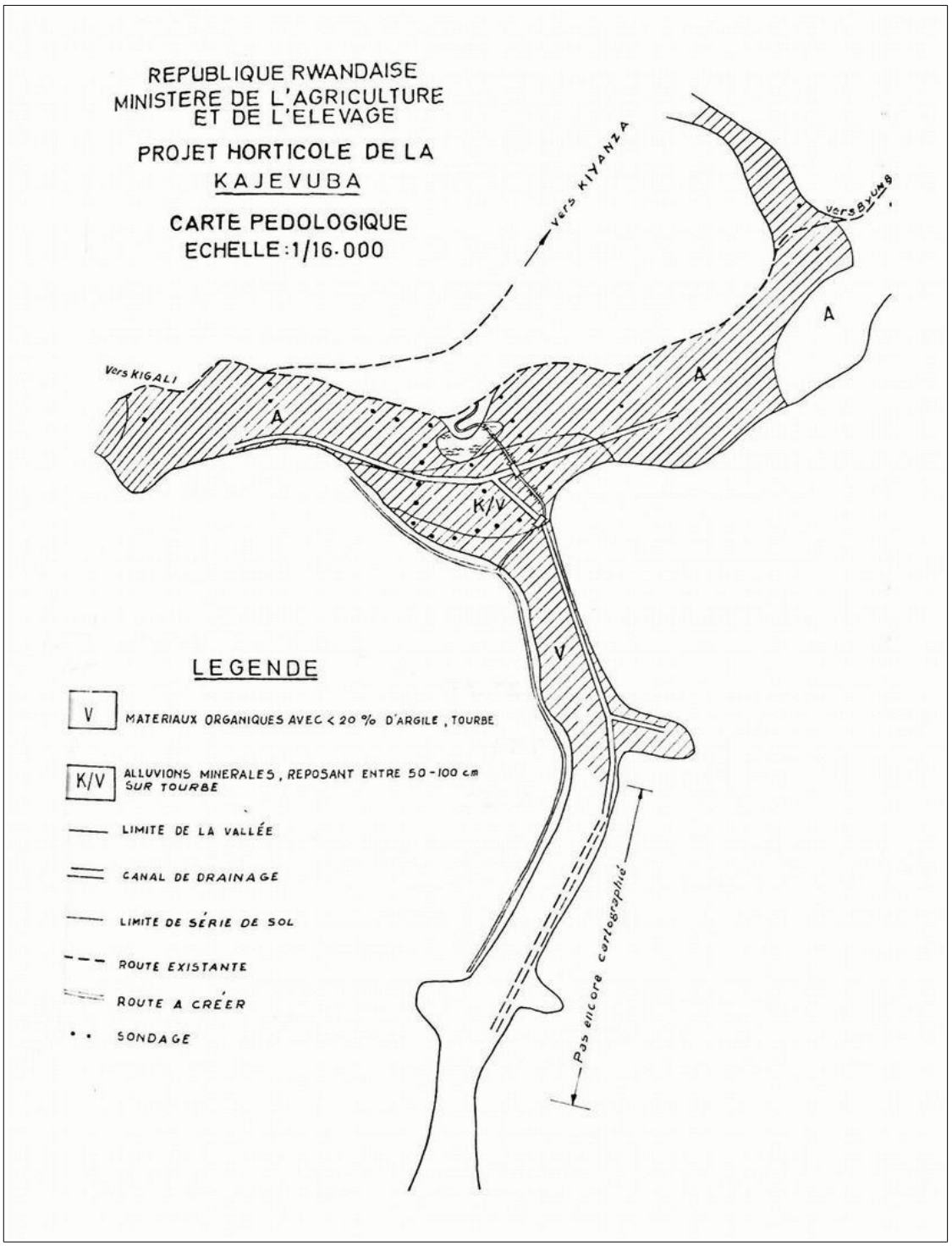


Figure 7: Map of Kajevuba and Nyabugogo marshland (adapted version from Minagri 1972, pp.7-8)

4.2. Vegetables Take Off: Export Production in the 1970s

During my fieldwork, many farmers who used to work in the marshland in the past or who still were working in there as a member of the marshland cooperative shared with me the story of "their"

marshland and how this famous project from the 1970s, financed by the FAO had changed their immediate environment and their lives.

One of them was Xavier. I had first met him at a meeting with the Abakumburwa cooperative, which was currently operating in this marshland. Xavier was a long-standing member of the cooperative. He has known the marshland since before it was drained and developed for the cultivation of vegetables. During a personal meeting at his place few weeks later, he called my attention to the environmental impact the vegetable project has had in the *ibishanga* [marshland]:

> Before 1972, this wetland was filled with grass for making mats called *urufunzo* [papyrus] and water. And it was filled with animals of different types, *inzobe* [antelopes], *inziramire* [pythons], *imondo* [servals], *inzoka* [snakes] and more. There were many animals… Because of the water that was filling the wetland, no one would cross from one side to the other. And some would drown in there and nothing more. In 1968, there came a Belgian and he started to clear the drainage from Nyabugogo down to here and he reached to Muhazi lake and he also cleared the branches that directed the water to the Nyabugogo river (…) In 1971 there came a project for cultivating vegetables that would be transported abroad. It started in Gitarama, a place called Bishenyi. In 1972, we saw that the wetland had tried up and it would be used and exploited (I_X_2015-06-09).

Xavier's account makes reference to the reclamation of the Nyabugogo marshland by the government of the First Republic. It was one of the largest marshland projects in Rwanda's early independence period and it was part of the government's general efforts in gaining more arable land (see chapter 3.3). As noted before, the Kajevuba project was a smaller sub-project within this bigger framework.

According to Xavier the local population was very positive, not to say enthusiastic, about the prospective project in Kajevuba. However, he also remembered that there was some initial scepticism among the local population:

> We were not used to the things of development. So we saw the agronomist Kabera Callixte coming with this white person, and we came pleading to them. They talked to us. We didn't know what they were going to tell us. Then, they said that they wanted to work with us to cultivate vegetables for export. When they told us about the *ipiripiri* [chilli pepper], and we would see it growing there, we didn't know any use of it and we first were thinking of refusing the proposal. But those who did the trial, I was also among them, we did the trials as 6 people and when we saw the harvest, I immediately knew that the project which was coming to us was really good. And it was important for us and it made many people, more than 300, participate (I_X_g2015-06-09).

Xavier pointed out that the good harvest of the trial phase soon attracted many more citizens to join the vegetable project. In his account he also refers to the former project agronomist Kabera. Kabera's name came up in many of the stories about the marshland's glorious past. "Have you seen that man who is rearing [cows] over there?" Xavier had asked me. "His name is Kabera Callixte. Back then he was an agronomist. He was still a young man!" he informed me about this prominent figure in the marshland's history.

Back in the early 1970s, Kabera used to work for the MINAGRI. He had been sent to Kajevuba "(…) to see what I could do!", as he himself said. My assistant had arranged the meeting with him down in the marshland. In 2002, the government had granted him a plot of marshland for his cattle farm right next to the cooperative's land. While some young men were loading fresh grass on his pickup, he told us about the beginning of the vegetable project in Kajevuba:

> We started with only three people and we cultivated vegetables which were exported outside. Later on, it became more value and we got more profit. By 1974 ten more people added in and by 1975 we were into hundreds. That's when many people started entering the project and we cultivated this entire plot with vegetables and we would export them outside (I_K_2015-06-04).

Kabera's statement confirms the sudden rush into the marshland as described by Xavier. According to the MINAGRI project proposal, the Kajevuba marshland would be reclaimed in two stages. The lower part of about 40 ha had already been drained in the context of the Nyabugogo marshland development, while the upper part, another 40 ha, would be drained during the first two years of this project (MINAGRI 1972, 13). The local population was called to participate in the laborious and costly process of draining the marsh and preparing it for agricultural intensification. For them, the government's development works in the Nyabugogo and Kajevuba valley provided new income opportunities. "It was not just for boys, it was for everyone! Everyone who had energy would go to clear the drainage and cultivate in the marshlands", Marcel had stressed. His voice was excited, as he recalled the dawn of this project. Seraphine, who was also staying close by the marshland remembered:

> Before, it [Kajevuba marshland] was full of papyrus, but in 1973 they started to drain this wetland. My parents used to go there and cut down the papyrus. Later on, a white man came and started working from there. They drained it and cultivated vegetables. (...) So they were cultivating these vegetables to be exported to Europe. By that time I was growing up, there were different projects going on to help the citizens in taking their harvest to Europe. In 1973, 1974 people were leaving the *nyakatsi* [grass-thatched houses], because of the vegetables they were exporting to Europe (I_S_2016-02-22).

Seraphine was born in the late 1950s. Her parents had been cultivating under the famous vegetable project and she remembered how the agricultural exploitation of Kajevuba marshland had changed their lives. In the 1980s, she started to work in the marshland by herself, and today she is still an active member of the Abakumburwa cooperative. A very similar account was given by Beatrice, who had been working in the vegetable project as a teenager but no longer works in the marshland today:

> Before that time, it [the marshland] consisted of the grass used for weaving. Later on, we got an investor. We had to cut down the grass and prepare the land well. We started cultivating the seeds that were exported outside. People were living in grass thatched houses. They were out of soil, but up there, they were thatched with grass. We knew how to thatch them in that way. Later on, when we started to cultivate, that's when we managed to get a good harvest and we got a lot of money. I don't

> remember how much a kilo was. I forgot because it is a long time ago. The harvest would be exported outside and people would manage to build houses with iron sheets (I_B_2015-07-01).

The different stories told by Marcel, Xavier, Seraphine and Beatrice all trace how the marshland's transformation into agricultural land took place. Their retrospective narrative is a very positive one. According to them, the vegetable project had helped the local population in getting developed and in making a lot of money. The latter two statements both illustrate the newly created wealth by the demise of the traditional grass-thatched houses called *nyakatsi*[78] which were replaced by rectangular iron sheet homes.

The new roofing style, however, was more than a simple hallmark of development. It was a direct consequence of the vegetable project. In order to make space for new plots, the original vegetation in the marshland needed to be cut down. Some of these marshland grasses were used by the local population for the construction of houses, which soon became an issue. The former project agronomist revealed:

> So that's when we sat down and decided what to do about this. So we said: "Let's open up a small shop!" (…)This was a shop for only the people who worked in the wetland and it would give them the iron sheets to thatch their houses. (…) The car that took the vegetables to the airport would also buy iron sheets from some shops in Kigali and bring them here. They were sold at a low price and it was a good thing the citizens liked (I_K_2015-06-04).

As if to support his account, Kabera pointed to a large building at the entrance of the marshland which was commonly called *hangari* (see picture 9). It was an old and run-down storage facility. Today, the dominant building still serves as a meeting place for local farmers and traders. Kabera pointed to the *hangari* and elaborated where the shop used to be. This shop provided the project members with different kinds of foods and goods for their everyday lives: beans, sugar, iron sheets, radios, bikes and malaria treatment – but no beer was sold, he confidently noted. I was wondering about the people who had not joined the project and therefore could not make advantage of the cheap shop, but Kabera was quick in explaining that entering the "pre-cooperative" as he called it, was not a big issue at that time. On the contrary, the limited access to the shop was a strategy to encourage more and more farmers to enter the project. They had divided the marsh into small plots of five ares each which meant that there were plenty of plots available. To access one of these plots the citizens were not required to pay any entry fees. Instead, they had to volunteer for work in the project on five successive days before they were given a plot. Each family, as well as single women and men, were given a plot, Kabera noted, and he added that nobody could own more than one plot in the marsh. If ever the project ran out of free plots, they applied some sort of lottery to make a fair decision.

78 Nowadays, *nyakatsi* are forbidden by law.

Kabera continued to tell us how the production in the project was organised. In July, they would cultivate vegetables such as peppers and chilli for the European market in order to harvest over the European wintertime. Their products were exported to France, Belgium and, in lower quantities, also to Germany. Between March and July they did not produce for the European market: “Usually from March to July we did not cultivate in that period. We rather replanted ornamental plants that replenished the land and we cultivated those things which would help us in our daily living in Rwanda, which would help us to survive” (I_K_2015-06-04).

Similarly, Beatrice remembered her time in the former vegetable project:

> In 1976, we were cultivating green pepper and afterwards we put in soy. We would put the seeds into the ground in July as well as in August and September and then start harvesting. This was the way it was cultivated. By that time the rain would come and bring down all the things from the hill. But it would still grow well and we would get manure, and that's how we learned about the manure from the factories (I_B_2015-07-01).

The main cropping season in the marshland was during the dry season and thus, the rhythm of the vegetable project fit nicely into the local agrarian calendar: it paused during the long rainy season so that the farmers could focus on farming their private hillside fields.

Also in another respect, the project tried to improve reconciliation between work and the farmers’ personal needs. Kabera told us proudly how he had managed to find a solution for the project’s labour demand on Sundays, when people wanted to attend church service:

> I went to talk to the priest of Rutunga and explained to him: “Mostly we have a plane on Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday. So it’s not easy for us”. And the priest was like: “Okay fine, I will come to your place [the marshland] and give you a mass down there!” So usually on Sundays, at around the time the mass starts, we would blow the whistle and all the farmers would come out of their gardens. I would put a table there on that place and the priest would come and read us the mass. By eleven, he was done and we all would leave and continue our work. So no one said that he/she could not work just because of religion (I_K_2015-06-04).

Three times a week, the fresh vegetables were taken to the airport. In order to store the harvested goods until the car came, a tunnel was dug into the hill. This tunnel was accessible through two big holes entering the hill just behind the *hangari*, and it served as a kind of rock cellar. “Have they [the members of the Abakumburwa cooperative] already explained you how these holes were used?” Kabera asked me to make sure that I would not miss this further detail. Indeed, I had already made enquiries about these strange holes. As my assistant and I had been told upon the very first meeting with cooperative members at the *hangari*, the holes belonged to a tunnel which had been used as a fridge for the former project. The two entrance holes could be covered with wooden doors. In there they would store their vegetables until they were taken to the airport (I_K_2015-06-04 and M_AC_2015-05-13).

The production of export vegetables for the European market was a profitable business for the residents of Rutunga. This was also expressed during a meeting with a local family who had worked in this project in the 1970s. As their special guest, I was offered a seat on one of the few chairs in the family's *uruganiriro* – the conversation room. The room was full of people, presumably extended family members and children who had all come to attend the meeting or to catch a glimpse of the white researcher. I had prepared some questions with my assistant, who was leading the discussion. Soon a lively conversation evolved around the benefits of the former project as compared to the current situation in the marshland.

> **Man:** In the former time we were like *abazungu* [white people]! We used to harvest at around 100,000 RWF. There used to come four or three Nissans and they used to park and take the harvest to the market. They were giving us cards, writing down the harvest of each and every individual and at the end they used to come and pay us.
> **Assistant**: How much were you harvesting in one season?
> **Woman:** Some people were getting even more than 200,000 per season.
> **Man:** The currency in the former time was not a lot like the currency of this time. It had a very high value. Like the person who harvested a lot in the former time harvested like 45,000 RWF. I remember I (…) [and two others] harvested 45,000 RWF and we were among the best farmers – we harvested a lot of money, because 45,000 RWF was quite a lot of money.
> **Assistant:** How can you compare 45,000 RWF in the former time to the currency of today?
> (Several family members in the room start laughing about this question)
> **Man:** The 45,000 RWF of former time can be compared to 400,000 RWF of this time. To understand the value of it.
> **Assistant:** What could you do with that money, to understand the value?
> **Man:** You could do a lot of things because cattle, like a very good bull was 6,000 RWF at that time. And you understand that this was really little compared to the 45,000 RWF we harvested. If you can buy a bicycle at 3,500 RWF, a radio set at 1,000 RWF. By now a bicycle is 100,000 RWF. There are some people in the former times who managed to build houses with iron sheets because they were in the cooperative and they were getting a lot of money. Even the agronomist who was managing that place is still there but nowadays he is looking after his cattle.
> (…)
> **Man:** In the former time we were rich. But this time around, no… It is all about looking for something to eat – just something to eat. We do not expect harvest to export. We just get the maize and we take it home. When you get French beans you just get a little bit to take it to the market. There is no profit out of it (M_HF_2016-02-13).

These lines nicely illustrate how profitable Kajevuba marshland used to be in former times. It equally shows that local farmers' families managed to improve their livelihoods and became rich like "*abazungu*", as the household head had said, looking at me with a big grin.

Another good example for me to understand the dimension of the project's success was provided by Marcel:

> The other time, the marshland was very profitable; very, very profitable, I tell you! Once, I harvested for 5,600 RWF on one day. A bike cost 3,000 RWF. So I had harvested one-and-a-half bikes in one single day! (I_M_2015-06-25).

However, the rapid rise of the project had soon provoked new challenges, as Kabera, the former agronomist explained. While his workers were still loading more grass onto his pickup he once again pointed to the *hangari* and mused:

> The green board over there (…) was used to write the income coming in and the harvest we were having and everything that was coming in. So that would be very transparent and everyone would see how we were getting more profit and how we developed. After a while, the people already wanted to save some money. In the beginning, they used to save the money with me or my wife, and I saw that this was not really appropriate. So I decided to call the *Banque Populaire*. So it came up and it gave the farmers an account to put their money in. And it was a good thing that this bank came, because they could go there to keep their money. It was a good thing (I_K_2015-06-04).

Kabera was not a humble personality. As a worker for the Ministry he had a lot if influence and strong networks. At length, he spoke of all the good things he had done and achieved in the former times. Kabera's positive reputation was largely confirmed in various farmers' accounts:

> He was a good leader for those who worked with him. We say he was good but even now he is still a good guy. We wish he would come back and become the agronomist. But he has a lot of cattle he has to take care of them. Even his sons are rich (M_HF_2016-02-13).

> [T]hat man that rears [cattle], did a lot of good things for us, though he finally decided to work individually. He once talked to the minister of health, and they got us a dispensary, that's how we called it by then, and that's what turned into a *centre de santé* which you pass by there, which is very important. So we got a place to go for medication easily. Because before, the hospitals were very far away in Rutongo, in Kigali. (…) And it [the vegetable project] also made them build the main road down there (I_X_2015-06-09).

As these accounts demonstrate, the vegetable project brought many more things than just individual development. A new road, a shop, a dispensary, a bank, and a local education centre for girls were tangible structural improvements related to this project.

Also, on the level of the community, the vegetable project had positive effects. "There were no conflicts, because there was money and everything was good and there were no conflicts or misunderstandings. We lived happily together because we were getting rich and we ate and shared happiness. There was no problem, it was good", Marcel recalled. His statement was linked to a previous remark he had made about the ethnic violence around this area and all over Rwanda in the curse of colonial independence (see chapter 3.3).

An interesting trait which is found in many of the stories about this vegetable project in the 1970s is the way it is sharply contrasted with the current situation in the marshland. This was particularly the case whenever I was talking to people from the older generations. The family discussion, quoted before, is a good example in this regard. However, the younger generations did not necessary share this perspective. As Hitimana, a son of the family, revealed to me during a private interview, he found that his parents were "stuck in the past" (I_H_2016-01-13).

To make better sense of this idealised image of the former marshland project, it is crucial to know that the people of the Abakumburwa cooperative had recently experienced a very disappointing joint venture (see chapter 8). They had joined in a project for export vegetables which had been introduced to them by government institutions. The foreign investor had promised them a good market in Europe and many of the cooperative members had expected the good old times to come back.

4.3. Growth and Decline: The Project's Demise

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, Kajevuba had been the second of a whole series of marshlands that were gradually developed for horticulture production in Rwanda (GoR 1979, 18–19). Kajevuba is thus representative of a number of medium-sized, easily accessible marshlands that were exploited in the 1970s. At the same time, the story of Kajevuba marshland is also special because it was a very successful project, initially at least.

The Kajevuba project's success also found expression in the MINAGRI annual reports. "During the year 1974, almost 500 tonnes of vegetables (499,687kg), produced by the Kajevuba Cooperative, have been exported to Europe (86% to Belgium, 14% to France)",[xvi] states the annual report from 1974 (GoR 1975, 14). The report from 1977 notes that 1,700 farmers' families were working in the Kajevuba marshland (GoR 1978, 17).

The fact that Kajevuba marshland is explicitly mentioned in these MINAGRI annual reports indicates that it must have been one of the most relevant site for horticulture production and export at that time. This presumption was confirmed during a conversation with Juvenal, a staff member at the FAO office in Kigali, where I was searching for old documents about the Kajevuba project. He was a kind person, near retirement, and remembered the former project fairly well (C_FAOO_2015-06-11). After giving me the contact details of some potential informants – Kabera, of course, was among them – he fell silent and finally noted that in the 1970s this marshland was still very good and fertile, while today, it is lost land, no better than the hillsides.

The annual report from 1976 describes the intensive agricultural exploitation of these horticulture marshlands as follows:

> Fresh vegetables such as peppers and chilli are produced in two separate seasons (January to May and December) while the Pili-Pili (*Capsicum frutescens L*) is exported year-round. (...)
> As compared to the year 1975, the exported tonnes have increased by 31.57%. The horticultural project also exported a large quantity of ornamental and medicinal plants, such as: 168,486kg Draczena, 12,518kg Euphorbia and 1,424kg Vinca Minor or Catharantuhs (GoR 1977, 14).[xvii]

It is important to note that these numbers refer to the total of horticulture projects on four production sites in Rwanda. The Kajevuba project was just one of them. The annual report further con-

firms that apart from export vegetables ornamental and medical plants were also cultivated "to replenish the soil", as Kabera had explained earlier. This measure against soil fatigue seems to have had only a limited effect on the marshland's degradation, since two years later a MINAGRI annual report explains that the marshland soil of Kajevuba was currently exhausted and that a cattle farm had been put in place for the purpose of regeneration (GoR 1979, 18).[79] In the following reports Kajevuba marshland is no longer explicitly named. The rather sudden disappearance of Kajevuba from later reports implies that the golden times of the marshland were only short-lived. The great disillusionment was sadly remembered by Marcel:

> The first, the second, third and fourth harvest worked out well. More money came in and life was good. People started building good houses, they bought bicycles and radios and they became civilised. Bikes, radios, houses with iron sheets, and we got out of *nyakatsi*. Listen well to what I am saying. All this was good but what followed was bad. Later, they started to maintain the project badly. It was done by white experts who were sent by the government. But this marsh was exemplary in Rwanda. The President Habyarimana even used to bring other Presidents like Micombero or the President of the Central African Republic, Ange Patassé. Many people came to visit this place and how it was developed. After the bad maintenance, the whole thing went down and the cooperative too (I_M_2015-06-25).

Farmers' accounts have named different reasons for why the project literally went down the drain. Soil fatigue, the end of the financial support, Kabera's retreat, and bad project management were the most commonly offered answers in explaining why the project failed.

Kabera himself confirmed that the fertility of the marshland had decreased over time. Yet, according to him, the core issue was not the soil management. "When the FAO stopped working with us the working spirit was not really good (…) The government gave us a car but we didn't get paid for the fuel to transport the goods. There were some bad leaders and already things started becoming messed up", Kabera reasoned regarding the project's failure. While my assistant was still translating, Kabera's workers approached us. They had finished their task and Kabera asked us to get back into his car. Over the engine's noise, Kabera described the situation after the FAO's departure in more detail:

> When it [the FAO] was still working here, the car had the number plate of the UN. Usually, when they would see that we were working for them, everything that we told them would just go into their mind quickly. If we wanted a paper, it was never an issue because we would immediately get everything we wanted through them [the FAO]. So, by the time the FAO stopped working, even the government was not able sell the harvest. Getting them to hear what we wanted or getting what we needed was not really easy, because the government, by that time, would give out what they wanted to whom they wanted. If they found like you... If they did not consider you to be important to them, they would not render you the service you needed. So the issue was that the FAO made us more recognised and we were being granted whatever we wanted through them. (…) But then, after they had left, everything was really hard to understand and to coordinate because we didn't have someone to make us immediately seen. I think that was the main issue (I_K_2015-06-04).

79 The report says: "Le marais de la Kajevuba (120 Ha) situé à 36 kms de Kigali à côté de la route bitumée Kigali-Byumba, est exploité par 2000 paysans. Ce périmètre est actuellement fatigué si bien qu'un élevage de vaches laitières vient d'être mis sur pied en vue de régéngérer progressivement les terres".

According to Kabera, missing markets, disappointed farmers, financial and administrative constraints all came together once the FAO no longer supported the project. Upon my asking why the FAO had withdrawn from the project, Kabera just noted that the project had expired at some point and no extension was planned. Kabera's quote also points to the symbolic loss after the FAO's withdrawal. Sharma and Gupta (2006, 18) point to the fact that government licence plates act as a representation of the state and that such kind of representations are a "(…) key modality through which states are culturally constituted, and through which state power is enacted". Similarly, we can understand the loss of the UN number plate that once had acted as an entry door that was now no longer available. Kabera's account expresses criticism towards the former government and its cronyism, but he remains vague in his accusations. This was different with Marcel. "Do they [the cooperative members] talk about the bad management?" Marcel asked me during our meeting few weeks later. "They have to talk about that!" he exclaimed. Marcel was upset. "Money is brought for the financing and all that. They nibble and nibble… Instead of constructing solid roads they put it into their own pockets and five years later the road is bad and the project is finished", he said angrily (I_M_2015-06-25). In the family meeting too, one of the elder women bitterly remembered: "Others came in and started swallow millions of millions. They were like sucking at us, the people who came after Kabera, who were in charge of the marshland!" (M_HF_2016-02-13).

4.4. Living on Lost Land: Cooperative Issues and Elite Capture

The time after the famous project was hardly ever talked about. I tried to directly address the issue in various interviews but answers remained sparse and incomplete. Often my informants summarised the period of about ten years, between the project's end and the outbreak of the war, in a few sentences. While the former vegetable project was remembered in rich detail and people were often able to recall specific numbers, year dates and names, these kinds of references were now missing from their accounts. According to some, the farmers were discouraged and used the marshland anyhow. Others again explained how they had first tried to keep up with the production of different crops for the local markets and for home use. Beatrice describes the aftermath of the project as follows:

> [The project] continued up to 1978 and then the investors went back. But the wetland was already dried up and well-prepared and we were still growing those crops. We marketed them, but the prices became low. We cultivated beans and soy and after that we would plant *intoryi* [aubergines] and cabbage. And those ways of cultivating vegetables kept on expanding, but the investors had gone back. In the wetland, the water drainage became full. (...) In October, sometimes the crops would be flooded. When the rain was heavy, the crops would die. But we didn't leave the wetland unused; we were still working in it because the citizens had a plot in the wetland which they would cultivate(I_B_2015-06-01).

Xavier recalled that the local leaders, who were in charge of the marshland advised them to become their own cooperative: “And we wanted to make our own cooperative. So but then... by that time we did not have enough training and had not learned how to work for ourselves. It immediately went down and the pre-cooperative got split apart” (I_X_2015-06-09). Sadly he remembered how people had cultivated anything they wanted and how the marshland had become disorganised and bad. As someone who had been involved in the cooperative’s issues for a long time, Xavier openly expressed his displeasure about the irregular use of the marshland. According to him, the problem was that they had not yet well understood the idea of forming a cooperative and working autonomously at that time. Under the former vegetable project there had always been leaders, such as Kabera, who had told them what to do and who provided good markets. They had been working for this project like wage labourers, gaining good profit out if it. But after the FAO and the project staff had left, many of the locals farmers were discouraged. Xavier ruminated:

> We were wondering: “What are we putting ourselves together in a cooperative for?” Because now the people who were leading and showing us what we had to do and also about selling our harvest and helping us in getting some income were gone. So we never understood what we would be putting ourselves together for. (…) The ones in charge of the project had left and the agronomist had also left (I_X_2015-06-23).

Kabera had left the Kajevuba project in 1982. During the interview, I had to ask him several times before he finally came up with an explanation. According to him, things had already become more difficult and he saw no personal benefit in this project any longer. He had come to Kajevuba as a single man. The project had allowed him to visit Europe, but later on, he was married and he needed to cater for his family. He wanted to take a break from the government’s work. Kabera also mentioned journalists who had asked him questions about ethnicity and how he was distributing the plots among the members of the community. Years later, he came to understand why they had asked him these questions. Obviously Kabera did not want to further talk about the genocide, because he had already launched into a new story about how they had brought ducks and geese to Kajevuba.

In the course of the 1980s, the marshland gradually fell back into its initial state. It became filled with water and grass, but the citizens continued to use it according to their needs. In the beginning of the 1990s, the government once more encouraged the local population to work in cooperatives:

> Later that’s when there came a government programme that all the wetlands are in the hands of the government. And there should only work cooperatives. So that made those who had been working there before come together and form a cooperative. And that’s when Abakumburwa came up. And we would crop one seed that was agreed upon. But because we didn’t have a large market we would just sell at the local market like Kigali or Rusine market. In 1994 the genocide came and it destroyed everything that was in [the marshland] (I_X_2015-06-09).

It is interesting to note that according to Xavier, the introduction of the cooperative in Kajevuba marshland predates the genocide. According to him, the cooperative issue had been very popular already before the war.

> The cooperative policy and all that was really popular. (…) In all the meetings that were held, they were teaching us about it. In the commune meetings and in every meeting from all levels of the state they were trying to encourage us to work in cooperatives. Especially the people that worked in the marshland were encouraged to work in cooperatives (I_X_2015-06-23).

Xavier's statements had confused me since the dominant political discourse generally presented the marshland cooperatives as a "new" approach of the post-genocide government. Even the president of the Abakumburwa cooperative had argued that the cooperative was only found in 1998, after the genocide. I had met the president on different occasions and visited him from time to time in his small shop close by the marshland, where he was selling milk, tea and various goods for everyday use. Between serving his customers he reported about the marshland's history:

> After genocide, that's when everyone was got out of the marshland and they encouraged small associations to work in there. Small, small associations were in the marshland, and later on we decided to become one big association and currently the government was encouraging people to be in cooperatives and that's when we increased to the level of being a cooperative (I_AP_2015-06-04).

The Abakumburwa cooperative was officially recognised by the Rwandan Cooperative Agency (RCA) in 2010. Overall, it seems that some of these contradictions relate to a terminological fuzziness of the cooperative concept. Beatrice's statement nicely illustrates this point:

> Each one would cultivate whatever he or she felt like. And that's when the time came and they put in cooperatives. By then, they had not yet started to encourage cooperatives. We were associations, but when we were cultivating in the marshland we would call it a cooperative (I_B_2015-06-01).

The history of Kajevuba is a good example of how terms such as cooperative, pre-cooperative, small groups or associations have changed meaning over time and therefore are often applied interchangeably.[80]

Another detail in Kajevuba's history which was mentioned in several accounts was the elite capture of the marshland just before the genocide. According to Marcel, some rich people came and occupied large parts of the marshland as a pasture for their own herds. The cooperative president elaborated about the circumstances of this incident:

> As you have heard, in the past, there were bad leaders. Some people were just dictators and they would come and get all the citizens out of the garden and say: "You all get out because this is my cattle kraal!" So from near the barrage, the artificial lake down to here it was a big, big place for people's cattle. They were like three people and that was only the plot for their cattle alone (I_AP_2015-06-04).

80 As noted in the methods chapter, in this work I do not follow the distinction between cooperatives and associations as proposed by the Rwandan government. I commonly employ the term "cooperative" as defined by the Rochdale pioneers (see chapter 5.1).

During our many conversations, the cooperative president easily spoke up about the profiteering political system under the Second Republic. Yet, whenever we touched upon the ongoing grievances, his voice turned low and he spoke with deliberation and careful consideration. The fact that his answers generally avoided direct criticism of the current government's affairs indicates that he was fully aware of his sensitive position as a spokesperson for the cooperative. This black-and-white narrative of the "bad" leadership before the genocide versus Kagame's great success was a common pattern in official interviews at all levels. Kabera, for example, explained:

> By that time, the leaders were not doing what they [the citizens] thought, but the government thought for them instead. They did what it felt like and not what the citizens did... The citizens gave out ideas but then the plans that were implemented came from the leaders. So it never worked out well. So it started working out well recently when now the citizens can think for themselves and try to put in what they think (I_K_2015-06-04).

Also Kabera's statement contrasts the former state coercion with the citizens' alleged autonomy under the current regime. As I will show in the coming chapters, this new "freedom of choice" is very limited – even more so – in the cooperative context. To critically reflect upon such narratives and how they are employed in Rwanda's political discourse, however, should not go as far as questioning the abuses of the Habyarimana regime. There are, as I have outlined in the previous chapter, good reasons which account for the negative image of the former regime.

As Marcel recalled, those who began to install their own kraals in the marshland were high-ranking ministerial officers and people with good ties to the Habyarimana government. One of them was working in the MINAGRI, the other one for the intelligence, and another one was Nyandwi, the former Minister of education. Marcel continued to explain:

> They were all from the same region, from the leadership region of that time [Northern Rwanda]. They were all leaders in the regime of President Habyarimana. The citizens had nothing to do about them or had nothing to talk about them. By that time, there was nothing like people getting together to fight against something. There was nothing like that by that time because those political parties were very strong (I_M_29-06-2015).

Marcel's statement refers to the well-known fact that most of the political leaders under the Habyarimana regime originated from the country's North-Western regions, Habyarimana's home region. This elite circle around Habyarimana appropriated land resources for their own benefits, as it was the case with the cattle farms in Kajevuba. According to Marcel, the local population had to accept the elite capture of their marshland. However, Marcel also recalls an alleged incident which occurred in 1993, shortly before the genocide:

> So one day they [the citizens] decided to send away all those cattle. Imagine having 100 cattle being sent back to Kigali that were filling the whole of a marshland! So they were sent away, meaning that the citizens were not happy about not being able to use the marshland (I_M_29-06-2015).

Unfortunately this incident was never mentioned in any other conversation. This calls the veracity of this incident into question. According to Kabera, these acts of resistance did not occur in Kajevuba, but in some other part of the country, where local farmers had denied the cattle access to the marsh. “Fortunately, they were not the traditional Rwandese cattle”, Kabera added.

4.5. After the Genocide: Times of Rehabilitation and Reconciliation

“After genocide we started by cultivating vegetables, among them cabbages, aubergines, green peppers, tomatoes and French beans. We were cultivating in a disorganised way and we were taking the harvest to the local market”. My assistant and I were sitting in Seraphine’s living room. “I wonder if she wants to know how we used to cultivate them?”, Seraphine asked my assistant before getting up and demonstrating how they used to make holes to put in manure and the seeds (I_S_22-02-2016). Marcel confirmed that the citizens had reclaimed the marshland after the genocide. But then he remembered that there were also soldiers working in the marshland after the genocide.

The military’s involvement in Kajevuba was also mentioned by the cooperative president who used to be a soldier himself. Upon my question how the local population got along with these soldiers he explained:

> The soldiers were not really troubling the citizens. They came and saw the plots and the citizens, and they asked them to give them the plots and they also agreed with them that they would be working with them and they would be paying them. And also the citizens liked it, because by that time they had no organisation in them, so they were not utilising it properly. So since they were also getting paid, (…) they did cultivate there with them with no trouble (I_AP_2015-06-04).

As he explained, the farmers were hired to work on the soldiers’ fields. However, he could not provide any detailed information about this period, since he himself was not staying in Rutunga by that time: “I was living in Kigali, but I saw many trucks carrying tomatoes that were from Kajevuba and that means it was really giving a lot of profit” (I_AP_2015-06-04). According to the president’s account, the farmers’ cooperation with the soldiers had soon become a routine, which was interrupted and eventually stopped due to floods. A field visit report by Harindintwali, a former officer at the Rwandan Agriculture Board (RAB), describes the causes of the military’s departure from Kajevuba as follows: “But this praiseworthy initiative felt [*sic*] apart due to poor maintenance of drainage network by local farmers and hazardous flash floods from Nyabugogo River [*sic*], which then overflowed its banks to severely inundate the downstream part of Kajevuba lowland” (Harindintwali 2011, 1–2). While Harindintwali’s report clearly blames the local population for the mismanagement of the marshland, a socio-economic study of the Kajevuba marshland site from 1998 is less reproachful about the causes og the failure. It simply notes that the military could not withstand the severe floods, which regularly struck the marshland (Rutagungira and GoR 1998).

After the soldier's departure from Kajevuba, several farmers' associations became active in the marshland. Officially, the marshland fell back into the hands of MINAGRI. The afore-mentioned socio-economic study lists 16 associations, half of which were women's associations (Rutagungira and GoR 1998, 6). The high percentage of women in these associations indicates two things. First, it points to the general fact that after the genocide, men were still largely absent and women took over the core responsibilities in their homes. In Gikomero alone, 37 percent of the households were female-headed, widow households, and this number does not include all de facto female-headed households where men were in prison or absent in some other ways (Rutagungira et al. 1998, 11). Secondly, the high engagement of women in marshland agriculture indicates that the marshland served as an important food-production zone to feed families in the immediate post-war context.

Between 1997 and 1998 the MINAGRI launched a marshland rehabilitation project, financed once more by the FAO but this time also including the United Nations Development Program and the World Food Program (Nkaye, GoR, and MINAGRI 1998). The project was known under the case number PNUD/FAO RWA/96/025 and comprised seven marshlands. The Bishenyi marshland, one of the first vegetable production sites in the 1970s (see chapter 4.1), was also part of this rehabilitation project – a short note on the side which supports the theory about the environmentally exploitative character of these former vegetable projects.

With 1,948 US Dollars per hectare, the Kajevuba marshland came as one the most costly rehabilitation sites within the project. It scheduled the construction of a flood barrier from Nyabugogo river as well as the complete rearrangement of the drainage system (compare figures 7 and 8). Both measures make clear that the recurring inundations must have had a more fundamental cause than the farmers' poor drainage maintenance alone. The high costs of the rehabilitation are further due to the construction of an artificial lake, a water deposit, which locally became known as the *barrage* (see picture 8). The *barrage* is situated at the upper end of the marshland. Today, it commonly serves as a second, important point of reference apart from the *hangari*, which is located at the marshland's mouth.

It is noteworthy that the rehabilitation works were initially planned as a "*formule mixte*" – as a dual approach that combines unskilled contract work from the local communities with the specialised skills of enterprises. However, this kind of participative approach was dropped in the course of the project since it "(…) took a lot of time and was in no way less expensive with respect to the quality of these works" (Nkaye, GoR, and MINAGRI 1998, 26). It is also possible that the rejection of local workforce is related to the community's critical appraisal of the project. As the PNUD/FAO project report indicates, local farmers feared that the rehabilitation of the marshland would eventually

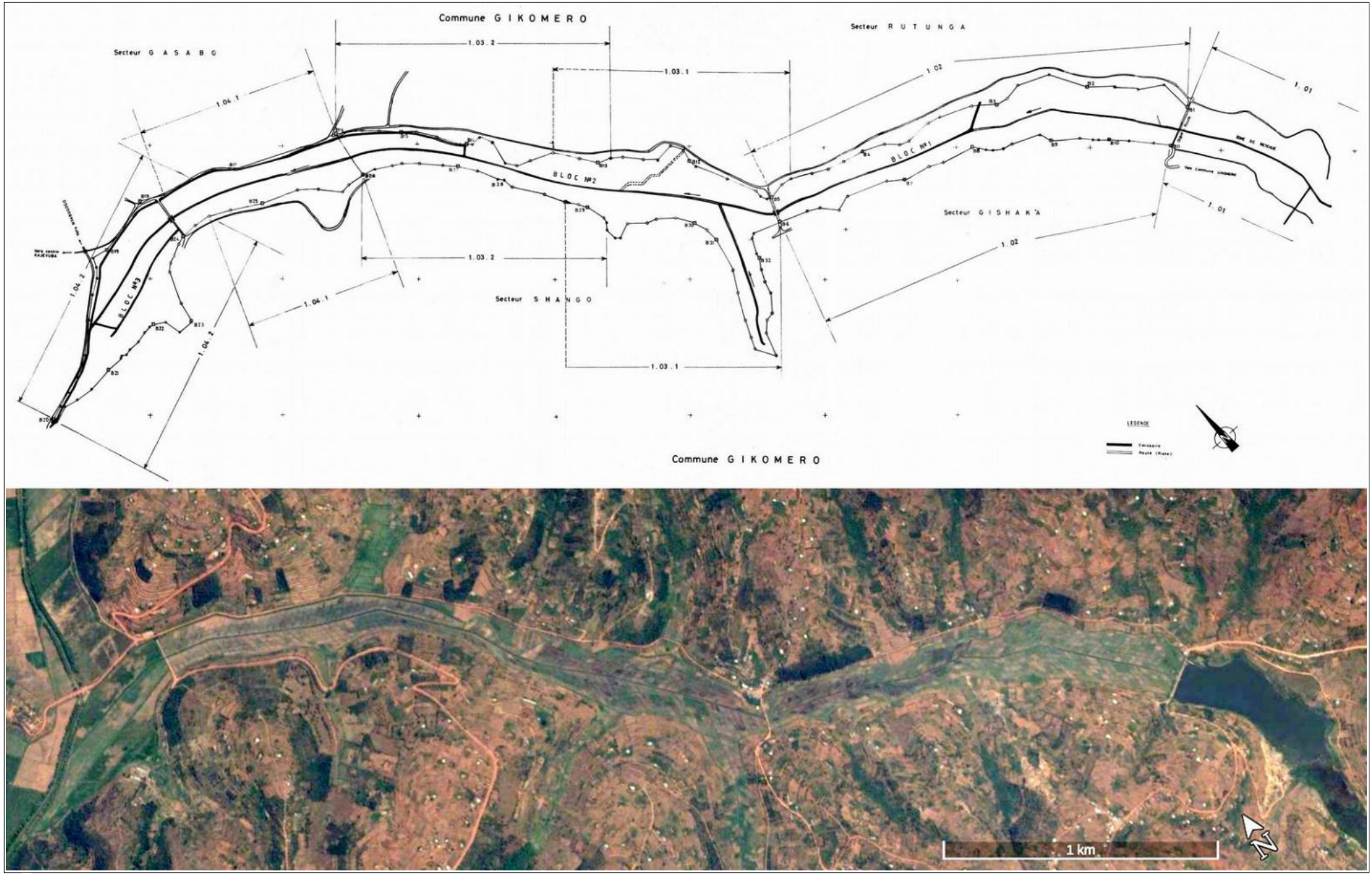


Figure 8: Map of Kajevuba of PNUD/FAO Project (Geotop Cunsultance 1998) and Satellite image of Kajevuba from August 2016

lead to the redistribution or reduction of their plots – a fear that directly relates to the "[p]recarious tenure situation in the marshlands" (Nkaye, GoR, and MINAGRI 1998, 23). The report states:

> Currently, all marshlands belong to the state. Farmers who are working in the developed marshland are bound to the state by use-right-contracts which define a long list of conditions they have to follow to not be excluded. Some terms of contract may become difficult for farmers such as the quasi-prohibition of sowing one's own seeds, or making the traditional ridges. The obligation to sow in lines and the prescription of specific dates for the seeding and other agricultural tasks. The farmers struggle to comply with all these regulations (Nkaye, GoR, and MINAGRI 1998, 23).[xviii]

This quote illustrates, that from the local farmers' perspective the expensive rehabilitation of the Kajeuvba marshland also implied a significant loss of autonomy. Farmers who formerly had been working in the marshland according to their own rhythms and habits would now be obliged to adhere to the new cropping regime under the supervision of an officially recognised marshland cooperative.

The artificial lake too was not an undisputed subject among the local civil society. The construction of such a huge water reserve, which would capture as much as 150,000 m^3 of water, was initially disliked among farmers, especially those whose fields were located in the respective area of the new lake, as the cooperative president revealed during one of our meetings. "Usually, when an idea is coming then people do not like it!" the president explained about the dam. He looked very tired as he said this. Tired perhaps of answering my many questions, but his tiredness also seemed to reflect his personal fatigue and the current challenges he was facing as a cooperative leader (see chapter 8). He sighed, and then concluded, referring to the barrage, that nowadays people would understand the great advantage this lake offered for irrigation.

There is, however, evidence that the new irrigation scheme and the artificial lake did not benefit all farmers who used to be working in the marshland. An environmental assessment report on behalf of the FAO and the Rural Sector Support Program[81] (RSSP), a country-wide government programme that functions as the executive arm of MINAGRI, notes:

> During the field visits to Kajevuba and Bishenyi marshlands, the farmers informed the EA team that some of the people who do not belong to the existing Farmers Associations have formed their own associations to exploit the edges of the developed marshlands since they feel that they were left out of the irrigation scheme (Badiane and FAO 2000, 30).

Furthermore, the construction of the barrage fell together with the start of exceptionally heavy rainfalls caused by the 1997 – 1998 El Niño event. It was one of the most severe El Niños ever recorded, with far-reaching global consequences, natural disasters, floods, droughts and subsequent

81 The RSSP was established in 2001. It is a World Bank-funded programme that has gone through different stages. By the time of my research, the programme had entered its third stage. In the previous periods, the RSSP had focused on the development and agricultural exploitation of marshlands all over Rwanda. Most of these marshlands were developed for rice production, yet some marshlands close to Kigali were developed for other suitable cash crops. The Kajevuba marshland is one of those exceptional sites (I_RSSPME_2015-05-07).

food crises in many Africa countries. As the project report notes, the rehabilitation works in the Kajevuba valley also suffered heavily from these environmental constraints. Jeannette, who was living in the little centre right next to the artificial lake remembered the time when the barrage was built and the floods came:

> They brought it [the barrage] in 1999 [here as well as in the subsequent year-references Jeannette was mistaken. According to other informants and satellite images she must have meant late 1997 or early 1998]. We used to cultivate sugar cane here in the wetland. Then the sugar cane was removed and we started planting potatoes and sweet potatoes. In 1999 [1998] there was a flood. It was called Rutabagirwa. We called it that, because it was the name of the person who was leading this area at sector level [At that time, Rutabagirwa was the burgomaster of Gikomero commune] (I_J_2015-07-10).

In 2006 the barrage broke. It was rebuilt under the initiative of the RSSP. As Jeannette emphasised, they had used proper stones this time and also Marcel was confident that the new barrage was better and more solid than the old one. In the subsequent years a series of different projects and programmes, mostly under the lead of the RSSP/MINAGRI in cooperation with the FAO and other donors, became active in the marshland. Jeannette's account nicely illustrates how most of these projects came and went:

> The RSSP started to teach us how we can plant different kinds of seeds. Since we started doing it like that, our cooperative has 350 members. Our *ibishanga* has 97 hectares with all those members inside. We had funds from RSSP and even MINAGRI. This is why MINAGRI came and put in some fish. There came another organisation called Catalist which was doing research on how to plant greens and it showed us how to use industrial fertilizers. The period suddenly ended and they went. There came another investor who started sponsoring us. They gave us pigs and they started dying and there were *ibishue* [ibis], they also died. And that is the house, you see, that is built by the water. That investor gave us the pigs and hens – to all members – and we were 50 members. And each member was given 3 rabbits and 2 hens. But all they gave us, they all died. So that means that is the history of how the wetland is in general. But mostly the investors we saw, they were RSSP and MINGARI (I_J_2015-07-10).

A fragmentary reconstruction of expenses based on different reports shows that over the past ten years, repeatedly, substantial amounts of money were invested in Kajevuba marshland (see table 1). As table 1 illustrates, between 2004 and 2006, the Rural Sector Support Program (RSSP) spent 90,416 USD on the reconstruction of the dam and the drainage network. In 2008, 20,732 USD were spent for general development works in Kajevuba, and in 2010, again 3,995 USD went on for two new flood gates on Kajevuba dam. One year later, in 2011, again 83,769 USD were demanded by the MINAGRI and the RAB for clearing the drainage infrastructure and the implementation of a Water Users' Association (WUA). And between 2013 and 2014 again 304,941 USD were used for the rehabilitation of the marshland under the Quick Win Marshland Development Program (QWMDP) – a sub-unit under the RAB. Most of these programmes not only provided financial and technical support, but also tried to "revamp" the cooperative, as it was phrased in the Haradintwali's field-visit report.

Year	Expenses USD[82]	RWF	Purpose	Source
2004-2006	90,416	50,000,000	Reconstruction of the dam and the drainage network	(GoR 2010, 184)
2008	20,732	11,119,175	Development works	(MINAGRI and GoR 2012, 83).
2010	3,995	2,287,660	Two new flood gates for Kajevuba dam	(MINAGRI and GoR 2012, 83).
2011	83,769	50,000,000	Cleaning the drainage, implementation of a Water User's Association	(Harindintwali 2011).
2013-2014	304,941	207,500,000	Rehabilitation under the Quick Win Marshland Development Program	(Office of the Auditor General for State Finances 2015, 119).

Table 1: Expenses for Kajevuba Marshland between 2004 and 2014

By the time of my first field stay in Rutunga in 2015, the cooperative had just entered a new phase of reconstruction. Under the custody of the MINAGRI and the NAEB a joint venture with a foreign investor was initiated. It was an investment project involving cropping green beans for the European market, and many of the local farmers were eager to restore the good old days of the former vegetable project. I want to leave it here with the history of Kajevuba marshland and its cooperative. The more recent history of how the joint venture between the Abakumburwa cooperative and the foreign investor turned out will be resumed in the coming chapters, notably in chapter 8.

4.6. Conclusion: State-led Marshland Development on the Ground

The history of Kajevuba marshland is one example that illustrates the impact of state-led marshland development for farmers on the ground. The transformation of the Kajevuba papyrus swamp into agricultural land for a big horticulture project in the 1970s has changed rural lives fundamentally, in positive but also in negative ways. From being a showcase of successful development politics, Kajevuba has turned into doomed land, where perennial floods have washed away a fortune.

State involvement and financial and technical support by international organisations and enterprises such as the FAO and others run like a red thread through the history of Kajevuba marshland. The first years of intensive exploitation in the 1970s, the loss of good markets and symbolic recognition after the FAO's retreat, elite capture and the post-war marshland rehabilitation are all good examples of how local farmers' access, use-rights and associated opportunities to profit from the marshland have been shaped and reshaped by such institutions.

Farmers' stories have drawn a vivid picture of this past. Their stories tell of excited hopes when a new project comes, and the harsh disappointment when yet another project is over or has failed. Their stories resonate with their frustration over this recurring pattern, but also point to the necessity, over and over again, of taking up the work in the marshland until the next promising project

82 Currencies were unified and converted to USD on Fxtop.com under consideration of the respective dates.

comes. They explain how local initiatives after the war were fused into a marshland cooperative to comply with the government's new cooperative policy. The following chapter will expand on the issue of cooperatives in Rwandan marshlands.

CHAPTER 5: MATCHING CONCEPTS? MARSHLAND COOPERATIVES AND RWANDA'S GREEN REVOLUTION

Rwanda was the first East African country that officially declared all marshlands state property and put them under governmental control (Adams, Berkoff, and Daley 2006, 12). The new Land Law (GoR 2005, article 29) states that marshlands cannot be entitled to individual farmers. Instead, use-rights are given to cooperatives.[83] Thus, to understand the current situation in the Rwandan marshlands, it is necessary to take a close look at these cooperative organisations.

Leaving behind the historical grounds, this chapter investigates marshland cooperatives in modern-day Rwanda. What is the political idea behind the supposedly new cooperative approach? How do these cooperatives work, and on what kind of legal frameworks are they grounded? What was the government's motive in introducing cooperatives as the primary setup in Rwanda's marshlands, and how does the state's vision match with farmers' experiences on the ground? What emerges from this analysis is a rather contradictory image: while the government presents cooperatives as an autonomous, productive and reconciliatory force in the new Rwanda, the case studies presented in this chapter show that the state strongly interferes with the cooperatives' affairs in the marshlands.

5.1. Interrogating the Cooperative Concept: A Socialist Seed in Neoliberal Soil?

In 2006 the Rwandan government adopted a new cooperative policy that acts as the legal framework of all cooperatives in Rwanda. The policy portrays cooperatives as "(…) good mechanisms for pooling the people's meagre resources with a view to providing to them the advantages of the economies of scale" (GoR 2006, 1). This economic understanding of cooperatives was further combined with a reconciliatory mission that understands cooperatives as "(...) a tool for combating social exclusion and promoting peace and reconciliation" (GoR 2006, 2). Against the backdrop of the country's genocide history, this "peace-building mission" appears to be of great relevance. In an

83 There are, however, exceptions such as large parts of Nyabugogo marshland as well as large marshlands in Rwanda's Southern Province, which are leased out to foreign companies. In some other cases, marshlands were put under the custody of Rwandan entrepreneurs. In my research site, there were at least two marshlands of that kind. One belonged to a soldier, the other one to a former ministerial officer. The general rule, however, is that the use-rights are given to locally organised, so-called "community-based" marshland cooperatives.

unpublished draft on cooperatives in Rwanda, Musahara (2012, 4) concludes, regarding the legacy of this conflict:

> A new rationale for formation of cooperatives was based on post conflict reconstruction. While cooperatives are usually used to counter market imperfections and to avoid mercantile injustice in Rwanda after 1994 cooperatives offered a possibility of addressing vulnerability, assisting in poverty reduction and as one of the few vehicles for reconciliation.

The cooperative idea in Rwanda was equally supported by the many international development organisations and donor programs, which have literally flooded the country since 1994 and which have fundamentally shaped the institutional landscape of post-genocide Rwanda. As Musahara (2012, 4) rightly notes, with some underlying skepticism: "Cooperatives and associations were preferred by the hundreds of NGOs that rushed into Rwanda to offer relief and rehabilitation support".

Apart from economic development and reconciliation, the 2006 cooperative policy emphasises the cooperatives' role in political decentralisation as it states:

> The policy will provide an enabling environment in which a strong and autonomous cooperative movement will evolve in Rwanda. A movement in which men and women participate on equal terms. The cooperative movement will be able to serve its members efficiently, to contribute to poverty reduction as well as to the decentralization and social integration processes that are ongoing in the country (GoR 2006, 6).

"[A]utonomy and independence of each Cooperative Organization" also is declared in the new cooperative law that was passed in 2007 (GoR 2007, article 3, no 4). Also relevant for this work is that in contrast to earlier cooperative strategy papers or law texts, the new policy explicitly refers to gender equality, and the law text too specifies that "gender" should be considered in the election of the cooperatives' major management authority, the so-called "Board of Directors" (GoR 2007, article 63). This gender-related impact and its effectiveness in the context of Rwandan marshland cooperatives will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

The years following the policy and the new law saw a strong upswing of the cooperative movement in Rwanda. In 2008, the Rwandan Cooperative Agency (RCA) for the promotion, registration and supervision of cooperatives was established. By 2013 a total of 5,000 cooperatives were registered under the RCA. Together they comprised approximately 2,500,000 members (Nkuranga and Wilcox 2013, 2), which accounts for about a quarter of the country's entire population.[84] Today, the cooperative scene in Rwanda is highly diversified, with small cooperatives of less than 50 members as well as big cooperatives counting more than 500 members. Their activities extend from public transports and money saving to handicrafts and others. The lion's share, however, has always been in the realm of agriculture (Verhofstadt and Maertens 2014, 42; Musahara 2012, 4).

84 Calculated by using population data from the Fourth Population and Housing Census (NISR and MINECOFIN 2012, 60). Taking only the adult population into consideration, at least every 3rd person aged of 15 or above is member of a cooperative (40%).

In a nutshell, the policy provides three good arguments for why the Rwandan government relies on cooperatives in this phase of reconciliation and renewal: first, an economic argument – to benefit from the so-called "economies of scale"; second, a social argument – to foster peace and reconciliation through cooperatives; and, third, a political argument – to promote political autonomy and decentralisation.

At the same time, the way the cooperative model is praised as an innovative approach in the marshland is also slightly surprising. In fact, cooperatives are far from being a truly "new" concept. On the contrary, in most African states – and Rwanda is no exception – cooperative movements look back at a long and not always rosy history. This raises questions about the government's current attempts at a cooperative revival in Rwanda. We may ask: in what way are these new cooperatives different from the original cooperative idea that emerged about 200 years ago?

The cooperative as a more distinguished concept dates back to the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century. It is rooted in the mindset of collective action and the emergence of labour movements against the backdrop of European industrialisation. Many cooperative movements had a strong base in early socialist thinking, but there were also other forms of cooperative concepts such as the credit unions introduced by the German cooperative pioneer Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen.[85]

In its beginnings, the cooperative concept was generally associated with ideals of joint action, common interests, education and self-help. It referred to social security and counteracted ideas of competition, hierarchies and dependencies. Cooperatives were pictured as autonomous, open and voluntary associations acting in harmony. In 1844, these attributes were formalised by the pioneers of the Rochdale Society into seven core principles: 1) open membership, 2) democratic control ("one person, one vote"), 3) payment of limited interest on share, 4) distribution of surplus to purchasers of goods, 5) political and religious neutrality, 6) cash trading, and 7) promotion of education (Cole 1964, 139). These seven cooperative principles later came to be known as the "Rochdale principles". They represent an important hallmark for the cooperative movement and the International Cooperative Alliance up to the present day (Glück 1931; Cole 1964; Sargant Florence 1968; Darity 2008). They also find expression in Rwanda's latest cooperative law (GoR 2006, article 3).

In most African countries, including Rwanda, cooperatives were first introduced by colonial regimes, where they rarely corresponded to the original cooperative idea (Develtere et al. 2008, 365–67; Holmén 1990, 22–24; Mwaka 2018, 110–15; Sentama 2009, 61, 83). In some instances, they also played a crucial role in the context of colonial liberation. In Tanzania, for example, several

85 Whether Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen should be called a (Christian) socialist or not is discussed by Reichel (2018). He concludes that Raiffeisen rejected state involvement and therefore can be viewed as an advocate for a social market economy.

cooperative leaders and members later held leading functions in the post-independence government, and cooperatives served as a crucial mechanism of state planning under President Nyerere's attempts of building an African Socialism (Mwaka 2018, 103, 114–15). Although there were different cooperative approaches among the continent's young governments, in most cases, cooperatives continued to primarily serve the purpose of the state. Wanyama, Develtere and Pollet (2009, 368) conclude regarding African cooperatives after colonial independence: "For their alleged potential to mobilize local human resources to serve the entire nation and to transcend the existing class and/or ethnic divisions, cooperatives were promoted by governments as part of their populist-nationalist strategy for nation-building".

Thus, the 1960s and 70s saw a strong rise of the cooperative movement in many African states not just for (agricultural) development but also to expand state control. From the 1980s onwards, however, the cooperative approach was pushed into the background, for different reasons. Firstly, the 1980s rang the end of the Cold War, which was accompanied by a collapse of state socialism. Secondly, and related to the first reason, a new understanding of development arose under the increasingly dominant paradigm of market liberalisation. The principle of state-led cooperatives no longer fitted into this new neo-liberal development approach. It is therefore surprising that despite this rejection of cooperative organisations in Africa, cooperatives have recently been rediscovered in their role for rural development, although they now face a very different, neo-liberal market environment (Wanyama, Develtere, and Pollet 2009).

As Bernard and Taffesse (2012, 441) argue, the current cooperative approach is very different from earlier existing cooperative movements in Africa:

> These organisations strongly differ from their pre-1980s' predecessors in several ways. They are member-staffed and controlled as opposed to being state instruments used to organise economic policies. They are service organisation as opposed to the collective production models that proved unsustainable in most settings (Deininger, 1995). Finally, these organisations are often multipurpose in the service they offer, ranging from marketing activities for members only to public goods provision for the entire community they belong to.

The modern cooperative organisation is drawn as a functional solution within a capitalist framework, and no longer as an alternative or fundamental challenge to the existing capitalist economy. This new perception of cooperatives is nicely summarised by Mwaka (2018, 133), as he concludes, referring to the Tanzanian cooperative movement:

> [T]he evolution of cooperative societies in Tanzania from the 1980s has been a directional trend towards democracy and autonomy. It also reflects three things: the first is the broader political transition powered by global forces which directed the state to detach itself from the civil society while encouraging more private operation of the public sectors. The second is that the subsequent changes in the formation and management of cooperative societies also reflect a shift towards micro-ordering as opposed to the historical large-scale schemes. The third is that this operation has a focus

> on markets, market competitions, and economic development. This neo-liberal restructuring therefore led to a new understanding of what cooperative societies are. Although earlier cooperatives looked out for market opportunities as well, the neo-liberal cooperatives are neither the traditional, egalitarian, self-help groups proclaimed by Nyerere's socialist Government, nor are they a symbol of resistance against stooge chiefs, cheating traders and colonial hegemony (...). They are more business-oriented entities with economic gains as their major incentive.

Turning back to Rwanda, my findings support this trend of reframing cooperatives as neoliberal-friendly and business-oriented entities. This new alignment is reflected not just in the new cooperative policy, but even more clearly in the government officials' narratives of how cooperative associations in the Rwandan marshlands are supposed to work. Let us now listen closely to their perceptions and ideas about a marshland cooperative's ideal performance.

5.2. Marshland Cooperatives: A Vehicle for a Green Revolution

The government's efforts in reviving a cooperative movement in Rwanda and installing marshland cooperatives was preceded by a process in which local farmers had put themselves together into so-called marshland "associations". These associations emerged relatively soon after the genocide, partly as a consequence of the fact that family members had died or were still in exile and the cultivation of the marshland as family entities was hard to maintain. Only in 2006, with the introduction of the new cooperative policy and legislation as well as the implementation of the RCA, were these associations encouraged to become officially registered as marshland cooperatives.

"They have the status and also the internal regulations, and then they go to the Rwandan Cooperative Agency to be registered", the Director General (DG) at the MINAGRI informed me on the process of becoming an officially registered cooperative (I_DG_2015-05-02). "Do they have to pay fees for the registration?", I asked, and he replied in the affirmative, but was quick to explain that those fees were very low and that once the farmers had paid, their cooperative was registered. "Okay?" he asked rhetorically, to make sure I had understood how simple it was to get registered as a marshland cooperative. "And how do the people see these cooperatives?", I inquired, "because I think it is rather a new thing that they should form cooperatives. (...) Some said that the government came up with the idea?". "No, no, no; yeah, some…", the DG replied, and added: "It is a government policy, but the formation of a cooperative is… it is voluntary. C'est à la volunté, eh? The government will not come to manage each cooperative. But it is a policy which is there. But to form a cooperative is voluntary".

Against this official narrative which represents the reorganisation into cooperatives as a voluntary process, "encouraged" or "supported" by the government, Ansoms, Cioffo, et al. describe this process as much more coercive. According to their findings, starting from 2009, the former associations were "(…) obliged to group themselves into officially recognized cooperatives" (Ansoms,

Cioffo, et al. 2014, 172). As they note, in most cases the official reorganisation into a marshland cooperative also "(…) entailed a change in cultivation practices, as farmers are no longer allowed to combine different crops but have to specialise in market-oriented 'high value' crops such as rice or maize, defined by the government" (Ansoms, Cioffo, et al. 2014, 172).

This description holds partly true for the cases of marshland cooperatives I was working with. The largest of them, the Abakumburwa cooperative, which I introduced in the previous chapter, is a "classical" example of this transition. Under the supervision of the RSSP, a state-led development programme, several small farmers associations were merged into one big cooperative which later became officially registered at the RCA. The three smaller marshland cooperatives had never changed their status to that of a "true" cooperative. Officially they still ran under the title of associations, even though they had been presented to me by the local leaders as "cooperatives".

As it was explained to me, the major difference between cooperatives and association was that associations were not yet recognised by the Rwandan Cooperative Agency (RCA) but registered only at the sector level. In principle, becoming an association was like the first step towards becoming a cooperative, and all associations were to become cooperatives at some point (M_DA_2015-04-28). In this work I do not adhere to the official distinction between cooperatives and associations. I generally refer to all of them as "cooperatives" and I apply the term "association" only if the legal status is of relevance in my argument. However, it is noteworthy that the new cooperative law protects the name "cooperative", which "(…) shall only be applied to a cooperative with a legal personality" (GoR 2007, article 7), i.e. only to officially registered cooperatives.

As outlined in the previous chapters, Rwanda's valley-bottom lands generally have had a very different status than the landholdings on the hillsides. They have long been subject to centralised governance, and their use was often collectively organised. This partly explains why the government has opted for a such a different approach, or, more precisely, a "cooperative" approach in the marshlands instead of launching a process of private land registration as it did on the hillsides. However, the cooperative setup also aligns well with the government's agrarian ambitions, specifically to transform the marshlands into large-scale and modern production sites for cash crops.

"It is better when farmers work in cooperatives. In the marshland it is very easy to work as a cooperative because you can have enough productivity, you can easily get those inputs, and also our land is consolidated", the Director General at MINAGRI explained. According to him the cooperative approach in the marshlands had a double benefit. First, for the government, which could easily manage these state assets through the organisational form of a cooperative. And second, for the

farmers, who could more easily gain access to state-sponsored, improved seeds and fertilisers through their cooperative.

William Bizimana, the Rutunga Sector Agronomist who was in charge of the local agriculture cooperatives, confirmed this positive aspect of the cooperative approach in the marshlands. To my question about how agriculture in the marshlands had changed and whether farmers now were cultivating different crops as compared to earlier days, he responded:

> It is not the crops that have changed, but the way the farmers cultivate them. In the past, farmers cultivated in chaos without using anything, such as fertiliser. There were no instructions. But now the community is closer to the authorities. In former times, there was no agronomist at sector level. There was no advice on how to plant and how to improve germination and fruit formation to increase yields. But didn't we also grow beans and maize in the past? (I_RSA_2015-04-14).

What these two government officials, one at the level of the ministry the other at Sector level, explain links up to a new government programme that was implemented in 2007: The Crop Intensification Program (CIP).

On the basis of scientific investigations, seven priority crops[86] were selected and attributed to certain regions all over Rwanda according to so called "agro-ecological zones" (Huggins 2013, 96; Kathiresan 2012, 22). Maize and soybeans were declared the priority crops in the area around Kigali, where my research site was situated, whereas cassava, sorghum and sweet potatoes, which were widely grown by local farmers, were no longer considered a priority. To "encourage"[87] farmers, improved maize seed varieties as well as subsidised fertilisers were distributed by the local sector agronomist. In the beginning, these were given out for free; later on, farmers had to make a financial contribution. "The Crop Intensification Program is like a Green Revolution in Rwanda. It is to improve the use of seeds and fertilisers, organic and inorganic ones. And the extension of this program includes capacity building for farmers", The Director General at MINAGRI elaborated about this programme. As was explained to me in various conversations with government officials, the CIP has been one of the major interventions from the side of the government to boost agrarian production in Rwanda, and it was generally presented as a very successful programme.

The CIP was furher combined with the Land Use Consolidation (LCU) programme, where farmers were urged to merge their small plots into larger entities of arable land to facilitate the cultivation of the priority crops.

> Formerly, the farmers used small plots of about 0.7 hectares where they grew some maize here, some potatoes there, as well as bananas and other things. The land consolidation means that I take my plot and my neighbour takes his plot etc. and we all have one common plan for one season. For

86 The seven priority crops are maize, rice, wheat, Irish potato, cassava, soybean and beans (Kathiresan 2012, 3).

87 I have put "encouraged" in quotation marks because the implementation of the new program varied considerably from region to region. The coercive character the program took in some areas was a major critique pointed out by several authors (Hahirwa 2014; Huggins 2017; Cioffo, Ansoms, and Murison 2016; Ansoms et al. 2018).

> example in season A, we are going to grow maize. If it is maize, it is maize for everyone. The government can assist you by providing improved seeds and also fertilisers and subsidies (I_DG_2015-05-02).

It is noteworthy that the CIP did not particularly target the marshlands. However, in most cases the new regulations of crop specification and land consolidation were much more effective in the marshlands than on the privately owned hillside fields, where the introduction of land consolidation and CIP crops faced more resistance and in some cases even failed (Ansoms 2013, 6; Hahirwa 2014, 203–56). Farmers' refusal to follow the new cultivation scheme was a recurring issue in the interviews with government officials. The MINAGRI Gender Coordinator (I_GC_2015-06-18) explained:

> Sometimes it is very, very hard to change the mindset of people. They want to have their banana plantation, mixed with beans, mixed with potatoes, you know. Like 10 crops in a plot of land. And in the end, they are not producing anything from those crops. So, even if it is scientifically proven that it can't be like that, and you explain this to different people: "You see this soil is better for this crop", some resist.

The cooperative setup in the marshlands was therefore considered a most convenient structure to implement large-scale farming as provided for by the CIP.

The government's greater influence and assertiveness regarding their agrarian policies was not the only advantage mentioned with regard to marshland cooperatives, however. Other benefits that were brought up in various conversations were the use of machines, the collective construction of storage facilities or processing plants, collective marketing and higher economic credibility to get loans for investments: "If they get together and form a cooperative, it is easier for them to be reliable when they want to get a loan from a bank", the Gender Coordinator explained, with special attention to women, who often lacked financial resources for investments.

An employee at the Rural Sector Support Program (RSSP)[88], a government programme that offered trainings for marshland cooperatives about modern agriculture and cooperative management enthusiastically reported about the positive effects of their programme: the beneficiaries would now send their children to school, they would open bank accounts, and become the shareholders of their cooperative. Some cooperatives even had managed to buy vehicles for transport or to build storage facilities for their harvest. The cooperatives provided members with financial services, and gave them better access to loans. The farmers would purchase inputs together and make use of modern cropping techniques. In the long run, he explained, cooperatives would change the people's mind-

88 The RSSP is a state-led development programme. It facilitates the rehabilitation and modernisation of marshlands all over the country. The Kajevuba marshland is one of them. Alongside various infrastructure measures (such as the construction of drainage systems, or dams), the RSSP has also been actively involved in cooperative issues.

set: "The people shall work together!" he stated, acknowledging at the same time that this was a process that would take time.

Challenges regarding the cooperative approach in the marshlands were mostly brought up towards the end of the interviews. The RSSP employee, for instance, argued that not all cooperatives had embraced the principles of good governance. To my query about what exactly he understood by "good governance", he declared that good governance was all about innovative leaders who would supervise the cooperative members and make sure that the cooperative members adhered to a common cropping plan. Good governance also meant, he said, that at least 80% of the harvest was sold, that fees were collected in time, that meetings were held at regular intervals, and that the cooperative held proper records about its revenues and business activities. And finally, he noted, a strong cooperative that had truly embraced good governance would also give support to the weak members (I_RSSPME_2015-05-07).

Reflecting on his account, it becomes evident that this state-led government programme not only "encourages" farmers to organise themselves into cooperatives, but also comes with clearly defined instructions and ideas of how a cooperative should ideally function. Cooperatives that do not comply with that vision are said to have "failed" to embrace the principles of good governance and therefore judged as "weak" cooperatives.

Similarly, the DG MINAGRI elaborated on the issue of "weak" cooperatives:

> The management of the cooperative; sometimes there is a strong cooperative, but there are also cooperatives which are not strong. It means that the president, the vice president, the secretary, (he starts to whisper)... those who are considered as the administration... (searching for the right term) the committee! If the cooperative is not strong, it means that somehow the interest can grow for the committee. You see? That is why the Rwanda Cooperative Agency is there, to see how the cooperatives are working. If they are working in the interest of all the members, or if it is only for the interest of the committee (I_DG_2015-05-02).

To summarise, the government employees from different institutions and levels consider the introduction of cooperatives in the marshlands as a very positive step. Their official narratives emphasise the economic advantages cooperatives have due to their focus on specific crops as well as the benefits from the "economies of scale". Also, social benefits such as the creation of a "mindset of cooperation", or secondary effects such as children's access to education were mentioned. At the same time, other fundamental cooperative principles such as a cooperative's autonomy occupied a less central place in their accounts. Government officials primarily framed autonomy in the context of economic independence. However, they made no secret of the fact that they considered marshland cooperatives a convenient vehicle to implement the government's agricultural policy. The policy, however severely limits the cooperative members' freedoms with regard to the cropping

choice or the mode of production. Thus, the cooperatives' aim of promoting political autonomy and decentralisation, as declared in the cooperative policy, is not well represented in the official narratives about marshland cooperatives. The government's involvement in the cooperatives' affairs is also evident in the fact that a cooperative's "good practice" is measured against a number of regulations and requirements specified by government programs such as the CIP. Consequently, bad yields and low profits are attributed to cooperative issues such as farmers' resistance to the new policy, bad cooperative management and corruption.

Such kind of arguments are not far-fetched, yet, as I argue in the following, these explanations put forward by government officials are very narrow as they leave out the structural and organisational constraints cooperatives face against the backdrop of the government's imposed vision of modern agricultural production and a cooperative's ideal functioning. Let us now see how the state's official vision turns out on the ground.

During my stays in Rwanda, I closely engaged with four agriculture cooperatives operating in Rutunga's marshlands. One of them, the famous Abakumburwa cooperative, was introduced already in the previous chapter. The three other cooperatives were much smaller and formed only after the 1994 genocide. In this work I refer to these three small cooperatives as "Sweet Salvation", "Bright Future" and "Vegetables for Peace" cooperatives, which, as already said, are not their original names. I met these four marshland cooperatives on a more or less regular basis over a period of about one year.[89] In the following, I take the Bright Future cooperative as a leading example, from which I elaborate and draw comparisons between the different cooperatives and their farmers' stories. The story of the Bright Future cooperative provides a detailed example of how such regulations, in this case the new cooperative policy and the government's Crop Intensification Policy (CIP), trickle down to the rural grounds, uproot the existing system of agrarian production and cause severe irritations in rural habits and practices. And even though each of the four cooperatives has its particular story to tell, these stories also reveal many similarities in the ways the cooperatives deal with the new regulations in their marshlands.

5.3. Seeking Compliance: A First Encounter with a Rwandan Marshland Cooperative

The Bright Future cooperative was one of the three small marshland cooperatives in Rutunga. As I learned during our introductory meeting, the cooperative had formed in 2006, as a result of a development project run by a Swedish NGO. The cooperative president, a man in his mid-forties, calm, almost shy but very friendly, recalled how the citizens around the hills had been informed about this

89 For a short description of all the four cooperatives see chapter 2.5 starting from page 43.

project, but initially only a few were interested. Finally, the local authorities at the village level chose ten participants. The NGO project first operated on the hillsides, but when there was an official announcement that marshlands should be worked collectively by cooperatives, they took the chance and applied for some land in the nearby marshland. According to the cooperative president, they were granted the land because they could prove their experience in working together.

Thus, their cooperation with this NGO, even though it was more or less forced upon them, had had its positive sides too. Not only did it support the farmers' case in becoming a marshland cooperative, the NGO also provided them with seeds and training, and it encouraged the farmers to form community-based savings groups (COSAVEs). Furthermore, they had helped them to build a cooperative office, of which they were very proud: "We have built ourselves a great office. Not all the cooperatives have offices, but we have a very good one" (M_BF_2015-03-04).

At the time of our first meeting, in February 2014, the cooperative counted eighteen members, eleven men and seven women, whose ages varied from 24 to 76. However, most of the members were in their late forties and fifties. All men in the cooperative except the youngest were married. The women in the cooperative were mostly widowed except for a "girl"[90] in her twenties and a woman whose husband was also a Bright Future member. The cooperative had a committee that consisted of the president, the vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer, a supervisor and a coordinator.

The Bright Future cooperative mainly operated during the dry season because they did not have the means to manage the water during the rainy season. Each cooperative member could obtain a plot of 4 ares and there was also a cooperative plot which they cultivated collectively. Once a week, they were meeting as a cooperative in the marshland to work on their fields and to discuss cooperative activities. Sometimes they agreed upon an additional working day to clean the drainage. But of course, depending on the type of crop and the growth stage, the members would check their fields and look after their plants more than just once or twice a week. Since most of the members were living in the same neighbourhood, they frequently met outside the cooperative context, for saving groups or church meetings or simply because they were relatives and/or neighbours.

At harvest time, each member had to contribute 750 RWF to the cooperative. The entry fee was at 50,000 RWF. At that time I had not yet developed a sense for the local value of money, and noted down these numbers without further questioning them. These must have been rather high fees, I guessed, for the president started to justify this amount, by pointing to the fact that the cooperative had already achieved many things (such as building an office) and therefore had reached at a certain

90 In Kinyarwanda, the traditional distinction between a woman (*umugore*) and a girl (*umukobwa*) is whether she is married or not.

level. "A person, to enter, has to pay 50,000 RWF, so that he/she can be at the same level with us", he argued.

They were selling their products at the local markets around Rutunga or using them for home consumption. "We wanted to become professional cultivators, (…) but we did not succeed and our yields are not enough to target bigger markets", the president said in an apologetic tone (M_BF_2015-03-04).

I wondered what the marshland had looked like in former times, and the President of the Bright Future cooperative recalled:

> In the past, the marshland was owned by everyone. It was owned by the citizens anyhow. So, like, one of them would put in sweet potatoes and the other one would put aubergines or any fruit he/she felt like. And we would find that these things would contradict each other and affect their growth. So nowadays, the best thing is that we plant things which we have agreed upon. And if you try to put in something that is contradictory to what we plant then it has… it will be removed. And the sector also helps us in deciding what should be grown in the marshland (M_BF_2015-03-04).

The president's account portrays the new developments in the marshlands in a very positive light: the better organisation of the marshland through cooperatives. The member's mutual agreements on what to grow and when, and the local government's "assistance" in providing inputs such as subsidised seeds for maize.

After about an hour, the cooperative members' answers became ever shorter. I could think of no further questions, the shadows had moved and the sun now was burning my neck. We arranged a date for my visit to the cooperative's fields and ended this first meeting.

The first meeting with the Bright Future cooperative is a fairly typical example of how the initial meetings with the other marshland cooperatives went. In contrast to the much larger Abakumburwa cooperative, the meetings with the smaller cooperatives all took place at the nearest cell office. Usually the president and a few additional cooperative members were present, but there were always more men than women. The introductory meetings all had a rather formal character. The presidents provided most of the answers but towards the end some other cooperative members also took the floor. Willingly the cooperatives shared numbers, dates and information about their cooperative and their cultivation practices in the marshland. The three small cooperatives showed many similarities. All of them had formed after the genocide, counted between fifteen and twenty members, and cultivated about two to three hectares of marshland. They mainly targeted regional markets around Rutunga. The organisational setup of each of the three small marshland cooperatives too was more or less the same: they had common working days and cultivated at least one part of their marshland collectively. The latter was not the case for the much larger Abakumburwa cooperative, which with

its more than 300 members and 60 ha of marshland represents an entirely different dimension of a marshland cooperative.

Another interesting common trait of all the four marshland cooperatives was that throughout their histories external involvement from the sides of foreign NGOs, local authorities and state-led development programmes was quite prominent. This kind of external involvement was also typical for many other Rwandan marshland cooperatives I met during my research. Other scholars in the field, too, have pointed to the fact that government authorities at different levels as well as (inter)national NGOs are strongly involved in cooperative matters in Rwanda, most particularly when it comes to cooperative formation (Ansoms 2010, 111). In fact, marshland cooperatives apparently rarely evolve from the original cooperative ideas of joint action and self-help. In most cases, they do not comply with the original understanding of being autonomous bottom-up movements. Rather, my own and other scholars' findings indicate that marshland cooperatives in Rwanda are often either the remains of a former development project or the result of top-down state regulations, or both. This does not necessarily mean that such cooperatives can not develop a "true" cooperative mindset. It is, however a very important point to keep in mind when talking about Rwandan marshland cooperatives.

The government's involvement in the cooperative issues also finds expression in the following statement by the President of the Vegetables for Peace Cooperative:

> The government of Rwanda also plays a great role in the cooperative issues. After the genocide, people were not working together. So the government encouraged people to work in cooperatives. So now, since we started working in the cooperatives, it is one of the successful things, because once people are together obviously they are cooperating and this is a good thing for the country (M_VP_2015-04-03).

The reader will notice that his argument is similar to the statement made by the Bright Future president before.

At these introductory meetings, basically all cooperatives presented themselves in line with the government's new approach in the marshlands. Each of the four presidents pointed to one or another great advantage of the new cooperative setup or the government's cultivation policies. They praised their cooperatives' achievements, but also pointed to further opportunities for improvement such as becoming more professional or targetting bigger markets, etc. Thus, the introductory meetings evoked the impression that the cooperatives were well organised and followed the government's regulations on how a marshland cooperative should properly work.

Yet it soon turned out that the information I had been given during these first meetings was very superficial. Let us now turn back to the case of the Bright Future cooperative, which provides a nice

example of how in the course of the following meetings the initial facade began to crack and revealed some more critical aspects of the state's involvement in cooperative affairs.

5.4. Whispering Fields: Challenging the Government's Crop-intensification Programme

About a week later, early in the morning, the supervisor of the Bright Future cooperative knocked on our door to guide me and my assistant to the marshland. The morning air was fresh and the walk from my little place situated on the top of the hill, down to the marshland over the steep slopes took us about thirty minutes.

The cooperative's marshland was situated next to a brickyard. The supervisor briefed us about the boundaries of their marshland and noted that they were currently only working at the marshland's fringe zones because the rainy season had already set in. My anthropological gaze wandered over the cooperative's land. What immediately caught my attention was that the marshland looked very different from what I had expected. Despite the fact that it was divided into plots, it did not display the very regular chessboard pattern I knew from my visits to other marshlands. From the president's account I had envisioned the marshland to be planted with the same crop all over, but now, standing in the fields myself, I noticed that one plot was planted with cabbages, next to a plot that lay idle, while again another plot was prepared into ridges and planted with sweet potatoes. When I asked the supervisor about it, I was told that this part of the marshland was very wet and the cooperative therefore had allowed this member to cultivate sweet potatoes on ridges, a method the government considered "traditional" and inappropriate (see chapter 4.5.). The cabbage field belonged to a woman who had planted those cabbages right after the previous harvest. She now refused to remove them. As the supervisor told me, members who disrespected the cooperative laws were fined.

After this little tour through the cooperative's fields, all members gathered so that I could ask further question. At first, I wanted to know how exactly the cropping decisions were made. They explained that the sector decided for them to grow maize in season A (September to February). For the two remaining seasons they held a meeting where each member could suggest a crop he or she wanted to cultivate. In the end they voted for one of these crops. Only in the very wet parts of the marshland were people allowed to grow sweet potatoes, which confirmed what the supervisor had told me before.

Then I collected different farmers' perspectives about the positive aspects of being member in a marshland cooperative. The best thing about the marshland, one of them explained, was that it was possible to cultivate there even in the dry season. Another reason, noted by the president was mutual support and the credits members could get from the cooperative. Even loans from the bank were

given to cooperatives more easily than to individual farmers. At some point I addressed a woman who had kept very quiet and asked her where she lived and what she liked about the marshland and the cooperative. She laughed at my question and pointed with her finger to one of the homesteads just above the brickyard. She explained that she had joined this cooperative when her original plot in the marshland was taken away from her. Regarding the cooperative, she liked the way they were working and making decisions together. She also appreciated that she could ask others for advice or for help whenever she needed.

Then I asked her what she did not like about the work in the marshland. The woman fell silent. Maybe not a good question to ask in front of all the other members, I silently guessed. Some members started murmuring and discussing something. I was about to ask my assistant for a translation when finally a man rose to speak. "You should better ask us about the maize we have to grow against our will", he said, and looked at me encouragingly. The entire cooperative now started to talk about the government's CIP regulation and how difficult it was for them to fulfil the obligation to crop maize. A young man complained that at first the sector authorities had told them to cultivate maize, but then, at the time of the harvest, they were left alone and could not find a good market. Another cooperative member fell in and argued that the maize they were obliged to crop was not profitable at all, because it was stolen from their fields or eaten by birds. In addition, there was no good market for maize, so that in the end he had to sell the maize at the local market for a very low price. "The people around this area are not familiar with maize. They do not know how to cook it or lack oil to roast it", he said in a depressed voice. "The only way to cultivate maize with profit is to mix it with beans", another man remarked, but this too, he explained, was against the government's regulation. The president took over again and concluded that they found the new regulation very disturbing because a family needed food, and maize did not bring any profit. If they could choose for themselves they would rather cultivate sorghum, beans or beetroot instead. And one of the members concluded that the new regulation on cropping maize primarily served the government and not the people (M_BF_2015-03-10).

Similar voices I collected from other farmers working in the marshlands of Rutunga. One of them complained about the bad seeds that the sector agronomist had given them. A woman who had been working in the marshlands as part of a local women's project said that she had dropped out of the project because such a bad maize yield was not worth all the time and labour she had spent in the fields. When I asked the Abakumburwa president about the maize obligation he diplomatically stated that the cooperative members did "(...) not expect to get good profit from maize".

While the members of the Bright Future cooperative as well those of the Abakumburwa cooperative expressed their concerns about the government's maize obligation, the two other small cooperatives

were exempted from the CIP maize-cropping obligation, probably because they were more remote and therefore out of the sector agronomist's reach – a subject I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. For now, I am trying to show how the cooperative members' accounts from the ground differ from the very positive statements about the CIP program, made by the government officials quoted earlier.

Indeed, between 2007, when the CIP was introduced and 2013, Rwanda's production of maize had more than sextupled from 100,000 tonnes to 667,833 tonnes while the area of production had doubled from 141,168 hectares to 292,326 hectares (see figure 9). This initial "explosion" of production figures can be found in many official documents and reports, to illustrate CIP programme's effectiveness (GoR and MINAGRI 2013, 16, 27). Also during my interviews, government officials gladly referred to these numbers of success. The local cooperative members, however, were far less enthusiastic about the maize obligation than were the government officials or public reports. They saw no true benefit for them in cultivating maize.

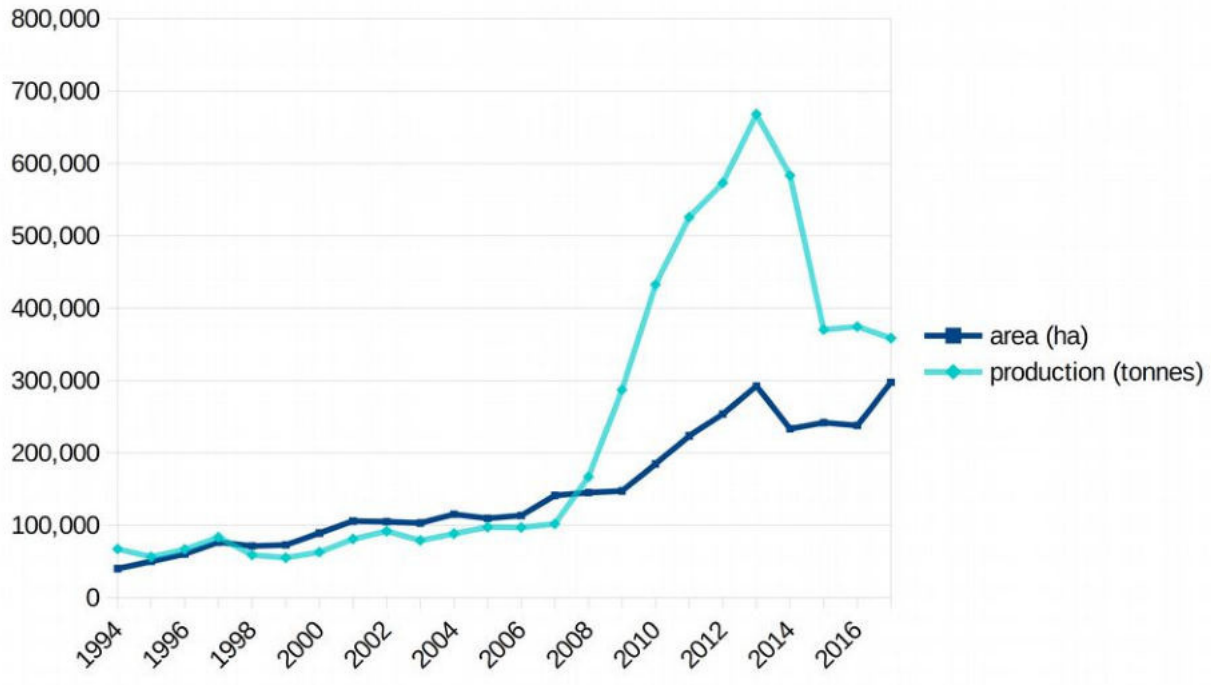


Figure 9: Maize production and area of production in Rwanda between 1994 and 2017 (own diagram based on data from www.fao.org/faostat).

Following the year 2013, however, the numbers describe a sharp decline in maize production.[91] Explanations provided by local smallholders, agronomists and workers in government institutions included crop disease, rumours about bad seed varieties that have been distributed by the government, indications of farmers' "resistance" or generally lower acceptance of and adherence to the

91 Interestingly, more recent government reports such as the PSTA IV remain silent about this "crash" (GoR and MINAGRI 2018, 16, 73).

maize obligation,[92] as well as unfavourable weather conditions such as droughts and floods (see also Hahirwa 2014, 204–6). Lastly, it seems that several compounding factors must have contributed to the sharp decline and the persistently lower production of maize since 2013.

The numbers about the **use** of maize production, provided by the Seasonal Agricultural Surveys (SAS), also shed an interesting light on the maize obligation (see table 2). In the years 2013 to 2016 agricultural operators[93] sold an average of only 13.5 percent of the maize they grew. The percentages for the maize sold in B seasons was generally lower, between 6.4 and 11.8 percent. A negligible percentage was stored, and most of the produced maize (about three quarters) fell under "auto-consumption" which, according to the survey means that it was consumed by the respective agricultural operator's household. Only the Seasonal Agricultural Survey from Season A in 2016 differs strongly from this general pattern, but this is most probably due to a typo in the original report.

	2013 Seas. A	2013 Seas. B	2014 Seas. A	2014 Seas. B	2015 Seas. A	2015 Seas. B	2016 Seas. A	2016 Seas. B
Sold	20.6	11.8	17.8	11	16.8	8	15.9	6.4
Stored	11.2	1.5	3.9	0.3	0.2	0.1	76.1	0.1
Auto-consumption	56.6	75.4	70.1	80.9	74.4	85	0.3	86.5
Used as wage for hired labour	1.4	0.6	0.7	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.4
Used as farm rent	0.3	0.3	0.2	3.0	0.1	0.3	2.9	0.6
Offered as gift to other	5.3	3.4	3.0	0	3.7	2.0	0.1	2.1
Exchanged/traded	0.1	0.3	0.1	3.2	0.1	0.1	3.6	0.1
Used as seeds	4	5.9	3.5	0.7	3.7	3.9	0.1	3.5
Used as fodder	0.5	0.9	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.1
Damaged	/	/	0.2	0	0.1	0.0	0	0
Used in any other way	/	/	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Total								
Possible typos in the report								

Table 2: Use of maize production (%) by agricultural operators. Compiled data from SAS 2013-2016 (NISR 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b).

Examining the figures, there appears to be a direct link between the percentages of sale and auto-consumption. Whenever the sales of maize are low, the auto-consumption is high. It therefore seems reasonable to argue that the high percentages of maize consumed by the household are caused by missing market opportunities which left farmers' families with no other option than "consuming" great parts of the production themselves. The difficulty in findin a viable market for maize, as

92 I saw the sector agronomist's maize seed distribution files with many empty rows and missing signatures, indicating that people never actually showed up to get their seeds, with my own eyes, and another agronomist also told me about the challenges in distributing the CIP-seeds to the local farmers.

93 The reports define "agricultural operators" as individual farmers or cooperatives that farm an area of below10 ha (NISR 2016a, xiii).

reported by the cooperative farmers above, thus appears to be a wide-spread problem faced by agricultural operators at that time. The high percentages in "auto-consumption" are even more disturbing considering the earlier statement brought up by one of the cooperative members that they were not familiar with this new crop and therefore did not know how to prepare it. This, of course, might be subject to regional differences; nevertheless, one might wonder what really happened to the large bulk of maize that, according to the Seasonal Agriculture Surveys, was "auto-consumed".

The media discourse on Rwanda's maize harvest provides further insights into that issue: the zenith of maize production in 2013 (see figure 9) was overshadowed by a new media debate on "post-harvest losses". "Post-harvest losses haunt Rwandan farmers", writes the East African in March 2014, "Agric ministry moves to enhance post-harvest handling to reduce losses", writes The New Times in January 2015, and other newspaper articles or development reports equally argue that much of the giant maize yield was lost due to poor post-harvest handling, inaccessible markets and missing storage facilities (The East African 2014; The New Times, Rwanda 2015; The Guardian 2015; Nsengumuremyi 2016; The New Times, Rwanda 2016a, 2016b). How does this match with the low percentages of "damaged" maize ranging between 0 and 0.2 percent as presented in the SAS table?[94]

These findings challenge the CIP's great success and effective benefit for cooperative farmers. They rather point out that the imposition of state-sponsored crops and the way the CIP was implemented by the local authorities was short-sighted and eventually led cooperative members into losses. The government officers' common argument about the cooperatives' bad management therefore disregards the structural causes of such failures. First of all, as others have shown too, households found it hard to integrate the crops promoted under the CIP into their existing cultural and ecological realities (Ansoms 2009; Hahirwa 2014; Cioffo, Ansoms, and Murison 2016; Huggins 2017; N. Clay 2018). Secondly, farmers were not familiar with the new crops, which were chosen for their economic value and marketability rather than their social and practical values. And finally, market prices fluctuated greatly under the influence of the CIP (Financial Times 2019) and storage facilities were not yet sufficiently put in place.

5.5. Phantoms of Success, Solidarity and Social exclusion

The farmers' perspectives on the maize obligation is a good example of the mismatch between the government's visions and the farmers' lived realities on the ground. As a matter of fact, the rosy image the cooperative members had drawn during our initial encounters only partially corresponded

94 The low numbers of "damaged" maize might also be caused by the methodological setup of these surveys. Field surveys for each season typically are finalised shortly after each harvest time. By that time, it is still too early to measure the total rate of damaged maize due to bad storage that will occur over the following months.

to how they actually behaved and what they believed. Little by little, more details came to light that challenged the cooperatives' ideal functioning.

The Bright Future cooperative's office, for instance, which had been praised by the president as a distinctive feature of their success, was no longer used by the cooperative for agricultural purposes. It was rented out to a local man, who had turned the place into a *kabaret*, a little bar. As I was told by some cooperative members, the office had been built with the assistance of the same Swedish NGO that had helped them got get started as a cooperative. It had increased the value of the cooperative drastically, so that several cooperative members decided to drop out and get their shares. But the exit payments had exceeded the cooperative's financial capacity so that they currently had no money left in their account. They were even considering selling their office, because more people wanted to leave the cooperative, which the latter currently could not afford.

However, despite or maybe even because of such surprises, I very much enjoyed working with this cooperative. When I visited their marshland again in July, shortly before my departure to Europe, their crops had grown well. Scarecrows and sunlight reflecting cassette tapes were spread over the fields to protect the ripening fruits from hungry birds (see picture 12). In another part of the marshland, some cooperative members were sowing cabbages, while others were preparing a plot with manure. Children stood around with large green plastic cans to help with the watering. My overall impression of this cooperative was that it was doing well. Despite having split the marshland into individual plots and cultivating different crops there was mutual aid and assistance between the members of the cooperative. Even though their harvest was not big enough to target national or even international markets, they tried to make use of the marshland in a way that helped them to meet their personal needs. The supervisor, for instance, was growing aubergines which he planned to sell to retailers from Kigali, while one of the women was planting cabbages and sweet potatoes which she planned to use for both, selling at the local market and feeding her family (M_BF_2015-07-10).

Similar impressions of a strong solidarity I found with the two other small cooperatives. Other than the big Abakumburwa cooperative, the smaller cooperatives considered themselves almost a family.[95] As one of the widows in the smaller cooperative explained to me, she preferred being a member in the small cooperative specifically because of this family-like solidarity, even though the Abakumburwa fields were actually much closer to her home. However, this strong sense of solidarity and cooperation among the members of the small cooperatives also had its downside. The longer I worked with them, the more I realised that these small cooperatives were quite exclusive. As

95 Evidently, I was very pleased when upon my return to Rutunga, the cooperative president of the Bright Future cooperative told me, that I was no longer a stranger to them but a member of their family.

members of a marshland cooperative, they were in a privileged position of having a plot that could be cultivated even during the dry season. The high entry fees demanded by the small cooperatives ranging between 50,000 RWF and 200,000 RWF, were hardly affordable for an ordinary peasant household in Rutunga. And the President of the Sweet Salvation cooperative openly admitted that they were just fine with the number of members they had, and were not interested in bringing more people into their cooperative.

Another interesting revelation was that only the Abakumburwa cooperative was officially registered as a cooperative, while the three smaller cooperatives had never applied for official status at the RCA. They were recognised by the local leaders and the sector office, who called and treated them almost like cooperatives, but legally they were to be called "associations". I was made aware of this subtle but sometimes relevant difference only during my second field stay about six months later when I visited the Bright Future cooperative's fields again.

Happily I was welcomed by the cooperative members and told about the good harvest they had had from the previous dry season. From one plot they had even earned 200,000 RWF which definitely was a great success.[96] I had expected the fields now to be planted with maize, since we were in the midst of season A, but this was not the case. As the president of the cooperative explained, this was due to a new MINAGRI project, which had started at the upper side of the same marshland. The Ministry was constructing new drainages combined with "radical terraces" on the hillsides to prevent soil erosion and to improve water absorption in order to prevent floods in the marshland. In addition, the Ministry was doing some kind of marshland inventory. The cooperative expected this project to reach their marshland within the coming months, which was why they had decided to cultivate crops with a short growth period. However, they had so far not received any official information or clear instructions, and it turned out that the former sector agronomist had been replaced by a new one.[97]

The new agronomist had not yet come to visit them and we started to discuss the case of the sector agronomist and his tasks and duties. Apparently the old agronomist had rarely come down to the cooperative's land, because he disliked using the bad road with his car. The president of the cooperative complained about these kinds of agronomists, who sat in their office most of the time without

96 In 2016, this corresponded to the price of a young cow. In comparison, a bicycle at that time was at 100,000 RWF and the price for a day's labour was at 1,000 RWF.

97 As a matter of fact, sector agronomists as well as other important positions in the Sector's administration such as the executive secretary are appointed by central authorities and exchanged quite frequently. Usually they are outsiders and have no personal links to the sectors in which they operate. Their position comes with a paid salary while the locally elected members in the sector administration do not get any financial reward. I found the frequent changes in the sector office quite irritating. Was it because they had failed to fulfil their performance contracts? Or was it, more generally, a way to prevent corruption? Was it to make the authorities collect experiences from different sites all over the country? Or was it a way to avoid personal identification with the local community, which could give rise to criticism?

knowing what was happening on the ground. How were they supposed to support them in their activities if they had no clue about their situation, he wondered, and the other cooperative members nodded in support. As we talked about their current state of uncertainty about the MINAGRI project, I proposed to them to make their case public. But the president of the cooperative rejected this idea. Open critique, he noted, was dangerous because it could discredit them in the eyes of the authorities. Since their cooperative was not registered with the RCA, their claim over the marshland was already very insecure. "It would be good to have the status of a cooperative, because currently our claim over this part of the marshland is very fragile. It would be better to have it registered in the name of an official cooperative to give us more security", the president explained (M_BF_2016-01-18).

5.6. On Becoming a "True" Cooperative: Dealing with Local Authorities

There are several advantages of being an orderly registered cooperative at the national level. One point, already brought up by the president of the Bright Future cooperative, is that only a legally recognised cooperative can get a marshland registered on the cooperative's name. Furthermore, only legally registered cooperatives benefit from financial support, as well as training programmes offered by the RCA. The official status puts cooperatives more strongly on the radar of the government authorities, which has both positive and negative sides. Officially listed cooperatives are less autonomous and more liable to comply with government regulations such as the CIP. But the RCA also assists cooperatives in finding investors and in joining development programmes. This assistance from above, however, often has a rather coercive character, and the imposed programmes, similar to the CIP, do not always work out for the farmer's benefit. A good example – of how a promising joint venture imposed on the Abakumburwa cooperative has ended in a lot of chaos, frustration and financial losses for most parties involved – will be discussed at length in chapter 8.

The members of the Bright Future cooperative had also heard different stories about such programmes. "Some of these government programmes really are unbelievable", the president said, and shook his head. "Sometimes, an investor brings a project to the people without explaining to them the aim of the project, and sometimes those projects do not last and the citizens find themselves loosing or becoming the workers of these investors. Sometimes, investors pass by the high leadership organs, but later on, the leaders do not come to see how the investor operates and works with the citizens. That is why the citizens lose most of the time", he further elaborated (M_BF_2016-01-24). At the same time the members of the Bright Future cooperative also wanted to increase the security over their marshland.

The cooperative members' careful consideration displays a certain ambiguity I had also noticed with the other marshland cooperatives when directing our conversation to the role of the government, state authorities and most particularly the sector agronomist. The Sweet Salvation cooperative, for instance, explained that they only could ask the agronomist for help once they had harvested, because the agronomist would immediately want them to pay the taxes for the marshland. "We are doing well without the agronomist's support!" their president declared, asking me a short time later to look out for potential development projects and NGOs that could support them in their activities (M_SS_2016-02-12). Other than the Bright Future cooperative the members of the Sweet Salvation Cooperative did not complain abut the fact that agronomist never took the trouble to come down to their marshland. On the contrary, they seemed to be secretly relieved about seeing him only on rare occasions and in the sector office, rather than in their own marshland. This way they could keep their autonomy, grow the crops they wanted and did not have to argue with the agronomist whether to plant maize or any other crop the government had prescribed.

The sector agronomist thus emerges as a rather controversial and complicated figure in these statements. On the one hand, he was there to support and advice local farmers and agricultural cooperatives, yet on the other hand, he apparently spent most of the time in his office and rarely took on the burden of coming down to the cooperatives' fields. The sector agronomists had to fulfil administrative duties from the sides of the government, such as collecting taxes and imposing government regulations which sometimes stood at odds with the farmers' true needs of support. At the same time the sector agronomist held a key position in distributing/granting government land and services. Cooperative members therefore did not dare to express critique or speak openly about the true issues they faced in their fields and in their homes. All these different challenges were expressed. Finally, the members of the Bright Future cooperative decided to take the next step and get their cooperative officially registered with the RCA.

The new sector agronomist was informed about their wish and asked for the necessary requirements to obtain a legal cooperative status (M_RSA_2016-02-04) (see box 1). Furthermore, a date for an inauguration meeting was set, where the sector agronomist would come down to the cooperative's fields to follow up their case. In the earlier quoted conversation with the Director General at the MINAGRI, the act of becoming a legally registered cooperative was described as a painless and simple procedure. In the Bright Future cooperative's lived reality, however, the process was accompanied by several complications. First of all, the act of registration requires considerable paperwork. For many cooperative members, especially the illiterate ones, such formalities pose a constraint.

Rutunga, 04-02-2016

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A COOPERATIVE TO OBTAIN A LEGAL STATUS (based on the indications of the Rutunga Sector Agronomist)

For a group of people to be allowed to operate as a cooperative legally, they must be at least 10 in number.

They have to hold a first meeting as a cooperative. In this first meeting they discuss and fix the initial capital of the cooperative. In this meeting the sector agronomist is present and a protocol is written up the end of the meeting. In this meeting the members vote for the committees (made up of at least 5 people) and the supervisory committee (made up of 3 people).

Other needed legal documents:

(a) A letter asking for a temporary operating authorisation written to the mayor of the district and this letter passes by the sector executive secretary.
(b) A letter asking about the legal status addressed to the RCA (Rwandan Cooperative Agency) through the district mayor.
(c) A copy of general laws governing the cooperatives in the country.
(d) A copy of the laws that will govern the cooperative (designed by the cooperative members).
(e) The protocol of the first meeting, a list of the members who attended and their signatures.
(f) A list of the cooperative leaders (members of the committees) and their signatures.
(g) A list of all members and their signatures.
(h) The copy of agreements on the part of the cooperative leaders that they will perform their duties well.
(i) An action plan.

A fee of 1,200 RWF needs to be paid to the sector for the processing. Once all the documents have been verified, the notary signs them and the documents are taken to the district level. There the mayor signs the documents and offers a temporary operating authorisation. The mayor's office forwards the documents to the RCA, where the legal status of the cooperative is granted.

Box 1: Requirements for getting a legal status as a cooperative

The cooperatives therefore relied on the sector agronomist's support in providing them with the necessary documents and copies for their application. Secondly, the sector agronomist is the one who processes the entire application: he first checks the documents, makes sure that the right bodies sign, collects the fees, and in the end, forwards the application to the major. The sector agronomist is thus a central figure in the entire process of becoming an officially registered cooperative which made the cooperative members depended on his goodwill. This also was noticeable during the cooperative's inauguration meeting.

The sector agronomist had postponed the inauguration meeting once already. A new date had been vaguely set for Wednesday morning. Several attempts to specify time and location had failed, and we finally reached the agronomist on his phone on the day itself at about quarter to nine. The agronomist explained that he was still in Kigali, yet on his way to Rutunga and we should start to sum-

mon the cooperative members in the marshland. About half and hour later most of the cooperative members and also some new people, who either were curious or wanted to join the cooperative, had gathered next to the cooperative's fields. We expected the agronomist to arrive any minute and continued to wait, but it turned out that he had a problem with his moto taxi. Via phone, he suggested that the cooperative should start with the election of the new committee. By the time the agronomist finally arrived, the elections were over. It was half past twelve. The sun was high and hot, and some cooperative members, mainly women, had already excused themselves after the last round of elections. The remaining members looked very tired. We had been waiting for the agronomist for more than three hours (FN_2016-02-24).

The issue of waiting for government authorities was a common experience among the citizens of Rutunga. At one meeting with ministerial and district authorities, the members of the Abakumburwa cooperative had even been kept waiting for ten hours (C_AM_2015-6-15). The waiting queue in front of the sector offices was also usually long. The agronomist of a local women's project told me how some women in his project had become frustrated about having gone to the Sector again and again without seeing any results because the officers were not there. He also criticised the sector agronomist for spending most of his time in Kigali. "When he comes to Rutunga, he only drives around with his fancy car", he said angrily (C_R_2015_07_09), which supports Bright Future's experience with the former agronomist; the new one, apparently, was no better.

Without taking a look at the cooperative's fields, the agronomist started with an introductory speech about the economic advantages of being a cooperative, a cooperative's most fundamental principles and its organisational structure. He explained the democratic values of a cooperative and noted that it was the right of every member and not just the committee to take decisions. Then he launched into the issue of bad leadership and, glancing at me, also the problem of dependence on foreign financial aid, which he compared with an "anaesthesia" that temporarily kills the pain but not the true cause of the disease and would make Rwandans dependent on further aid (S_RSA_2016-02-24).

Following the agronomist's speech, which took about 45 minutes, the newly elected committee members were presented. Together with the agronomist they agreed that each member should contribute 5,000 RWF for the cooperative's starting capital. At some point, the agronomist took my assistant aside. He had seen that the members of Bright Future did not adhere to the principle of planting the same crop all over their marshland. The agronomist now turned to the cooperative members and explained that they should cultivate only one crop, which would help them to develop. The cooperative members, seemingly grateful, nodded in response to his advice. Then the agronomist left together with the re-elected president and my assistant to finish the documents.

What we see from this very specific situation in the marshland is how the figure of the sector agronomist here acts as the lowest representative of state authority. He does not act as an understanding mediator; rather his appearance underlines the coercive character of state power that impedes a true bottom-up cooperative movement based on local know-how. The Newburys have characterised this "hegemonic authority", as they call it, as follows:

> The preeminence of state authority over local knowledge is present even in recent times at such mundane levels as local production, where an agricultural officer often becomes a hegemonic authority. Several factors account for this. First, such agents often serve more as representatives of the state than as advocates for agriculturalists: their job is to enforce state directives in agricultural production. But they often have much less direct knowledge of their field (or others' fields) than those they are advising, for such officers are often chosen more on the basis of educational levels than agricultural experience. Furthermore, they are invariably males. Although women are the major rural producers, and often know more about local conditions than men (including the agricultural officer), relations between men and women are frequently strained in rural areas – male agricultural officers relate to women producers with difficulty. Finally, even for male cultivators, respect for an agricultural officer often marks this relationship as one of deference rather than dialogue. Consequently, an agricultural officer may arrive and ask to talk to the male head of household, yet the critical advice does not get to the actual (female) producers, nor does the critical knowledge of local conditions get to the agricultural officer. As a result, not only does state agriculture become a coercive field, but much local knowledge (local variations of crops, soils, pests, labor practices) is lost, in the name of standardizing and rationalizing agriculture (D. Newbury and Newbury 2000, 856).

The way the Rutunga sector agronomist had treated the marshland cooperative and its members perfectly fits into this analysis. He had made them wait for hours and hardly took the time to listen to them. His speech and the way he explained to the cooperative how their fields should look were perfectly in line with the government's standard approach.[98] Administrative matters were discussed privately with the president and did not include any of the other, female, elected committee members. In addition, the agronomist's delay had prompted several members, and most particularly female members, to leave. All this confirms the Newburys' observation that these hegemonic authorities do not do justice to the gender-specific realities on the ground, which will be extensively discussed in the coming chapters.

Let us now return to the beginning of this chapter and see what we have learned. What have these different experiences and stories from the sides of Rutunga's marshland cooperatives taught us about Rwanda's new and supposedly autonomous cooperative movement in the context of the state's agrarian vision in the marshlands? Is it a perfect match, or a tough match that is played out mostly at the expense of rural smallholders?

98 It is fair to note that local government authorities are not entirely free in their decisions. They are bound to so-called *imihigo* performance contracts, which they sign with the higher-level authorities. These contracts set quantitative targets local authorities must fulfil. For sector agronomists such contracts may specify, for instance, how much land must be consolidated within a certain period of time or on how many hectares of land maize must be cultivated. If the sector agronomists fail, they can even lose their jobs (Huggins 2013, 10–11). As Huggins and others explain, these *imihigo* contracts make local authorities accountable upwards in the hierarchy and not downwards to the local citizens and their needs (Huggins 2013; Ingelaere 2014; Hasselskog 2016; Ansoms et al. 2017, 55).

5.7. Conclusion: Matching Concepts Revised

The empirical evidence presented in this chapter shows that there is a clear mismatch between the ideal image of cooperatives as presented by the government and the farmer's lived experiences.

Let us quickly recall the three major advantages of cooperatives as outlined in the cooperative policy: their economic advantages, their social benefit and finally their political effect in promoting political autonomy and decentralisation. However, the examined cooperatives have not emerged from an autonomous and endogenous process, but were enforced by state policies or initiated by external bodies such as state programmes or foreign aid projects.[99] Furthermore, the Rwandan state is very much involved in cooperative affairs. There is a high degree of dependence on state authorities to obtain the use-rights for a marshland or to get officially recognised as a cooperative. The granted use rights in the marshlands usually come with cropping obligations, standardised policy approaches or, as we will explore in chapter 8, state-facilitated foreign investment projects. Even though the cooperative members generally appreciated the opportunities of agrarian production in the marshlands and valued their cooperatives with its many advantages, they complained about the many prescriptions from the side of the state which they did not find helpful. They publicly praised the government's regulations, but secretly tried to bend the rules, not solely because they "had not embraced the principles of good governance" but because the government's regulations and expectations from marshland cooperatives were difficult to combine with their own immediate needs and circumstances. Due to lack of a viable sales market and missing storage facilities the maize had to be sold for a very low price or it was spoiled. Thus, the farmers hardly benefited economically from the government's new cropping policy. Finally, the social aspect of cooperatives to bring people together and foster peace and reconciliation was also very limited. Even though especially the small cooperatives displayed a strong sense of internal solidarity, they turned out to be rather exclusive and not really open to new members, notwithstanding the fact that "open membership" is the very first of the Rochdale principles.

So how come that the Rwandan government continues to promote the cooperative approach in the marshlands despite the fact that actually neither the political, nor the economic or social arguments put forward in the cooperative policy actually apply to the marshland cooperatives I investigated? Is it not irritating that the government's agrarian vision of a green revolution in the marshland basically corrupts its own cooperative policy and law?

In "Seeing like a State", James Scott (1998) provides several case studies of how high-modernist approaches that tried to increase rural production and to improve the well-being of the population

99 Nevertheless, some of these cooperatives, most especially the smaller cooperatives, displayed a strong sense of solidarity among its members.

have failed. Scott concludes that despite their failure, those schemes were very successful in a different sense – in expanding the state's control and in making the rural population more "legible". By "legible" Scott means "(…) to arrange the population in ways that simplified the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and prevention of rebellion" (Scott 1998, 2). According to Scott, environmentally rough places such mountains, deserts, the sea or, as he writes, marshlands tend to be illegible and therefore more likely to become "non-state spaces" or spaces where the government lacks control (Scott 1998, 187).

Considering this new perspective, the cooperative approach in Rwanda's marshlands appears in a new light. While marshlands are officially state property, not all of them are "state spaces". This especially concerns the more remote marshlands, which are difficult to access. The introduction of marshland cooperatives can thus be read as one of the means to increase the outreach of the state.[100] From a state's perspective it is much easier to introduce new agrarian practices via the standardised structures of the cooperative. It is much easier to measure food production if each cooperative cultivates only one crop per season. The cooperatives in the marshlands therefore serve as a useful interface for the state to implement its agrarian policy. However, not only agricultural reforms, but also other important government topics are introduced to the rural population via the cooperative setup. One of them is the Rwandan government's discourse on gender equality. The following chapter investigates how the state makes use of marshland cooperatives to propagate gender equality in rural Rwanda.

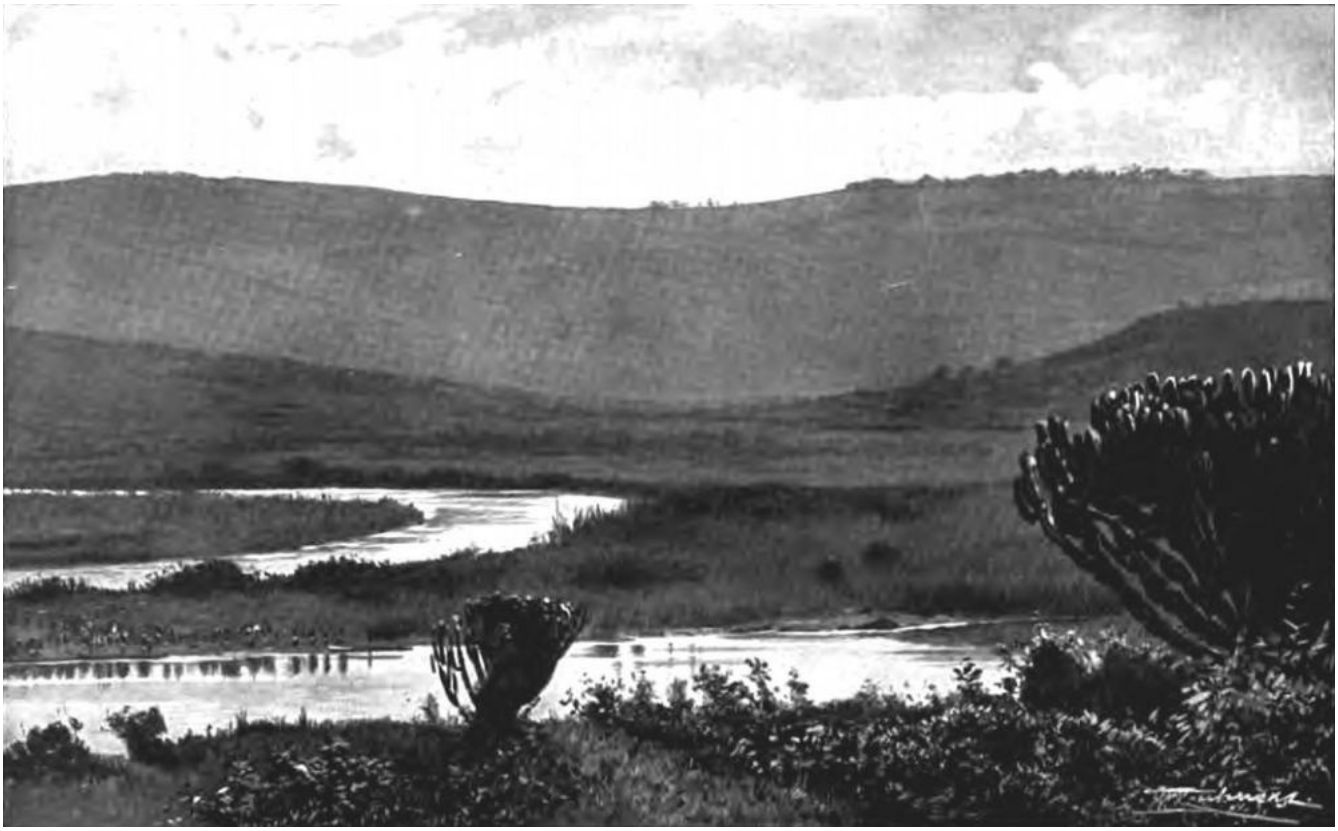
100 The wetland inventory conducted by REMA in 2008, which mapped and classified the country's marshlands, can also be seen as part of this process (REMA 2011, 36–37).

Picture 1: The local market of Rutunga on a market day, March 2015

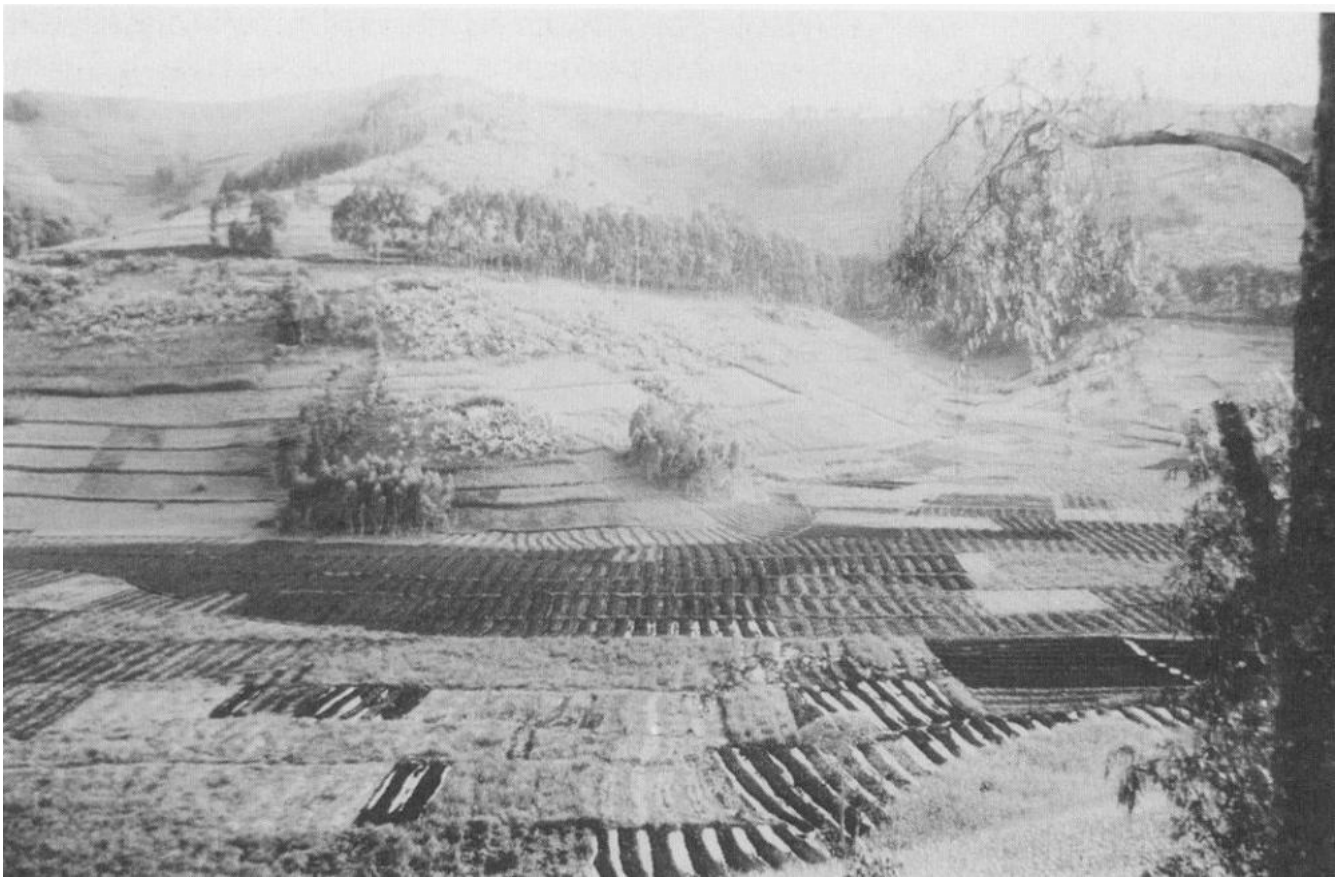
Picture 2: A little shop in Rutunga, January 2016

Picture 3: A house in Rutunga, fenced and with a banana grove, July 2015

Picture 4: Construction with soil bricks (Eastern Province), May 2014



Picture 5: "Der erste Übergang über den Nyavarongo" (Götzen 1895, 169). It shows part of the pristine Nyavarongo streambed. Most of the Nyabarongo marshlands today are used for agricultural production.



Picture 6: "Raised fields in a bottomland in the Buberuka Highlands of Ruhengeri Prefecture" (Ford 1990, 49). It depicts the mosaik-like marshland fields and the ridges which today are prohibited.

Picture 7: Flooded Kajevuba Valley, January 2016

Picture 8: The artificial lake (barrage) of Kajevuba Marshland, February 2016

Picture 9: The hangari, an old run-down storage facility, May 2015

Picture 10: Rutunga hills with a view on lake Muhazi, June 2015

Picture 11: A cooperative's fields next to a brickyard, July 2015

Picture 12: A Scarecrow in one of the cooperative's fields

Picture 13: A marshland cooperative sells sugar cane to children, July 2015

Picture 14: A woman is watering the crops in the marshland, July 2015

Picture 15: Pesticide Sprayers in the fields of the joint investment project, February 2015

Picture 16: Preparing the chemicals for French Beans, February 2015

Picture 17: Neat and orderly fields at the time of the Kajevuba joint venture, February 2015

Picture 18: Export production under the investor's solo project, June 2015

CHAPTER 6: QUOTAS FOR EQUALITY – MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN MARSHLAND COOPERATIVES

I have closed the previous chapter with the important argument that probably the most essential function of marshland cooperatives in Rwanda is to expand state control. I have illustrated how the state utilises the cooperative as a convenient interface to install its vision of a green revolution in the Rwandan countryside. But there are other important political themes that follow these paths down to the rural ground. One of these themes is gender equality.

Over the past decades, "gender" has become a popular buzzword in Rwanda's post genocide development discourse. Internationally, the Rwandan government is widely recognised for its progressive gender laws, most notably the new 30% quota policy in decision-making organs and the new legal reforms that have drastically improved women's access to land titles on the hillsides. However, in the marshlands which are excluded from the system of private land titles, the government has opted for a different approach to push forward their "gender agenda": the cooperatives.

This chapter deals with the basic question of how cooperatives may or may not support women in their empowerment. As I argue, the government employs marshland cooperatives to foster a new vision of gender equality in rural Rwanda. This opens up opportunities for some women to redefine their roles and to improve their situation. At the same time, however, the government's vision conveys new norms of what a modern, emancipated woman ideally should be like. The present chapter now closely investigates how terms such as "gender" and "gender equality" are employed in Rwanda's popular political and everyday reasoning. I portray the most common arguments and expectations put forward by government officials and critically explore what kind of ideological and normative structures can be found in their explanations. Finally, I contrast these official views with how local smallholders in the marshland cooperatives deal with the government's vision and what their own, diverse ideas of gender equality are.

6.1. "We Also Have Female Members": Gender, as a Common Currency

"Gender has gone into the spirit of Rwandans", a government officer explained when I was asking him about the relevance of gender in his work. He was working for the Rural Sector Support Program (RSSP), a state-led development programme that had committed itself to modernising the Rwandan marshlands. The officer, who was in charge of the programme's monitoring and evaluation, had sceptically glanced at my recorder. "No problem", I had said, to ease the situation, and stored the recorder back in my bag. While his office colleagues left for lunch, he began to summarise the programme's most important facts and achievements. At length, he told me how the RSSP was trying to get women involved in their programmes, because the country's development could not work without them. When I was asking him about men's take in this whole new approach of gender equality, he became more reserved. "It is a process", he said and explained that it would still take much time to change people's "mindset". While I was still wondering about the difference between "spirit" and "mindset" and whether this latter statement contradicted his first one or not, he reassured me that the government was constantly working on that "gender issue", and that gender had become a corner stone of Rwanda's politics (I_RSSPME_2015-05-07).

In fact, the government's commitment to gender equality is clearly visible. The term "gender" has become "common currency", a term used by Purdeková to describe the configuration of "unity" as a "social project" of the Rwandan state:

> The term [unity] has a wider public presence, being deployed and redeployed in media, meetings, activities, policy documents and happenings in rural and urban Rwanda. In the parlance of the commission that bears its name, the shorthand 'u&u' – short for ubumwe n'ubwiyunge, unity and reconciliation – is suggestive of the common currency that the term has become and points to its bureaucratization and status as a 'social project' of the state (Purdeková 2015, 3).

This description also applies to the term "gender". All sort of policy documents, strategy papers, reports and laws nowadays include either an anti-discrimination clause or at least a short section on gender-relevant impacts. The country's new cooperative policy, for instance, says that it "(…) will provide an enabling environment in which a strong and autonomous cooperative movement will evolve in Rwanda. A movement in which men and women participate on equal terms" (GoR 2006, 6). Furthermore, there have been institutional changes: In 1997, the former Ministry of Family and Women's Promotion was turned into the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Affairs, which today acts under the label Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. In 2003 the Gender Monitoring Office was established, an independent government institution that advises gender mainstreaming in Rwanda's policy-making, reviews policy papers and also cooperates with non-governmental development organisations (Debusscher and Ansoms 2013, 1118).

Given the topicality of gender, it comes as no surprise that government officials were rarely irritated by my many questions about gender equality in Rwanda. Instead, they provided enthusiastic answers similar to that quoted above. Many times, I was explained that "gender" was not only about women, but also about men, and leaders often praised Rwanda for having "gender", by which they actually meant gender equality.[101] All these examples prove that gender truly had gone into the spirit of Rwandans, at least at a discursive level.

What surprised me, however, was that even the cooperative presidents, these senior men, living and working somewhere on the remote hills of Rutunga, recognised the importance of gender equality in their cooperatives. "We also have female members; there is gender equality", the president of the Sweet Salvation cooperative proudly announced during our first meeting. The other cooperative presidents, too, were well aware of the gender ratio in their cooperatives and provided the exact number of female and male members without hesitation (see table 3).

	Sweet Salvation	Vegetables for Peace	Bright Future	Abakumburwa
Female members	9 (4 widows)	6 (4 widows)	9 (7 widows)	143
Male members	10	11	7	180
total	**19**	**17**	**16**	**323**

Table 3: Distribution of female and male cooperative members in the marshland cooperatives

This, I found remarkable, most particularly in the case of the Abakumburwa cooperative with its more than 300 members. It indicates that gender was recognised as a new political currency even at the very local level. At the same time, the president's emphasis on the more or less balanced number of women and men in their cooperatives sounded as if this alone was sufficient to speak of gender equality.

As outlined in earlier chapters, women have never been completely absent from the Rwandan marshlands even in earlier times. As mothers, wives, daughters or even in some cases as single women, they worked in marshland development projects or so-called pre-cooperatives during the First and Second Republic. It was a different case, however, when it came to the official membership in these pre-cooperatives. The cooperative membership was usually granted to the head of the household, which typically was a man. And even though in some families women effectively spent more time and more energy in the marshlands than did their husbands, the official membership status often remained with the male household head (Nyandwi 1999, 314). This changed after the genocide, when in the aftermath of the war, many women in Rwanda faced a new reality without

101 In various occasions, the term "gender" was used as a short form of "gender equality" or, more generally, the state's gender politics. A very good example for this meaning of the term "gender" in every-day language is also provided in the opening vignette of this thesis. Gender was rarely employed as a term to describe the social and cultural constructions of specific gender role patterns, behaviours and norms in contrast to sex.

their husbands, who had either died, or were "absent" – an often used indication, which in the first instance provoked a certain unease about asking further questions and opened up room for speculation: why were they absent? Had they died or had they never come back home from exile? Were they in prison? Had they been among the genocide perpetrators? Or had they left their family for some other reason?

Anyhow, against the backdrop of this new situation, the Rwandan women's movement gained increasing influence in the country's political agenda (Burnet 2008, 2011; Hogg 2009; Powley 2005). In the rural context, women joined their forces in self-help groups and associations. As we know from the Abakumburwa cooperative, half of the marshland associations that existed in the Kajevuba before they merged into a cooperative were women's associations. Also in other parts of Rwanda, these new women's associations were granted some plots in the marshland to support them in their livelihoods (C. Newbury and Baldwin 2000, 2). In addition, the local governments encouraged already existing associations and cooperatives to balance their numbers of female and male members. This was also mentioned by the president of the Sweet Salvation cooperative, who remembered:

> It was unusual for the women living uphill to cultivate in the marshlands, but some men, like me and some others, who were living down the hill, we used to work there. After the war, we were taught to work in associations and we told those women to join us. Many of them are widows, so we started to work with them (M_SS_2015-04-03).

There were different strategies the cooperatives used to increase the number of female members. The admission of widows was the most obvious strategy after the war. Another strategy was to officially register female household members as part of the cooperative. I discovered this second tactic when I started to pay visits to the cooperative members in their homes. Unlike in many other parts of the world, Rwandan names do not necessarily indicate kinship ties.[102] For this reason, I found out about such kin relations only once I got to know the cooperative members better.

In some cases women had also replaced their husbands or sons in the cooperative. This was the case for all but one woman in the Vegetables for Peace cooperative. I had asked them for how many years they had been working in the marshland – a very simple question that had provoked great confusion: the women were not sure whether to indicate how long they had been working in the marshland as members of the cooperative or, more generally, when they had started to work in the marshland for the very first time. "I started with it [the cooperative]!" the youngest woman shouted out, while the others were still engaged in discussion. Apparently, for her, there was no discrepancy between these two dates. *"And you?"* I asked another one. "Me? I joined replacing my husband

102 The use of family names as we know them from Europe is now becoming more and more popular among Rwandan middle-class and elite families (Wessling 2020).

because he passed away after working there for two years", the woman explained. "*What about the rest of you?"* I further inquired. "I replaced my son who used to work there and quit working", the next one continued. "I also replaced my husband, and now it's been 6 years". "I also replaced my husband who started with it but couldn't make it. So I replaced him after his death", the fifth said, and the last one explained that she too had replaced her husband, who had started in the marshland with the others, but was no longer working there (FG_VPW_2015-04-14).

The women's statements as well as their confusion over this question indicate that near to all of them had been working in the marshland even before they had obtained a formal status as a cooperative member. Their answers further show that all women except for one had been able to enter the cooperative only because of their close relations to men inside the cooperative, either their (deceased) husbands or sons.

The importance of close relations to men already was addressed by Villia Jefremovas (1991), an anthropologist who researched Rwanda before the war. In her study she describes the lives of three very different Rwandan women who managed to get into powerful positions that granted them access to marshland and control over labour. Jefremovas characterises these three women as the "loose woman", the "virtuous wife", and the "timid virgin". Since Rwandan women at that time had no legal claims over land, each of them had reached their respective powerful positions via their relationships to influential men: their lovers, (dead) husbands, or fathers.

In 2003, still under the influence of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, a clause was adopted in Rwanda's new constitution which says that "women are granted at least thirty per cent of posts in decision-making organs" (GoR 2003, Article 9, n°4). This 30% quota today also applies for the cooperative committees – at least theoretically, for, as the Director General at MINAGRI admitted, despite the fact that women today are fairly well represented in agriculture cooperatives, the 30% quota in the committees was a vision rather than a reality:

> The problem there is, if you want to form the cooperative, is that in the decision-making organs, women are not the majority. (...) We are respecting the Beijing principle that 30% should be women, but this is not absolutely 100%. But we encourage them to put also women in the decision-making organs (I_DG_2015-05-02).

The DG's comment is supported by a recent report presented by the Gender Monitoring Office (Gender Monitoring Office 2017, 21) according to which between 2010 and 2015, the number of women in agricultural cooperatives fluctuated slightly between 42 and 45 percent.[103] These numbers, as well as the numbers I have collected from the Rutunga marshland cooperatives, seem to confirm that female cooperative members nowadays are quite common. However, taking into con-

103 Unfortunately the data represents only a rather short period of five years.

sideration that women generally are more involved in agricultural activities than men – 79.1% versus 54.4% (Gender Monitoring Office 2017, 10) – their representation in the cooperatives is actually not that good.

With regard to the committee the GMO-report further discovered that while men are typically found in the top leadership positions of a cooperative, women "(…) take over subordinate and stereotyped posts such as the vice presidency, secretariat and treasury which have limited advantages in terms of decision making and access to opportunities such as information and trainings" (Gender Monitoring Office 2017, 21).

Indeed, the presidents in all four cooperatives I worked with were men and in all cases they were men who held a superior position in their local communities as village leaders or as business men. Three of them were engaged in business activities outside the agricultural sector. In contrast to the "ordinary" members, I never saw them actively engaged in the physical labour of cultivation in the marshland, and the day activity clocks I collected clarified that the effective time they spent in the cooperative fields was limited. The fact that the most powerful position inside the marshland cooperatives was not held by full-time farmers, but by better-situated men with a good reputation inside the community and, in most cases, well-connected to the local authorities is no coincidence. It rather confirms what has been found by other researchers – that local elites or political entrepreneurs often take the lead in implementing the government's new cooperative policy, and often they do so for their own personal gains (Ansoms and Murison 2012; Huggins 2017; Nyenyezi Bisoka 2016). Furthermore, most of the other committee members were male; however, in each cooperative committee, there was at least one woman. Who were those women?

Taking a more detailed look at five women, who were engaged in the committees of their cooperatives unveils some similarities: four of them were in their forties or fifties. They had (more or less) grown-up children who could support them in their activities or, at least, who no longer needed a lot of care. Even though they were far from being rich, they definitely were not among the most vulnerable. All these four women enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, either because of a certain financial independence, or because they were the heads of their respective households and therefore could delegate household work to other (inferior) household members. Three of them were widows; the fourth was married, but economically independent from her husband. The fifth female committee member was very different. She was young, not yet married, and she was living together with her mother in a female-headed household. Like the other four, she was relatively free in deciding about her daily activities. Furthermore, she had a higher level of formal education than most other women in the same cooperative.

It is interesting to see how Jefremova's (1991) aforementioned categories: the timid virgin, the loose woman, the virtuous wife – here re-emerge in a slightly different form as the "educated girl"[104], the "autonomous widow" and the "entrepreneurial or independent wife".[105] Anyhow, the characterisations of these female committee members suggests that a certain degree of personal autonomy and available time is very important, and a precondition for women to take up leadership positions in their cooperatives. I once asked one of these female committee members, a very outspoken and hard-working woman, why, after the cooperative president's withdrawal, she had not opted for the seat of the presidency, and she explained that she could not become the leader of the cooperative because she had many other responsibilities and not enough time (C_BD_2016-01-16). Instead, an old and experienced man was assigned for the new presidency. He definitely had more spare time for such a job. What I want to explain with this little comparison is that even if there are strong incentives to increase the number of women inside cooperatives and, most especially, in the committees, and even if a woman has attained a certain degree of independence, gender-related labour patterns still restrict them in taking leadership positions. It was generally women who came late to our meetings because they had to prepare the food first, or who left right after the meeting to make sure that at home everything was at order, while the men strolled into the next bar. These "temporalities" that will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7 show that gender equality actually involves far more than just considering a balanced number of women and men.

For now, we can conclude that while many Rwandan women today are officially registered as members in a cooperative, they continue to be typically found in less influential positions. They are "ordinary" members or, if they are elected into the cooperative committee, they run for or are chosen for subordinate posts. This does not happen by coincidence, but has to do with the way gender relations are inscribed into rural everyday lives. In addition, my data show that first, most of the female members were widows, and also that second, kinship relations to men inside the cooperative had helped women to become official cooperative members at some point.

In some cases this "wider" and more sophisticated understanding of gender equality also came to be expressed during my interviews with female government officials and NGO workers, who explicitly worked on gender issues in Rwanda. For them, quotas were an important and necessary measure, yet only as a first step to empower women more fundamentally and economically.

104 In Kinyarwanda the term *umukobwa*, translated as "girl" refers to women who are not yet married or in a relationship with men.

105 As to how these three types or categories are "complete" and represent a more general pattern in Rwanda, this is definitely an issue requiring further research. For now, I suggest that even though women in present-day Rwanda have a better legal position and the autonomous widows, the entrepreneurial wives and the educated girls today are less dependet on the goodwill of men, women's personal relationships with influential men and a certain degree of autonomy remain important criteria in their ability to benefit from marshland cooperatives.

6.2. "You Can't Have a Say, If You Are Poor": Empowerment through Cooperatives

The Gender Coordinator at MINAGRI explained:

> Through agriculture cooperatives, these female-headed households are now able to access the land in wetlands. Some cooperatives, even most of them, have got a big number of women. You find that there are female headed households, who can now get together and form a cooperative and cultivate like rice or other things in the wetland. I think those are mainly the gender gaps in those wetlands. But, what do we do to eliminate those gaps now? There are different projects here at the MINAGRI that focus on marshlands and irrigation. So in those projects, we say that if it is something related to irrigation or marshland development, we have to make sure that women are also employed, because we have got a huge amount of money for these marshland-related works and also in irrigation. By doing this we are trying to empower them economically. To make sure that they gain something out of these activities, which are organised in different seasons. And also we encourage them to form cooperatives, not to work alone, because if they get together and form a cooperative, it is easier for them to be reliable when they want to get a loan from a bank. And also to get facilitated in terms of, you know, benefiting from fertilisers and some of the services we are offering here from the Ministry (I_GC_2015-06-18).

Her statement nicely illustrates how marshland cooperatives ideally could help women not only in getting access to agricultural land, but also in obtaining a wide range of (government) services, modern production inputs, employment opportunities, credits and loans.

A similar perspective was shared by a woman who was working as a community developer in a state-led development program:

> Everytime we make a committee [for a cooperative or an association] (...), I make sure that there are some women in that committee, so that if there is a training, they cannot be left behind, just because they were not elected. So I always tell them that they are capable of doing something positive and my observation is that when there is a self-help special group of women, they do their best to improve their activities. You know, they are the heart of the family. They are the ones who work hard to develop their family. (...) So I always talk to them: "Please show those men, that we are capable of doing something positive". And I think, we are going to reach something positive. Yah, after a long time, we are going to reach something! (I_RSSPCD_2016-02-15).

She was in her thirties and had studied in South Africa, and her answers were full of hope, almost defiant. She was convinced that cooperatives could help women to get access to education, or, as she said "training", which to her was a key to women's empowerment. The perspective that rural women lacked fundamental education and that this was a main cause of their poverty and oppression was a wide-spread argument put forward by both women and men in Kigali's offices. The importance of women's and men's equal access to education as a corner-stone of the achievement of gender equality in Rwanda is also considered in the country's Vision 2020 (GoR 2000, 18). The MINAGRI Gender Coordinator elaborated on that matter:

> If women are not educated, they do not have sufficient skills to help themselves, to sit down and to elaborate agricultural projects, and when they are not able to elaborate these bankable projects, the banks will not give them loans. And in the absence of loans, they also... it is like a vicious circle! They cannot get loans from the bank; they cannot invest in agriculture. And they stay in this kind of

> subsistence agriculture. (…) Mainly there are those three things: having the skills, illiteracy is a main thing, and culture. Yeah, and culture is also associated with those rights (I_GC_2015-06-18).

In her quote she stresses the importance of literacy and education in order to get access to finances and to engage in commercial production, which would finally help women to break the "vicious circle" of poverty. The Gender Coordinator further explained:

> There is a saying in Rwanda that literally means: "You can't have a say if you are poor" (…) Some of our women, even men, they have this understanding that they have to cultivate in order to survive. The aspect of a more commercialised agriculture is not yet there. We want to forecast on this commercialised agriculture to make sure that actually our farmers are going on to another step up from the subsistence level to the level where they can save some of their produce and meet their day-to-day life needs (I_GC_2015-06-18).

Referring to a Rwandan proverb that equates poverty with having no voice, the Gender Coordinator links the larger vision of women's empowerment in Rwanda with economic development through commercialised agriculture. This understanding of women's empowerment, of course, smoothly fits into the Ministry's promotion of market-oriented production in the marshlands.

At the same time, such statements evoke a specific image of how a modern, emancipated woman in the new Rwanda should ideally look: literate and educated, a woman who has left behind subsistence agriculture and now engages in commercial production or even runs a small business. A woman who is not poor, but financially independent and therefore has a say.

This clear, but also very normative understanding of emancipation is not only the private opinion of a few women sitting in comfortably upholstered ministerial chairs. It is precisely the image that is conveyed in government campaigns and in the public media. A good example is a street advertisement I photographed in Butare (see picture 19). It is an advertisement for the fight against corruption and injustice. On the picture we see a woman dressed in a business suit. She is wearing high heels and boxing gloves. Apparently she has just knocked out a man who is sitting on the ground in front of her. His t-shirt says "corruption". He looks defeated and his eyes point towards the ground. He is silent, for his lips are closed while the woman appears to be loudly proclaiming her victory.

Such forms of graphic depictions of "modern women" today are found in all sorts of public leaflets, teaching books, posters or newspaper cartoons.[106] They show career women, women at universities, women as (local) leaders, women with bank notes, and so on. A primary school pupil's book, for instance, explains about the new position of women in Rwanda's society as follows: "Women still do a lot of the jobs at home, but today they also take part in trade as buyers and sellers.

106 Another very good example is the editorial cartoon of the Mother's Day in 2017, printed in the government-loyal newspaper The New Times (2017)(2017) and critically discussed by Wessling (2020). It juxtaposes the "African mother before" with the "African mother today" – the latter carrying a briefcase with the letters "CAREER", "FAMILY", "LEADERSHIP" and "ECONOMY".

Women can now run their own businesses and borrow money from a bank" (Bamusananire et al. 2006, 101).

Picture 19: Street advertising in Butare: A modern emancipated woman fights corruption and injustice, April 2014

While on the one hand, these new narratives of modern Rwandan women point out the opportunities women have in the new Rwanda, on the other they convey a very particular understanding of women's empowerment. During my stays in Rwanda, I met women who came close to this image of being an educated, entrepreneurial and emancipated woman. Most of the women in the marshland

cooperatives, however, only had very distant similarities with the woman on the advertisement board. High heels in the marshlands? – This is definitely a very bad idea. What I am trying to say with this slightly cynical remark is that the government's vision of empowerment, in most cases, was far from the realities faced by the women in the marshland cooperatives. In the following, I introduce three very different female cooperative members I met in Rutunga's marshlands.

6.2.1 Mutuyimana

Mutuyimana was a widow with two young children living close by Kajevuba marshland. As a member of the Abakumburwa cooperative, she owned five plots in the marshland. In addition, she worked as a wage worker on other people's fields. At the time I met her, she suffered heavily under financial constraints due to a failed investment project in Kajevuba marshland. "I personally have used my savings to be able to crop in the marshland, because I was expecting a lot from this project. We were really impressed by having an investor who we thought was going to help us develop and totally change our lives, but all our dreams were shattered after harvesting", she explained. Together with my assistant we were sitting in the conversation room of her place. It was one of the better homes, with solid bricks and glass windows, yet it had definitively seen better times and several of the windows were broken. In anticipation of a good yield and high profits, Mutuyimana had invested in solar energy for her home, but she was forced to return the solar kit because she could not pay off the cost. "We are now in poverty. Even getting something to eat is hard for us. Before we never had such kinds of problems, but now I cannot even afford transport to the hospital when I am sick." When I asked her how she thought the cooperative should now manage the marshland, she quickly came up with an idea:

> The authorities should allow us to cultivate a crop of our individual choice, because we do not all have the same capacity. For example, we cannot all have the capacity to crop French beans, as the seeds are expensive. If they could only allow us to crop the normal beans, because they do not take a lot of time and care and yet you can get money out of them. One sack of fresh, normal beans costs 8,000 RWF, which is far more than French beans, which require more pesticides, care and time (C_M_2016-02-24).

Mutuyimana's wish to decide for herself which crops she could cultivate is expressed in her criticism of the government's verdict that marshland cooperatives should focus on one single crop per season. As Mutuyimana argued, this regulation would disregard the different financial and time capacities within the cooperative. According to her, households with low financial resources were struggling to engage in something like a more professional production as envisioned by the current government. This especially affects female-headed households, which more often live in extreme poverty than male-headed households (MINAGRI 2010, 28) – even though this does not say anything about where the money goes inside the household (see Marie's story below).

Mutuyimana's story reveals a paradox in the structural design of the government's agrarian and gender politics in the marshland. While on the one hand, the marshland cooperatives are presented as spaces of equity where women can autonomously decide about their own investments, on the other hand the marshlands are becoming more and more regulated. As illustrated in chapter 5, members of marshland cooperatives are no longer entirely free in their decisions. They have to conform to the rules and regulations of the cooperative, which again is liable to the government's policies. To overstate the case: what good does it do if nowadays women are pushed into the cooperative committee, and to make sure that they can partake in the decision about what to crop, if in the end the answer has already been predefined by the CIP?

In addition, temporal restrictions due to childcare and housework make it difficult for women like Mutuyimana to adhere to strict time-tables and cropping schemes as provided by the cooperative. She therefore suggested loosening the strict regulations so that she could cultivate crops that better suited her own capacities and necessities.

During my fieldwork I met many women like Mutuyimana, who rejected the government's strict regulations in the marshlands. Most of them considered the marshland first and foremost as an area of food production during the dry season. The selling of surpluses was something that happened in addition to this, but it was not necessarily part of a calculated business plan. This was very different from the case of Uwineza, who worked in the same cooperative as Mutuyimana and was even a member of the committee.

6.2.2 Uwineza

Uwineza was a very outspoken cooperative member. She was in her mid-forties and lived together with her husband and five children in one of Rutunga's better homes. It had glass windows, instead of wooden shutters, and had new iron sheets, and, when she led me and my assistant inside her place, I noticed painted walls and a cement floor, which many other homes in Rutunga did not have.

As Uwineza told me, she had met her husband in a refugee camp during the genocide. Shortly after the war their first child was born and they wanted to get married, but then her husband fell very ill and they moved back to his family assets in Rutunga. Her first years in Rutunga were marked by many difficulties. "It was like I was starting a new life. I was constantly producing children, because there was no family planning. They were sensitising us to it, but I came to understand it well only after my third child. (…) I got a bad life because of producing many children at once", Uwineza recalled (I_U_2015-06-28). *Indahekana*, she explained, was the Kinyarwanda expression for producing children without space. It means, literally, that a baby can no longer be breastfed and

carried on the back, because a new one is already there. At some point she decided to go and cultivate in the marshland:

> Because of my bad life, I went to the marshland and I started to cultivate vegetables. I bought a goat. I took good care of it and it would bring good profit and I cultivated in the wetland again and I bought sorghum and beans. And like that I came to the level of buying a cow. (…) And my children started drinking milk, and they stopped suffering from kwashiorkor and became good (I_U_2015-06-28).

The decision to go and cultivate in the marshland also had to do with the difficult relationship she had with her husband at that time. She wanted to have a plot where she could work for herself two days a week and where she would earn something on the side (I_U_2015-07-06). However, the activities she did to improve her and her children's situation also provoked a stigma within her personal environment: "They would say that I was like a 'man-type' and kind of an abomination. But because of the good government of unity that was encouraging women to do good work, I wouldn't concentrate on that belief", Uwineza noted. Inspired by her success in the marshland, she also began to cultivate vegetables on the hillsides:

> As a woman who looks far, I saw it was developing me. So after that, I thought: "If I can cultivate in the marshland, I can get the seeds from there and also cultivate them in the wet season [on the hillsides]". That makes me remember the marshland very well, because it has given me a lot of strength (I_U_2015-06-28).

In this quote Uwineza describes herself as "a woman who looks far". This expression is interesting, because it points to a qualitative turn in Uwineza's story. While in the beginning her activities centred around everyday struggles such as finding food for her children or meeting basic financial needs, her agricultural activities now included a new dimension – that of making plans for the future. During that time, Uwineza worked with other women who advised her. After the birth of her third child, they taught her about contraceptive methods to delay further pregnancies. She joined a saving group that helped her to collect the money she needed for the marshland cooperative's membership contribution. As she explained, the government's way of promoting women's rights had encouraged her to learn more about the law and stand up for herself.

Today, Uwineza owns several cows as well as a very productive plot of land in addition to her fields in the marshland. Her grown-up sons assist her with the selling of vegetables to Kigali and her business was running very well – or at least well enough to share her ideas about how she was planning to improve "her" place in the future.

Uwineza's case is probably the one that best depicts the ideal path of women's empowerment through marshland cooperatives as envisioned by the government. She perfectly mastered the skill of "bending without breaking" which de Lame (2005, 399) had observed as an important strategy

among rural peasant women in Rwanda. But we must acknowledge that the use of the marshland by the time she started working with the cooperative was less regulated than it is today.

While Uwineza's story also points to the difficulties she experienced as young mother with many small children her story shows how personal courage, other women's support, and lastly the government's new commitment to gender equality had helped her to break the "vicious circle" of poverty, as described by the Gender Coordinator. The activities she did in the marshland had helped her obtain a certain degree of financial autonomy. In contrast to Mutuyimana, who was struggling to make ends meet, for Uwinzea, the cooperative's costly production schemes posed no great challenge. Step by step she had extended her personal liberties up to the point that she was considered the head of the household. Uwineza's liberties stand in stark contrast to the following story of Marie, whose freedom of movement and access to money was strictly controlled by her husband.

6.2.3 Marie

Marie was an elderly woman and a member of one of the small cooperatives I worked with. She was the only women in that cooperative who still lived together with her husband. Together they had seven children, most of whom had already left home and lived elsewhere. On the day of my visit, they were engaged in all sorts of wedding preparations for the marriage of one of their younger sons. Marie and her husband lived close by the cooperative's marshland and they were both registered as members of the cooperative. The relationship between the two spouses, however, was difficult, as she conveyed to my assistant one day. Her husband exercised firm control over all her activities. He not only wanted to be informed about her whereabouts, he was also the one who managed the family's income and finances. Enviously she told my assistant how deliberately she wished to participate in a savings group as did the other widowed or unmarried women in the cooperative, yet her husband did not allow her to have any personal savings.

During one of the focus-group discussions Marie explained:

> At home the man has to take the responsibility of the money that enters. For example, if you have the idea of cultivating some tomatoes, sometimes the man immediately comes and takes all the harvest out of your hands and sells it. Even if you have sold them, you have to give the money to him to keep, unless maybe you understand each other well and he lets you to go and participate in saving groups (FG_BFW_2015-06-03).

Marie's lived reality shows that family internal hierarchies and patriarchal gender relations at home can corrupt women's opportunities to benefit from being members of a marshland cooperative. Marie was a member of such a cooperative, yet her personal gains from this official status were very limited. Nevertheless, she appreciated being part of the cooperative – obviously not because of the financial gains, but because she liked to socialise with the other cooperative members.

In general, the social aspects of the cooperatives were considered as very important not only by Marie, but most particularly by the women in the small cooperatives. They appreciated the mutual aid and assistance which was especially valuable for those who lacked the strength to do the back-breaking work in the marshlands on their own. Despite the hardships posed by the new government regulations, they never questioned their membership. To them, the cooperative was almost like a family.

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It can be concluded from these different cases that Rwanda's gender equality approach in the marshlands does not empower all women the same way. Burnet, an anthropologist who has investigated the impact of Rwanda's quota policy, draws similar conclusions. Her findings show that urban elite women have benefited more from these quotas than rural women. She states:

> Yet urban, elite women have reaped the greatest benefits from these changes, thanks to increased access to salaried jobs, including lucrative positions in the national legislature and ministries, and grater purchasing power (for items like automobiles, clothing, and domestic servants), (…) whereas rural peasant women in elected positions in local government have seen their workload increased and their economic security undermined (Burnet 2011, 305).

As the three cases above have illustrated, even within the rural areas there exist nuances as to how women are able to benefit from the government's quota approach. A certain degree of autonomy and flexibility emerges as an important prerequisite for women to take positions in the cooperative leadership or to truly benefit from the government's quota policy in the marshland cooperatives. Furthermore, women's current living situation (children, health, age, financial capacity, labour capacity etc.) constrains their opportunities to engage in commercial agriculture, as envisaged by the government. In other cases, patriarchal family structures at home undermine women's financial and emancipatory gains from the cooperatives.

We thus can say that the pathway of women's empowerment as described by government officials is not a well-paved track for all women. Instead, the public representations and the government's narratives evoke a very particular image of how an exemplary modern Rwandan woman looks or behaves. I borrow the attribute "exemplary" from an article by Ansoms and Cioffo (2016), where they elaborate on the Rwandan government's version of an "exemplary citizen". This is the label employed for those who comply with the governments prescriptions. In the rural areas, this means for instance that he or she is a hard-working farmer who engages in commercial production and dutifully attends *umuganda* (public working days) etc. On the downside, "[f]armers who cannot and do not want to fit within the commercial model are incapable of performing within the boundaries of 'exemplary citizenship'" (Ansoms and Cioffo 2016, 1265). Ansoms and Cioffo argue that the image of the "exemplary citizen" has become an integrative part of Rwanda's post-genocide state-

building. In a very similar way, I argue, the official discourse on empowerment also produces an ideal-type image of an exemplary emancipated Rwandan woman, which I would like to analyse in more detail in the following section.

6.3. From the Heart of the House into the Cooperative's Fields – Understandings of "Gender"

During my various field stays, and most specifically during the interviews and conversations with government representatives, public leaders and NGO workers, as well as during the focus-groups with the cooperative members, I heard a wide range of arguments about the necessity and meaning of women's empowerment and gender equality in Rwanda. Mostly, these arguments comprised a mix of specific strategies combined with descriptions of achievements already attained in terms of women's new rights and opportunities. However, especially in the interviews with officials in Kigali, these arguments often had a pejorative undertone and came with specific complaints about rural women who were not educated enough to know their rights or who had too many children or did not know how to manage money well. These representations exhibited a particular understanding or "image" of what a modern, emancipated Rwandan woman should ideally be like. A collection of these different statements, or rather characteristics, can be found in box 2.

An exemplary, emancipated Rwandan woman

… is educated and literate

… is a leader and takes over representative functions in the political sphere

… is not poor

… is entrepreneurial and manages to conceive bankable projects

… has abandoned subsistence agriculture and devotes her efforts to modern farming

… knows and stands up for her rights

… has freedom of speech

… participates in women's saving groups and cooperatives

… manages her own finances

… invests her savings for the well-being of her family and never forgets about her responsibilities at home

… lives in a monogamous relationship and is legally married

… knows about contraceptive methods and is committed to birth control

Box 2: Collected statements about the characteristics of an exemplary, emancipated Rwandan woman

Some of these arguments, such as the importance of education and literacy, or women's engagement in leadership, mentioned particularly often by government officials or NGO workers were already addressed above. Another set of arguments, also already critically discussed, centred around the

issue of women's poverty and vulnerability and how access to finances, business activities and modern agriculture could help women to get out of the poverty trap.

This business-oriented, economic dimension of empowerment was less emphasised by the cooperative members themselves. Even though the cooperative women valued the saving groups for giving them a certain degree of financial security and autonomy, their investments were primarily family-focussed rather than business-oriented. For most members in the cooperatives, women's monetary activities, whether selling their crops at the market or participating in saving groups, had become a necessity to cover the increase in financial demands such as school fees, taxes, security fees etc. Only very few of the female cooperative members, – Uwineza was one of them – had clear entrepreneurial ambitions and understood their activities as part of a larger "business plan", or, to recall Uwineza's phrase, were "women who looked far".

Two very common statements that were typically brought up during the focus groups with the cooperative members were that Rwandan women today had **"freedom of speech"** and that they could **"stand up for their rights"**.

> **F1:** When they say gender it means like maybe now a man is not superior to a woman, it's like equality. And ever since that gender equality, that's when things started to change like for girls who now inherit from their families. (…) So gender is when everyone brings his*her inheritance, or even, when one of them hasn't inherited anything, it doesn't cause any superiority between them. They just work together with what they have and help each other in their activities. A man can get the children ready when they are going to school and do other home activities, but also a woman can do some activities like feeding the cow, which long ago was known as an activity for men. So that's gender equality, the leaders say.
> **JT:** And what do you think about it?
> **All together:** Gender equality? What we think is that it is a very good thing and it helped us because we have speech everywhere.
> **F1:** No one is superior to us any more. (FG_VPW_2015-05-21)

This discussion among the women of the Vegetables for Peace cooperative describes the meaning of gender equality in relation to women's better position in society, their right to speak out and, most particularly, their improved security regarding land. What is interesting though, if we look at the answers in more detail, is that the first statement did not provide a personal perspective at first. The talkative woman who had set out to speak referred in her explanations to something "they" had said, by which she meant "the leaders" or, more generally, the government. This wording creates a certain distance between gender equality as it is conveyed in the political discourse and the women's personal perceptions about "gender". Furthermore, the woman's answer clarified that "gender" was to be understood in terms of "gender equality" and not, as I, the feminist-theory-biased academic would have said, as the critical reflection upon the cultural and social construction of gender-role patterns and norms.

In other cooperatives too the female members valued their new rights. However, they also had their reservations for instance when "gender" was used by other women as a justification to give up their care responsibilities at home:

> **F:** In the former times, when you were thirsty and your husband had money he would buy you a drink. So he took you out and bought you like two drinks, and then you would go back home in time to take care of children or even animals if you had them (...). But nowadays they both go to the bar until morning without even thinking about the children or animals at home and women chill with men in the bar and maybe when she gets home and her man tries to confront her, things become even worse.
> **Another woman (joining in):** She thinks she can stand up against her husband even if she's wrong because of this gender equality thing, and threatens to report him if he tries to touch her (FG_BFW_2015-06-03).

It must be noted, once again, that most of the female cooperative members in this cooperative were widows, and far older than forty. The few younger women, however, did not actively challenge this perspective. One of them even confirmed that a home without a mother was a problem for the children.

Similar concerns about gender equality were brought up by the men of the same cooperative:

"I think it is not good because women get a chance to use it not in the right way. But it is good on the other side, because before, men used to be superior to women. (…) I think gender equality is a right that was given to women and it is not used in the right way", the President of the Bright Future cooperative explained during the focus-group discussion. "What I can add", another member joined in, "is that if we are doing things that require more energy you can't make a woman work like a man, because they are not strong on the same level so it might affect her". "No, it's impossible!" the cooperative president supported this view: "If you're talking about gender equality, then people would do the same things, which means that whatever I can do, she can do as well, like carrying heavy things and do all the other things I did, and that is impossible! And she would also spend the hours I am spending at the bar in the evening, so it is impossible. (…) I think they should have called it 'fulfilment', because equality is another thing, so that they would live peacefully!" he reasoned (FG_BFM_2015-06-19).

The president's statement points to some of the difficulties in placing the government's gender-equality discourse on the ground. The men of the two other small cooperatives argued with the same purport: They had no problem with gender equality as long as it did not question their own (male) authority, particularly in their own home. While they acknowledged women's new inheritance rights and their better visibility in the political sphere, they were very sceptical of how this change had spilled over to what they called the "cultural side". This could happen, for instance, when a woman challenged her husband's superiority because she had brought more land into the marriage, or when

a wife misused her new freedoms to spend time in the centre and come home late, without having cooked, and cleaned and cared for her husband and children. As they explained, this was a "wrong understanding" of women's new privileges – which were actually the same privileges that, for men, were never challenged (FG_VPM_2015-06-16).

"What is a woman?" I had asked the female members of the Vegetables for Peace cooperative. "Isn't a woman a husband's wife!" the first one suggested. "A husband is a head of the family and a woman is an adviser of the family", another woman noted. "A woman is one of her husband's ribs (...) she came from a man's rib and even the Bible says that a woman came from a man's rib", the first one now came up with a new definition (GF_VPW_2015-05-21).

"But what is a woman for you, personally?" I had asked the women of another cooperative who had also come up with the "rib argument". "A woman is a woman; she has to take care of the children, she has to keep her values, and she also has to welcome the visitor and cater for the husband", the oldest of them explained. "She has to respect her husband either in trouble or in good times", said another. "A woman assists her husband at home", the youngest cooperative member added (FG_BFW_2015-06-03).

"*Umugore n'umutima w'urugo!*", the men of the Sweet Salvation Cooperative declared, and explained to me in more detail: "In Kinyarwanda the woman is the heart of the home. So when the man leaves, the woman stays home cooking, taking care of the children and doing other home activities that are assigned to women" (FG_SSM_2015-06-10).

What all these different statements collected from female and male cooperative members demonstrate is that being a woman is defined, firstly, by her particular relationship to a husband: as his wife, as the one who caters for him, respects or assist him; and secondly, by her activities at home: to take care of the children, to welcome visitors, to cook and so on. This second, spatial attribute will be further explored in the chapter on the localities and temporalities of gender (see chapter 7.5). For now, I want to pay a closer look at the expression *umugore n'umutima w'urugo*, which is a traditional Rwandan proverb. The reason why this traditional proverb is of particular interest, attentive readers might have noticed, is because it is also a very popular proverb used by Rwandan officials and women activists to legitimise the need for women's empowerment and involvement in the country's development.

Many times during my interviews and talks with state officials and NGO workers in Kigali, I was told how essential it was to promote the development of women because women are "the heart of their homes". A good example is this quote by a rural sociologist working at the RSSP:

> As we all know, a woman who earns some money will use this money wisely. This means that women manage money better than men, the men who pass by the *kabaret*[107] (laughs). The woman comes home with some food, clothes for the children... Women, how shall I say? In general, women know to manage money better than men. They use it properly as it is necessary, whereas men will share a drink with other men (Interview with Rural Sociologist at RSSP 2016-02-09).[108]

According to him, money spent on women's development was more sustainable than money spent on men's development. As he explained, this was one of the good reasons why the RSSP, as a government institution, encouraged women to join marshland cooperatives. Women's empowerment would not only benefit the women themselves, but their entire families, because women were using the money more responsibly than men.

In their analysis of Rwanda's post-genocide gender politics, Uwineza and Parsons illustrate how the traditional saying *"Umugore n'umutima w'urugo!"* was used by the Rwandan gender policy advocates as part of a political strategy. By publicly stressing women's traditional role as the "hearts of their homes", they created a causal link between women's development and the country's development on a broader scale. Uwineza and Parsons write:

> Women leaders have presented gender equality as a development strategy intended to help the whole family and society; for instance, they have emphasized that when women earn an income outside the home, the living standard of the entire family rises (Uwineza and Pearson 2009, 15).

In the feminist literature, these kinds of arguments fall under the category of "efficiency arguments". These are based on the assumption that women are more altruistic than men. In consequence development politics that target women are more "efficient". Such efficiency narratives are very commonly heard from the women in development (WID) discourse. However, they are not without controversy within feminist literature. A good clarification is provided by Razavi and Miller (1995) who, on the one hand, acknowledge the political strength of such arguments in moving women into the political focus, yet on the other hand, they challenge that efficiency arguments reduce gender empowerment to a mere cost-benefit calculation. They write:

> [E]fficiency arguments are still central to the women and development discourse. In fact, efficiency arguments have become increasingly sophisticated in recent years and form what we refer to below as the "gender efficiency approach". Concerns remain, however, that the emphasis on women's productivity ignores the impact of a broad range of social divisions and social relations that constrain women's economic choices and opportunities (Razavi and Miller 1995, 6).

As shown before, in the Rwandan context, this criticism is definitely valid.

107 The word *kabaret* derives from French and refers to a local bar.

108 Own translation from French. Original quote: On sait bien que, quand la dame a gagné de l'argent, cet argent on espère va bien gérer. C'est-à-dire que les dames gère mieux l'argent que les hommes, les hommes qui passent dans les cabarets (laughts). La dame va à la maison avec de la nourriture, les habilles pour les enfants... Les dames, comment dire? En général, les dames elles savent mieux gérer l'argent que les hommes. Elles l'utilisent comme il faut comme il est nécessaire pourtant que les hommes vont partager les bouteilles avec les hommes.

Apart from the efficiency problematic, there is another interesting aspect with regard to the way political stakeholders refer to the traditional understanding of a woman being the heart of a home. One may ask why the promotion of a modern understanding of women's rights is linked to such a traditional idea of women's role in Rwandan society. Is not the idea that a woman should become an active member in a marshland cooperative and engage in all sort of businesses contradictory to the idea that women are supposed to stay at home, prepare the meals and take care of the children? How do these two rather opposing views go together? In fact, this apparent contradiction is resolved by a reinterpretation of the original meaning of this saying: Women are the heart of the house not because they effectively stay at home, but because they direct all their efforts and activities towards their families. If they leave home to grow cash crops or to sell fruits at the market, this is accepted, but only as long as these activities benefit their families.

In addition, and more generally speaking, Rwandan politics very much work under the directive that "traditional is the new modern". The adaptation of traditional concepts is typical of Rwanda's post-genocide politics (Pottier 2002; Reyntjens 2018). The *umuganda* labour day, the *gacaca* courts, *imihigo* performance contracts and many more examples do exist where traditional concepts have been revived and modified and now are presented as a Rwandan, "home-grown" solution as opposed to Western-imposed development strategies (see also the agronomist's statement that compared foreign aid with anaesthesia). Reyntjens reflects on this phenomenon as follows:

> In today's Rwanda, constant references to history, whether factually true or not, are used as a tool of legitimation. The idealised glorification of the precolonial era supports the political objectives and strategies of the current rulers (Reyntjens 2018, 528).

These kinds of references to precolonial history and traditions also hold true for Rwanda's present-day gender politics. The way the traditional saying *umugore n'umutima w'urugo* is re-employed in the political discourse is a good example.

Another example of this kind of glorification of precolonial Rwanda combined with a post-colonial feminist argument was put forward by the MINAGRI Gender Coordinator when she explained about women's better position in Rwanda's traditional[109] society:

> Traditionally, women actually had a better position in terms of managing the household income and property. But, as our culture evolved and as we learned from the other parts of the world, there were different things that kept on changing. And as the world has become more capitalistic, including in Rwanda, women sometimes find themselves being like the workers but not benefiting a lot from their production. (…) Traditionally, when the men were together discussing issues, let's say there is a neighbour who has lost cattle because of a disease, and they wanted to compensate him, the men used to sit together, have a meeting and say: "We have to donate some cows to compensate". But a man could not do that unless he went back to the house and asked the view of the woman. So, that

109 Just as a note: It is interesting to see how the Gender Coordinator uses the term "tradition" in a very positive sense while she sees "culture" as one root cause of the discrimination against women.

> shows that actually the woman was considered as a stakeholder in terms of managing the family property (I_CG_2015-06-18).

As we notice, the Gender Coordinator here makes reference to a very specific example of women's involvement in a family's decision-making. It is a decision about giving cows to a neighbour, thus depicting a traditional community of cattle herders. But Rwanda's traditional society was very complex. Apart from pastoralist groups, there also existed farmers and foragers, and there were elites and servants and rich and poor families in all of these groups (Jefremovas 2002; Vansina 2004). Vansina (2004, 31–32) writes about women's position in precolonial Rwanda:

> The social position of women was complex and variable. In principle they were inferior to one man – this was most evident in the case of women married to farmers since women could not control any land, but it was also apparent among herders despite women's right to own cattle. Usually their status derived from that of their fathers, husbands, or sons. The royal status of a queen mother, which stemmed from that of her son, is the most striking example of this. Yet age and personality were of considerable importance as well. At least that is the picture, valid for the twentieth century, painted for us by tales of fiction and historical narratives. (...) Oral literature often underlines the mystical power inherent in femininity and human fecundity. Some women became famous as magicians or healers, and above all as prophets. (...) On the other hand, however, this same supposedly inborn female quality also justified the attribution of all household tasks to women, from cooking to educating small children, to dispensing everyday medical care. And because slaves were mostly used for household work, nearly all slaves were women.

Vansina's account provides a much more nuanced picture of women's "traditional" standing. He confirms that some women were influential and powerful, but he also points to the many other women who had little to no say. Codere's collection of Rwandan biographies that cover the period from 1900 to 1960 equally reveals the many differences that existed within Rwandan women's lives (Codere 1963). The Gender Coordinator's glorifying statements must thus be considered with care. This, however, does not invalidate her general argument that women's situation in modern-day Rwanda must be understood as the result of historical and global processes.

6.4. Women to Become Rwanda's New Productive Force: Towards a Multiplication of Labour?

In a similar vain to the efficiency argument criticised above goes another narrative that was regularly used to legitimate women's new role in the new Rwanda. It is the idea that women currently constitute a repressed productive force that could be turned into higher profits. President Kagame's often quoted speech at the 10th anniversary of the parliament's women's caucus in 2007 is a good example. During this speech he rhetorically asked: "How does a society hope to transform itself if it shoots itself in the foot by squandering more than half of its capital investment? The truth of the matter is that societies that recognize the real and untapped socioeconomic, cultural, and political power of women thrive" (Kagame 2007).

What is difficult about this statement not only concerns again this cost-benefit analysis that understands women as a "capital investment"; Kagame's quote also provides a very narrow understanding of women's productivity. It neglects to consider that women already are very productive, although mostly in the less visible and less financially rewarding domains of house and care work. As Guyer (1988) and several others (J. A. Carney 1992; H. Moore and Vaughan 1987) have shown, women's greater involvement in a more labour-intensive commercial production has often had as a consequence a "multiplication of labour". For the Rwandan context, Nyandwi (1999, 313–14) already expounded this critical dynamic, which she observed among the women in the cooperatives she studied in the early 1990s. As she writes, due to the increased workload, women started to burden their daughters with domestic chores such as preparing the meal or looking after their younger siblings.

I was able to observe the same phenomenon among the female cooperative members I met in Rutunga's marshlands. It was not easy for them to reconcile the labour-intensive work in the marshlands with the many other duties they had in their homes. Often they would hurry away quickly after our meetings to make sure that everything was in order in their homes. During a focus group with the women of the Vegetables for Peace cooperative, I was told that while in principle, domestic tasks such as cooking could be shared between husband and wife, in reality many of them no longer had husbands, or their husbands did the cooking only, if the wife was not around (in hospital for instance) and if there were no other "inferior" household members (typically daughters) to do this job (FG_VPW_2015-05-14).

Furthermore, the discussion with the women of the Bright Future cooperative clarified that the primary responsibility for domestic tasks continues to be very gender specific:

> *"Is there a difference in what boys and what girls help you with?"* I had asked the women of the cooperative. "They do the same!" several women cried at once.
> *"And what about sweeping or cooking?"* I queried. "Nowadays they all do the same activities, like when the girl is not around, the boy can also sweep!" one of the widows explained.
> *"And the boys also carry the babies on their back?"* "No, they do not carry the babies", the cooperative's treasurer said. "They do not look good when they are carrying babies", another woman fell in. "The boys, you cannot force them to help you with activities like cultivating, because mostly the boys are going to look for another job that will help us to earn a living", a third one explained.
> *"And what about the girls?"* I wondered. "Girls also do their own activities, but they also remember to come back and do the activities at home. They cannot sit there and watch their brothers working!"
> *"In the centre, I see many young boys sitting around and talking to friends, having fun, but I never see any girls"*, I shared my own observation with the women of the cooperative, and they replied together: "The girls usually have to be at home!" "They are doing some activities at home!" "So the boys rather sit there and then if you see a girl starting to be like that and going in the centre to sit there, then you know that girl is becoming impossible! So, you start knowing that she is starting to become bad, because usually their task is to stay at home and do some activities" (FG_BFW_2015-05-25).

As we can conclude from these statements, women or girls continue to be the main persons responsible for household-related activities, despite their growing engagement outside the traditional domestic sphere as well. Women's empowerment through marshland cooperatives does not automatically break with these gender-segregated working patterns. Instead, reproductive work is delegated once more to female household members or, in more affluent families, to maids. Hereby the gendered labour division is not fundamentally challenged but merely replicated at another level.

A similar observation, albeit in a very different regional context, has been made by Lutz in her intersectional analysis of transnational female migrant workers in Germany's care sector. Lutz argues that professional women in Germany empower themselves from within their traditional roles as "good mothers" or "good daughters" by employing, cheap, female migrant workers. Lutz critically reflects upon this phenomenon:

> The redistribution of housework and care work to other women remains within the traditional logic of gendered identity patterns. (...) The self-image of the "good mother" or the "good daughter", for example, can be maintained (...), because it does not affect the gender-specific, segregative symbolism. (...) On the personal level, this means that she can cushion her "doing gender" by "doing ethnicity" (Lutz 2007, 224–25, own translation).

Similarly, in Rwanda, the entrepreneurial wife or the autonomous widow may cushion their "doing gender" by "doing seniority", if they expect their daughters to take over the domestic work or "doing class", if they employ a maid.[110]

What we enter here is a discussion about the gendered division of labour and how it is reproduced in everyday life. This important theme will be taken up and examined in more detail in chapter 7. Before that I would like come back to the different perspectives and arguments I have contrasted in this chapter and situate them within a larger feminist analysis.

6.5. Gender Equality in Times of Neoliberalism

This chapter has shown that the Rwandan government employs different measures to implement gender equality in the state-owned marshlands. First, state programmes actively encourage women to join marshland cooperatives. Second, the local arms of the government try to ensure a more or less balanced number of female and male members, and finally, the 30% quota declared in the country's constitution also accounts for the cooperative committees, at least theoretically.

These measures have proved effective insofar as nowadays, many women today hold formal membership statuses, which is different from the former times, when women often worked in the marsh-

110 And even this is not always accepted by husbands. In an interview, Justine Uvuza, a Rwandan scholar who has done research on women politicians in Rwanda, provides the story of a Rwandan parliamentarian who was expected to iron and prepare her husband's clothes in person as he did not accept this being done by a domestic worker (Warner 2016). More stories of how women politicians are still considered the main person responsible for managing the domestic sphere are found in Uvuza's thesis (Uvuza 2014).

lands on behalf of their husbands or households. While for some state representatives, this improvement in terms of numbers is sufficient to speak of having "embraced" gender equality, some other state officials and NGO workers understand the quota system only as a very first step, as a precondition to make women benefit from training, extension services and access to loans. In line with the country's general vision of a green revolution in Rwanda, female cooperative workers are to become agricultural entrepreneurs, who leave behind subsistence agriculture and play active roles inside their cooperatives' committees. This form of women's empowerment, politically as well as economically, was legitimised by pointing to women's traditional role as the hearts of their homes, which declares women's development to be an important step for the development of the entire country. I have tried to summarise and visualise the different steps of this argument in figure 10:

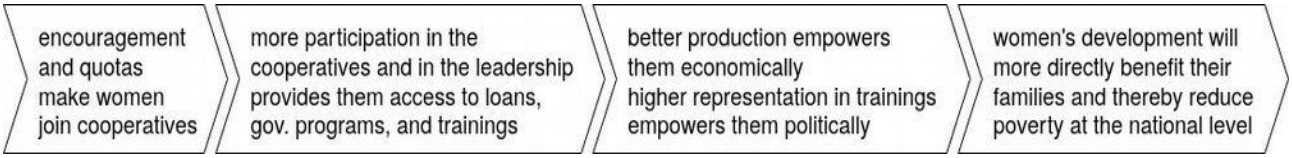

Figure 10: Women's ideal path of empowerment through marshland cooperatives.

Rwanda's empowerment strategy in the marshlands thus basically aims at integrating women into the neoliberal, competitive free-market economy. As illustrated earlier, this structurally excludes many women from the government's empowerment approach. Furthermore, the current approach is insufficient in the eyes of many feminist anthropologists, especially those committed to political economy. One of their fundamental concerns has been to situate and understand gendered dynamics and inequalities within the society as a whole and to trace the root causes of these inequalities rather than dealing only with their effects.

Good examples of such kinds of macro-social analyses are the works by ecofeminists such as Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Claudia von Werlhof and Maria Mies, who have shown how women's worldwide oppression is closely tied to the spread of patriarchal capitalism in the context of colonisation. According to Mies, patriarchal capitalism operates under the condition that "(…) other countries and women are defined as 'nature', or made into colonies to be exploited by WHITE MEN [*sic*] in the name of capital accumulation or progress and civilization" (Mies 2014, 4). The "colony" here not only refers to colonies in a classical sense, but is understood, more generally, as a "source of unregulated exploitation" (Mies 2014, 33). This also includes unpaid work done by women, whom she regards as "the last colony".[111] While Mies acknowledges the importance of all kind of feminist struggles in the "cultural domain", whether the fight against sexist images in the

111 In "Women the last Colony", Mies et al. (1988, 5) write: "Women and subjugated peoples are treated (…) as if they were means of production or 'natural resources' such as water, air and land".

media, the call for new legal frameworks or for new, non-sexist role models, she is critical of whether those struggles that mainly occur at the level of everyday life will really be able to undermine the patriarchal foundation of our society. Mies also rejects the "education for development" paradigm. Not that she generally objects to women's right for education. But she says: "The belief in education, cultural action, or even cultural revolution as agents of social change is a typical belief of the urban middle classes. With regard to the woman's question it is based on the assumption that woman's oppression has nothing to do with the basic material production relations or the economic system" (Mies 2014, 22).

As indicated, Mies' class-argument also holds true for the case of Rwanda: education has been a major argument used by government officials, yet it was far less prominent among the cooperative members and women in the rural areas. In the same vein, a recent work by Wessling on middle-class women in Rwanda concludes that education is an essential distinguishing feature used by urban middle-class women to demarcate themselves from women in the countryside, whom they often judge as uneducated (Wessling 2020).

The voices and cases I have presented in this chapter clearly show that the government's gender approach in the marshlands, which is strongly tied to the government's aspiration toward commercial exploitation, is not helpful for women with limited autonomy and low financial resources. The government's strategy only benefits some women, while other women and girls experience an increased workload and great pressure to comply with the government's understanding of being an emancipated female entrepreneur. At least from the sides of officials, there exists no alternative vision of empowerment in rural Rwanda that refrains from this neo-liberal logic.

We thus may ask how the government's gender approach in the marshlands will have true and sustainable effects on the rural grounds. The current measures tend to remain at a very superficial and symbolic level and implement gender equality first and foremost in the public sphere. This criticism is far from new. Other, and not only feminist, researchers have been questioning how women-friendly politics in Rwanda really aim at a fundamental change in terms of gender equality. They argue that the new currency "gender" is used as a flagship for financial aid and as a strategy to stay accountable to the donor community (Burnet 2011; Ansoms and Rostagno 2012; Debusscher and Ansoms 2013; Holvoet and Inberg 2015).

6.6. Conclusion: Keeping Feet on the Ground while Looking Far

As a matter of fact, today, more women hold a formal membership status and adopt leadership positions inside their cooperatives. This particularly helps women with a greater scope of action, such as autonomous widows with grown-up children, entrepreneurial wives or educated girls. However, the

government's agrarian vision in the marshlands and the strict requirements of the cooperative create a barrier for women with limited personal and financial capacities. Women in patriarchal relationships whose freedoms are materially and socially limited do not benefit from the cooperatives' economic advantages. Even though some government officials do acknowledge the problem of female under-representation and are also aware of the economic and social constraints many women in the rural areas have to deal with, the current empowerment approach in the marshlands neglects the structural barriers women face in their everyday lives.

Furthermore, this chapter has taken a critical stance towards the image of the modern, emancipated woman, as presented by government officials and in the broader political discourse. It has shown that this image conveys a very normative understanding of women's role in the country's development. Empowerment is more or less equalled with financial development and women's incorporation into the neoliberal market. The "exemplary emancipated woman" is the one who leaves behind subsistence agriculture, engages in commercial production and business activities, and is successful in this competitive empowerment environment. At the same time, women's labour-intensive engagement in the commercial sector has not freed women from their various tasks and responsibilities at home. In consequence, household tasks are delegated to "inferior" household members such as daughters or maids. This replicates gender-specific inequalities at another level rather than breaking with the very foundation of these inequalities.

This is also reflected in the discussions with female and male cooperative members. "Gender", in the sense of both women and men having the same opportunities, is widely accepted today in the realm of the public, and women today are increasingly seen in leadership positions, run businesses, and speak out in front of the community. Yet in the private sphere, women remain the hearts of their homes. Gender equality there rather refers to an idea of complementary or "fulfilment", which reinforces existing gender roles and norms. In consequence, this double understanding of gender equality provokes a multiplication of labour: as modern emancipated women, they are expected to be exemplary in their new roles in the public sphere, at the same time as they are not relieved form their responsibilities at home, where woman may face very different situations.

Women's empowerment through marshland cooperatives can therefore not be judged without looking at their many other responsibilities outside of the cooperative context. The following chapter takes a close look at the gendered division of labour inside the marshland cooperatives and beyond.

CHAPTER 7: EXPANDING ON THE GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOUR WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE COOPERATIVE

> **Cooperative President:** Usually the family has to share, because a family consists of a husband and a wife. We all take part in the sharing of the things, because our cooperative consists of men and women. So each one brings up an idea. No idea is let down just because it's from a woman or a man (M_VP_2015-04-03).
>
> ***JT: Are there things that men do that women do not do?***
> **Several women:** Nothing!
> **F:** Before there were some things, like constructing a house, a woman would not do. But later on when the war came, many men died and now women do everything.
> (...)
> ***JT: Are there any crops that are typically men's crops or typically women's crops?***
> **F:** Mostly, all the seeds, we plant them equally.
> ***JT: So there is no difference that coffee is more a men's seed and tea is more for women or cassava is more for women and sugar cane is more for men or something like that?***
> **Several women:** We all do it. (FG_VPW_2015-05-14)

During the various meetings with members of marshland cooperatives, gender equality was often confirmed as one of the fundamental principles in their cooperatives. The equality of women and men was repeatedly stressed up to the point that I became more and more suspicious. There was a clear mismatch between generalising statements such as "we all do it" or "we do it equally" and my personal perception of rural everyday life. Indeed, when in the course of the focus groups I started to dig deeper into the daily activities of cooperative members, a more nuanced picture emerged.

This chapter deals with the gendered division of labour in rural Rwanda. The collection of data was initially guided by my interest to learn more about the agricultural production in the marshlands and to understand how labour tasks and responsibilities were organised among the different members of the cooperatives. The chapter therefore provides a gender perspective into the various agricultural activities performed by cooperative members. However, since the agricultural production in the marshlands cannot be viewed in isolation from rhythms and vicissitudes of rural life, my analytical gaze soon wandered beyond the marshland's fringe, up the hills and into the intimate spheres of homes. As I show, even though the division of labour in the marshlands is not very pronounced and the dividing lines between "food" and "cash" crops or between "productive" and "reproductive"

work are anything but sharp, there emerge patterns of gender-specific responsibilities, which are often bound to certain times and places.

7.1. Is Female to Male as Food Crops are to Cash Crops?

This question, some might have noticed, is inspired by Sherry Ortner's famous article titled: "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" In this article, published in 1972, Ortner took a feminist structuralist perspective to explore the universal oppression of women (Ortner 1972). Since then, feminist theory within anthropology has headed on into different directions. I am thus taking up this structuralist question in the first place to demonstrate its limitations.

For many years now, feminist anthropologists have shown how external influences and processes of agrarian change, such as the introduction of new crops, agricultural intensification and the commercialisation of agricultural production, have brought about not only changes in terms of land use but also in terms of gender relations and gender equity (H. Moore and Vaughan 1987; Eleanor Leacock 1988; Guyer et al. 1988; J. Carney 1993). And while some feminist scholars have meticulously described how gender is inscribed in agricultural labour relations, tasks and core responsibilities and control over certain crops, others have gone as far as labelling crops as "women's crops" or "men's crops". Doss criticises this simplistic view, which has become popular in the realm of agricultural development politics. She writes:

> If crops could be categorized as men's and women's crops, this would simplify many things for both policy makers and development economists. We could then distinguish the effects of agricultural policies on men and women, simply by examining the effects of policy on different crops. It would be easy to determine how men and women would be affected by price, weather or pest shocks. Policies could target either men or women, simply by targeting their crops (Doss 2002, 1987).

Following the logic of gender-specific crops, the obvious approach to analyse gender-related consequences of agrarian change in the Rwandan marshlands would be to see whether the priority crops, introduced under the government's CIP (see pages 82 and 118) are regarded as women's or as men's crops. But the matter is much more complex, as the applied subjunctive in Doss' quote as well as my own research findings suggest. What about the crop-specific gendered labour division in Rwanda?

Table 4 shows how cooperative members in the three smaller marshland cooperatives assessed the labour division between women, men and children in the process of agricultural production. The idea for the so-called "activity profiles in agricultural production, processing and marketing" was taken from Holcombe (1994) who used such profiles in the context of development planning. They served to document the complex dynamics of rural production and gender-related labour tasks. For this work, the method was used as part of the focus groups with the cooperatives.

As Holcombe remarks, the results from these "activity profiles" underlie local variation and cannot be generalised (Holcombe 1994, 96). She therefore speaks of "patterns" that are "(…) to be explored at each stage of any planned intervention". The activity profiles I conducted confirm this shortcoming. The results listed in table 4 cannot be understood as solid truths, nor should they mislead us in coming to essentialist conclusions about "female" or "male" crops or tasks. They must be understood as the outcome of a group process of deciding how agricultural procedures and their gender dimension were perceived by the cooperative members. In addition, the presented results show how the cooperative members remembered and perceived these labour patterns while they were away from the fields. This, of course, differs from the results I would have obtained by noting down my observations of the cooperative members' effective activities in the fields. On a positive note, the discussions evoked by this method equally created valuable data and insights about **why** certain tasks were rather ascribed to women or to men or to children, who also partake in the cultivation process. They reveal additional factors, such as household composition or marital status that may influence the labour division. Further, the discussions illustrate **how** gender-specific labour tasks underlie a normative understanding of gender roles. And while, on the one hand, the activity profiles exhibit several fluctuations and discrepancies, primarily due to the fact that each of the cooperatives and even their members had their own strategies of working and dealing with different challenges, on the other hand there emerge recurring patterns. These patterns or "tendencies" enriched by the discussions among the cooperative members are presented on the following pages.[112]

First of all, the activity profiles support Doss's critique: Not a single crop was said or presented to be exclusively grown by women or by men. This also reflects my own observation in Rutunga, and most particularly the cooperatives' fields. One may therefore question carelessly applied labels of "women's" or "men's" crops in Rwanda. All crops were said to involve both women's and men's labour. This kind of mutual assistance in agricultural labour is not a new phenomenon. Vansina writes about the gendered division of labour in the fields of pre-colonial Rwanda[113]:

> The division of labor by gender was not absolutely rigid. In general, men and women collaborated on major tasks such as the clearing of fields, working with the hoe, harvesting, and perhaps threshing. But central Rwanda on the Eve of the Emergence of the Kingdom certain tasks belonged

112 It would be interesting to see if these patterns stand up to statistical analysis. Such an analysis then ideally should contain background information about a person's marriage status, age, household composition, and access to/control over land.

113 He describes the division of labour among herders as more refined: "Women were not directly involved in caring for the herd and were absolutely forbidden from milking the cows. But they tended the fire in the cattle pen and mucked it out. They also cleaned and maintained the houses, which included, for instance, manufacturing the houses' woven screens, took care of the milk containers, which had to be kept in pristine condition, stored the milk needed to feed the calves, churned the butter, and exchanged the butter for honey. (…) [W]ithin the enclosure, the wife of the leader of the family was also the mistress who directed all the tasks, assisted by the female members of the household, and, in well-to-do households, by slave maids" (Vansina 2004, 27).

	Bright Future Cooperative								**Vegetables for Peace Cooperative**						**Sweet Salvation Cooperative**					
Tasks ↓	women		men		women		men		women		men		men		*women*		*men*		*men*	
Crops →	*soya*	*aubergines*	*aubergines*	*cabbage*	*bananas (h)*	*beans (h)*	*French beans (h)*	*potatoes (h)*	*sorghum*	*sugar cane*	*sugar cane*	*soya*	*beans (h)*	*bananas (h)*	*sorghum (h)*	*sugar cane*	*sugar cane*	*sweet potatoes*	*cassava (h)*	*tomatoes (h)*
Clearing the water outlets	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	/	/	/	/	=	=	♦♦●	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	/	♦♦	♦♦♦!	♦♦♦!	♦♦	/
Preparing the soil	♠	=	♦●●	=●●	=	=	=	=●●	=●	=●	=●	=	=	♦♦	=	=	♦♦	♦♦♦!	♦♦	♦♦●
Applying manure	=●	=●	♦●	=●	=	=	♦●	=●	=●●	=●	♠●	=	♠♠●	=	=●	=●	/	♦●	♦♦●	♦♦●
Seeding/planting	♠♠♠!	♦	♦●	=●●	♦	♠♠♠!	=●	♦●	=●	=●	=●	=	=	=	=	=	=	♠♠♠!	♦♦♦!	=●
Transplanting	/	=	♦	♦	♦♦♦!	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	♦♦♦!	/	=	/	/	/	=●
Watering	=●●	=	♦●●	=●●	/	/	♦●	/	♦●	/	/	●●♦	♦♦●	/	/	=●	/	/	/	=●
Placing sticks	=	=	/	/	=	=	/	/	/	/	/	♦♦♦!	♦♦♦!	♦♦!●●	/	=●	/	/	/	♦♦♦!
Pest control	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	/	♦♦	♦♦♦!	♦♦♦!	/	/	♦♦♦!	♦♦♦!	♦♦♦!	/	/	♦♦♦!	/	/	/	♦♦♦!●
Weeding	♠♠	=	♦●	=●	♠	♠	=	=	=●●	= ●●	♠●	♠♠	♠♠	=	♠	♠♠	♠	♠	♠♠ ●	♠♠ ●
Scaring brids	♠●●	♠♠!●●	♦●●	●●●!	/	♠●●	♠!●●●	/	●●●!	/	/	●●●!	●●●♠!	/	●●●!	●●●!	/	/	/	♠●●●
Trimming	=	=	♦♦♦	/	♦	/	/	♦	/	/	/	/	/	♦♦♦!	/	♦♦♦!	/	/	/	♦♦♦!
Harvesting	♠●	=●●	♦●●	=●●	♦	♠●	♦♦	=●	=●●	=●●	♠●●●	=●●	♠●●	=●●	=●●	=●●	=●●●!	=●●	=●●	♦♦●●
Processing	♠♠	/	/	=	/	♠♠	/	/	♠●●	/	/	♠	♠♠●	/	♦♠♠●*	♠♠!●	/	/	♠♠!●●	/
Selecting seeds	♠♠♠!	/	♦♦♦!	=	=	♠♠♠!	♠♠♠!	=	♠♠♠!	/	♠♠♠!	♠♠♠!	♠	♦♦♦!	♠♠♠!	♠♠♠!	♦♦♦!	♦♦♦!	♦♦♦!	♦♦♦!
Storing	=	/	/	=	=	=	♦♦	/	♦♦♦!	/	/	=	=	/	♦	♦	/	/	♦♦	/
Selling/marketing	=	=	♦●	♦●●	♦	=	♦♦	=	♠●●	♠!●●●	♠●●●	♠	=	♦●●	=●●	♠●●	♠♠●●●	♠♠●	♠♠●●	♦●

= **equally done by women and men**

! **exclusively done by either women, men or children**

(h) **hillside fields**

marshlands

♠ **rather done by women**
♠♠ **more done by women**
♠♠♠ **mostly done by women**

♦ **rather done by men**
♦♦ **more done by men**
♦♦♦ **mostly done by men**

● **children help a bit**
●● **children help a lot**
●●● **mostly done by children**

***** Men do the beating, women the drying, men bring the water, women cook the sorghum and children help with everything.

Table 4: Activity profiles of the cooperatives in agricultural production, processing and marketing in the marshlands and on the hillsides

Guide for a better reading of table 4:

On the left side of the table, we see the different activities or steps in the process of cultivation. The upper line indicates the different cooperatives with whom this exercise was conducted during the focus groups. The focus groups took place separately for the women and men of the cooperatives, which is indicated in the second line. The third line indicates the crops the cooperative members chose to "cultivate" for the exercise. I had asked the cooperative members to chose the crops for which they wanted to elaborate the production process. In some cases I suggested crops. I asked the cooperative members to elaborate the working patterns for crops in the marshland (light blue background) as well as on the hillsides (h).

For the exercise each task had been drawn on a card, so that the illiterate members could also follow the process. Beans of different colours were used to indicate how many women, men and children were involved in a specific task done for a specific crop. For each crop, we first discussed the order of the crop-related tasks before the cooperative members decided together how many beans for women, men and children should be laid beside the task-card. The results are presented in the table's main part. However, for reasons of better clarity, the symbols used instead of the beans already present aggregated and condensed results. This means: If the table shows only the symbol ♠ , which indicates that the activity was rather done by women, the original activity profile included beans for men as well as for women, but slightly more beans for women. Correspondingly ♦♦ does not mean that women were not involved in this task, but that men were considerably more involved in that task that women. Only where an exclamation mark "**!**" was used was the other gender totally absent. Finally, the table also considers children's activities. Children's contribution in variuos activities during the cultivation process must not be underestimated. There even exist activities that were said to be exclusively done by children, such as scaring the birds to protect the ripening fruits.

For a more detailed overview of this method and the context in which it was used see chapter 2.7.1.

Box 3: Resource map guideline

> to one gender or the other. Men sowed cereals and women planted, men burned the fields and took care of the banana groves, and women weeded, winnowed, stored the produce in granaries, prepared food, and brewed. Women were also mistresses in their house and its compound. But, on the other hand, they could not hold claim over any land and their personal status was mostly determined by the fact that they were always dependent on a man, whether as daughters, spouses, or mothers. (Vansina 2004, 24f).

Danielle de Lame writes about her observations in Rwanda in the 1980s:

> There is not much division of labor. Gender is the main differential factor: it is strict when based on ritual taboos or on habits connected with the system of representation, and less so when chores are simply adjusted to the supposed strength and abilities of each individual, age being a major criterion here. There are so many varied activities (upkeep, farm work in rotation with another farmer, paid work, construction, farming tasks of all sorts, school attendance, minding the animals, going to market, visits) that the active members of the family are rarely all in a same field at the same time. They work by twos or threes, making sure to achieve the optimal combination of the different abilities (de Lame 2004, 183)

Both quotes show that even in earlier times, the division of labour in Rwandan agriculture has never been based exclusively on gender. There was a lot of collaboration between women and men, and the way daily activities were shared also depended on individual abilities. This understanding was also reflected in the discussions of how women and men share agricultural work today. "We do it together!" the women of the Vegetable for Peace cooperative called out, "like if it is you and your husband, the wife applies manure and the husband does the seeding, or they do both activities at the same time", one of them explained in more detail (FG_VPW_2015-05-14).

However, the results in the activity profiles likewise indicated that women and men did not always contribute their labour to the same extent. Differences not only related to the kind of crop that was planted, but also to the kinds of tasks the cropping process encompassed. Beans and soya in the Bright Future cooperative as well as the sweet potatoes in the Sweet Salvation Cooperative were noted as being planted by women alone. And if we are looking at the selling/marketing, for instance, vegetables such as aubergines, tomatoes, or French beans, which in the area of Rutunga are mainly produced to supply urban markets in Kigali, were said to be rather sold by men, while again crops such as soya, beans, or sweet potatoes, which are largely cultivated for home consumption, even though they are also offered at the local markets, were said to be sold equally or more often by women.

We can thus argue that while it makes little sense in the Rwandan context to clearly define crops as either female or male, there exist task-specific gendered labour patterns for specific crops. And if we look at these crops in more detail, the pattern seems to be in line with the more general often-made distinction between cash crops and food crops: men were declared to be more active in the production and selling of cash crops, whereas women were described as being more engaged in the cultivation of crops such as beans, sweet potatoes or soya. In Kinyarwanda these crops were often subsumed under the label of *ingandurarugo*.[114]

7.2. On Defining *Ingandurarugo*

> "So *ingandurarugo* means in Kinyarwanda 'food crops', if I am not mistaken, as opposed to these 'cash crops'. I don't know in what sense to you want me to elaborate on that?" the Gender Coordinator at MINAGRI wondered.
> ***"How it is related to gender as well?" I specified my question.***
> "Ah. Yah, it's a good question", she noted, and continued: "Actually, there are those crops that women see, that are really for the feeding of the household. Those include some beans, maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes and all that. And women are actually involved in such farming activities. But as I told you, when it comes to the selling exercise: men they have got this kind of authority and control, power, that they can even sell what the family was supposed to be eating. And this becomes like a burden to a wife. It is not a general case, but sometimes it arrives" (I_GC_2015-06-18).

The binary construction of food versus cash crops and female versus male crops, which has often been linked to the idea that it is mostly women who are responsible for the first whereas men are more interested in the latter is, however, problematic. Ascriptions of that kind are stereotypes that tell us relatively little about the occurrence of such patterns. Such is the idea that women are not interested in cash crops closely related to the colonial image of "(…) the African woman as 'rural subsistence farmer' (…) that historians themselves adopted as 'the norm'" (Allman, Geiger, and

114 In Rwanda, the distinction between food and cash crops dates back to the introduction of tea and coffee by the colonial regime, which were almost exclusively cultivated for export (GoR and MINAGRI 2004, 16). In everyday life the distinction between food or cash crops is far less clear. I therefore preferably speak of subsistence- or cash-**oriented** crops.

Musisi 2002b, 7). Allman et al. challenge this normative perception as being way too narrow. In the introduction of their edited volume *Women in African Colonial Histories* they argue that, in fact, the "(…) female subsistence farmer emerges as nuanced, multifaceted, and complicated. She is not defined solely by, or understood only in terms of, her labor as an agricultural producer" (Allman, Geiger, and Musisi 2002b, 7)

Also Villamor warns against such gender-stereotypical presentations of "female food crops" versus "male cash crops". She argues that crop preferences are not directly linked to gender but to different risk preferences:

> Risk preferences significantly differ based on gender, with growing evidence that women are individually more risk-averse and less prone to competition than men. (...) Particularly when resources are limited or lacking, gender differences in risk aversion become relevant for decision making (Villamor et al. 2014, 131).

As outlined earlier (see chapter 3.4), the government's envisaged transformation of the Rwandan marshlands involves a shift from individual or family-based, subsistence-oriented production towards large-scale production of "high-value" crops under the supervision of cooperatives. This new agricultural production setup in the cooperatives involves many new risks, as Ansoms et al. (2014, 179) demonstrate (see figure 11).

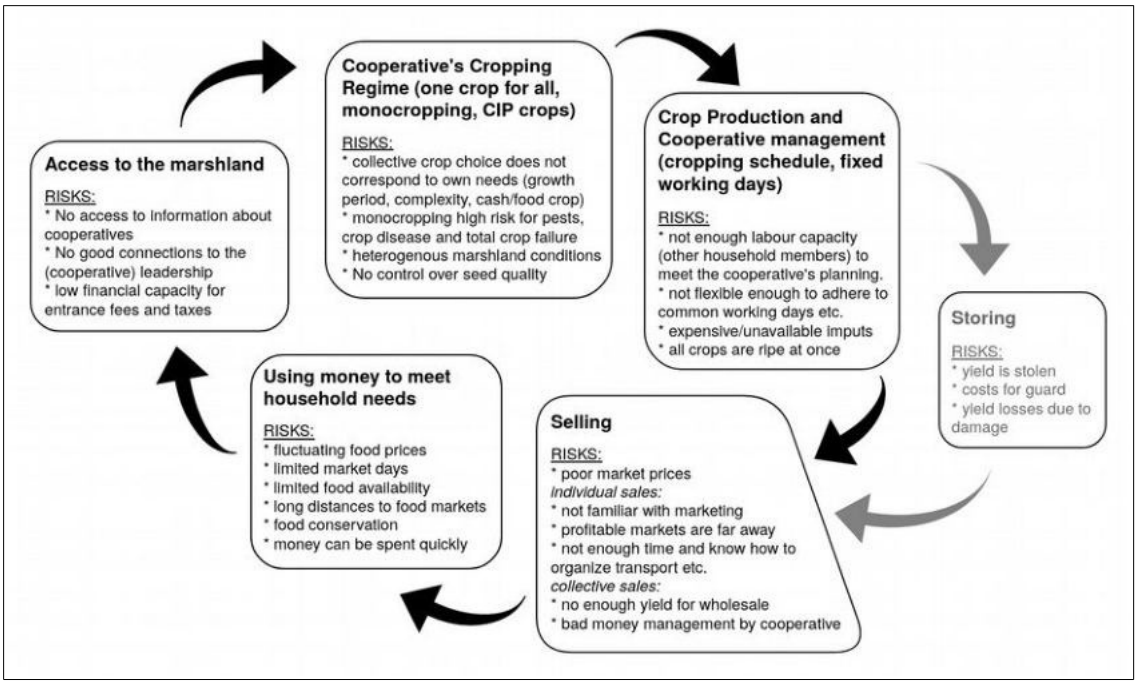

Figure 11: Women's risks in marshland cooperatives. Figure based on Ansoms, Cioffo et al. (2014, 179).

These risks range from financial risks (such as not having the money to pay the cooperative fees or to buy seeds and pesticides, fluctuating prices on the market for both the sale and purchase of food, financial mismanagement of the cooperative), to environmental risks (crop diseases, floods,

droughts or other environmental disasters), and social and organisational risks (having a poor personal network, not being informed about important decisions, difficulties in adhering to the timing of cooperative production). As Ansoms et al. argue, these risks can get poor and vulnerable households into desperate straits.Since female-headed households in Rwanda tend to be more vulnerable than male headed households, the government's impetus toward planting more marketable but also riskier crops in Rwanda's marshlands has gender-specific consequences.

Similarly, a Rwandan social scientist, who has extensively studied local perspectives on Rwanda's agrarian transformation process, noted during a personal conversation that many of the rural households had formerly used the marshlands to cultivate *ingandurarugo*. As he explained, *ingandurarugo* crops are characterised by a short growth phase and provide food over several months. Sweet potatoes, for instance, could be planted in April and harvested step by step from July until September. According to him, many farmers' families therefore regarded sweet potatoes as a good crop to sustain themselves over the long dry season, whereas the revenue that was gained from the government's new priority crops, such as maize, often lasted no longer than a month (Rwandan scholar who prefers to be anonymous).

The MINAGRI's Gender Coordinator drew a very different picture of sweet potatoes:

> *Ibijumba* [sweet potatoes] is a food crop that sometimes we used to discard because it can not be conserved. If you cultivate *ibjumba* it cannot be there for four, five months. We wanted something that can help people to not experience hunger every year and the maize was the only crop which can resist, you know. The potatoes, you can cultivate them; in one, two months you are okay, but what after that? (I_GC_2015-06-18).

It is interesting to note that while the Gender Coordinator had listed maize as a food crop, the Rwandan scholar's account presented maize rather as a cash crop. Also the cooperative members did not always agree on whether a certain crop should be labelled as an *ingandurarugo* or not. "Is cassava even included in *ingandurarugo*?" a cooperative member opened up the debate during the focus group with the men of the Bright Future cooperative. "What is not included in *ingandurarugo*?" another one countered. "Cassava" several others replied at once. "I think that cassava is not an *ingandurarugo* it is an *ingengabukungu* (cash crop) instead, because the roots take like two years to grow", one of them explained (FG_BFM_2015-06-12).

This little discussion shows that *ingandurarugo* does not only refer to crops that are cultivated for food rather than for cash, a distinction which, in most cases, was flickering and far from clear. It shows that *ingandurarugo* also implied a temporal aspect: the growth period of a certain crop, so to speak, which in the case of cassava made it impossible to grow and harvest in the short term in response to early signs of food shortages.

With regard to the government's idea of introducing better storable crops such as maize, the experience with the Bright Future cooperative outlined in chapter 5.4 has shown that the cooperative members objected to the new maize "obligation". As a cash crop, it had proved unprofitable, even more so because almost the entire valley was called to cultivate maize at the same time, while as a food crop it was also not appreciated by the cooperative members. The three cooperatives had therefore developed their own strategies to justify the cultivation of sweet potatoes and other *ingandurarugo* in their marshlands. The Bright Future cooperative cultivated sweet potatoes in some parts of their marshland that apparently were too wet to cultivate other crops (M_BF_2015-03-10). The president of the Vegetables for Peace cooperative noted that they could not grow vegetables throughout the entire year because the soil would get fatigued and in order to restore the soil they would also grow *ingandurarugo*, even though there was not much profit in these kinds of crops (M_VP_2015-04-03). And well hidden in the midst of the sugar cane field that belonged to the Sweet Salvation cooperative, I noticed a small plot which obviously looked different and on closer inspection turned out to be ridges planted with sweet potatoes (M_SS_2015-04-29). Considering women's high level of involvement in the cultivation, harvesting and selling of sweet potatoes, the new maize policy appears in a new light. Of course, it would be very interesting, to have and compare a cooperative's activity profile in the process of cultivating maize. Yet in not a single focus group did the members of the cooperatives come up with the idea of cultivating maize for the activity profile – a fact that comes as no surprise given the unpopularity of this crop.

Let us now turn back to the activity profiles.

7.3. Heavy Tasks and Hard-working Women

If, instead of the crops, we look at the different tasks in the cultivation and post-harvesting process, the gender-specific tendencies turn out to be even clearer. Pest control was generally ascribed to be done first and foremost by men – a fact I could confirm from my own observations. Clearing the water outlets also was said to be mostly done by men, except from the women of the Vegetables for Peace cooperative, who listed this task as being done by all members to the same extent. Women again were perceived to dominate in the task of weeding. And, as I was told by a cooperative woman, there also was a difference in the way the weeding was accomplished: while men would squat to reach the ground, women's legs would remain extended while bending their entire torso to free the soil from weeds (FG_SSW_2015-05-24). Guyer once stated about the labour division among the Beti of Southern Cameroon: "Women's work is still dominated by the symbolism of bending: over the short-handled hoe, the cooking fire, the grinding stone and the groundnut harvest spread out on the ground to dry" (Guyer et al. 1988, 250). This "symbolism of bending" holds true

for the weeding and also for the sweeping, which in Rwanda was generally perceived as a women's task. However, such physical ascriptions theoretically exist but they are not a general rule, for when my assistant and I left the woman's place, I noticed that her son, a young man, also bent down to weed.

Furthermore, the gendered division of labour was not always perceived in the same way between the various members of the marshland cooperatives. Men's answers in the activity profile often emphasised men's greater contribution, while women more often emphasised that tasks were done together by all of them. A good example for this tendency are the aubergines, which were chosen by the women and the men of the Bright Future cooperative (see table 4, columns 3 and 4). The different outcomes also derive from the fact that "equal participation" in a certain task was not always understood the same way: fertilising the fields with manure, for instance, was done by both women and men. Yet some men of the cooperative argued that since they had more energy than women, the quantity of manure they carried was higher than the quantity the women would carry in the same time. They therefore concluded that the men of the cooperative contributed more to this task than women (FG_BFM_2015-06-12). The following conversation between the president (P) and a male cooperative member (M) further explores the issue of how "energy" or "strength" relates to gender-specific working patterns:

> **JT:** Is there a difference in how women cultivate and men cultivate, in their actions?
> **M:** In cultivating?
> **P:** The energy we were talking about ….
> **M:** Yeah about that energy: Sometimes a woman is strong and more hard-working than a man, while also sometimes men are stronger than women.
> **P:** But the more powerful are men.
> **M:** Yeah, mostly men are more powerful.
> **P:** Even the time to go home is different.
> **M:** Yeah, a woman goes at 10AM or 11AM and the men remain there.
> **P:** And mostly men work more hours than women and use more energy than women.
> (FG_BFM_2015-06-19).

The little discussion shows that while men were generally perceived as the ones who were physically more powerful, they also acknowledged that **sometimes** women could also be strong and hard-working. The notion of being "powerful", "strong" or "more energetic" thereby referred to the biological difference between women and men, whereas the notion of hard-working comprised more an attitude. The discussion also reveals that while the president had a very clear idea about how attributes of energy, strength and power were linked to gender, the other cooperative member mitigated the differences and declared them to be less evident. The discussion equally addressed the effective time the women and men spent in the field. What was not said, however, was that most of the women actually left the fields earlier to go home in order to start preparing the food. When discussing daily routines and tasks in the context of the "day activity clocks" (see end of chapter 2.7.1) women would often note that they left the fields "to go home and prepare the meal", whereas men

never mentioned the part of the "cooking" but usually "found the food ready" or simply "went home to eat". In some rare cases, also women could find the food already prepared – that is, when one of their children had done the cooking.

Notions such as "energy" and "strength" also came up in other situations during my research to explain why "light" and "easy" tasks were done by women whereas the "heavy" tasks were done by men. Hitimana, the young man I have introduced in chapter 4.2, explained the labour division in the context of a foreign investment project in Kajevuba marshland: "Women were assigned to light work, for example weeding, putting the manure on the plants and harvesting. Because for example a woman cannot load things on the lorry when men are around, or spray the pesticides cause normally the sprayer is heavy" (I_H_2016-01-13). Diane, an old woman who had been working in the same project, noted: "We all did the job of cultivating, but sometimes men did the heavy work like cleaning the drainage while women planted and cultivated" (I_D_2016-02-27). Kuiper (2019, 173), in her work on agroindustrial labour in the flower industry at lake Naivasha/Kenia similarly notes about the gendered division of labour that women were considered "too delicate" for certain tasks, and she continued: "This division of labour, in which jobs that were perceived to be dangerous or heavy were not accessible to women, was never challenged".

The peculiar thing about this gender specific labour division in Rwanda was that it was considered "natural" at the same time as it was challenged, at least on a discursive level. The following debate with female members of the Vegetables for Peace cooperative shows how the performance of "hard" or "heavy"[115] activities by women, was understood to be emancipatory:

> **W1:** Like, before we weren't allowed to cultivate, saying that we would get dirty or that we were weak, but now some women cultivate exactly like men do or even more than them.
> ***JT: In the past women were not allowed to go to the marshland?***
> **Several women at once:** Yes, in order to not get dirty, they used to prepare the house and everything related to milk, cook food, wash themselves, wash the children and clean everything.
> **W1:** Now we have started working like men. We don't sit and do nothing any more. We cultivate, sell products, do farming... We don't sit down any more.
> ***JT: When did it start?***
> **W1:** The change? (...) Since 1981, that's when people started to cultivate and to change. (...) After the war in 1995, when our husbands were killed, we started working with everything we had in us.
> ***JT: So then your grandmothers were not cultivating in the fields?***
> **W1:** They didn't cultivate.
> **W2:** They only planted the seeds.
> **W1:** And also in a very small plot.
> **W2:** No woman cultivated bananas at that time.
> **W1:** But they at least took care of milk and small animals but they never did heavy work.
> **W3:** And also they smashed the sorghum using the traditional tool.
> **W4:** Like those women from Kigali that wake up and cook tea then sit down (she laughed).
> **Others:** From Kigali?
> **W4:** Yes what else do they do? They wake up and light the stove.
> **W2:** They wash themselves, wash clothes.

115 In Kinyarwanda, "*gukomera*" refers to being strong, difficult and hard at the same time. "*Akazi kenshi*" refers to a lot of work as well as for hard and heavy work.

> **W1:** They work. Even after work, they also do the house work. They also work hard.
> **W2:** They also have some tasks to do!
> **W4:** A woman wakes up and lights the stove and prepares breakfast for her husband. She goes to work... They spend the whole day sitting and then they say that they have worked. Is there any work they really do?
> **W1:** Some of them even take care of their husbands and children and then after that they study. (...) They spend the whole day doing all that and then in the night they iron their husband's clothes.
> **Others:** They really do some work and they mentally get tired.
> ***JT: So what is hard work?***
> **W1:** The hard work to us? Yes we work hard because we have where to work at! (*most probably she had meant the marshland and more generally their access to arable land which is not self-evident in modern day Rwanda*).
> **All together:** Cultivating, cultivating in the marshland, getting cow grass... when we cultivate the harvesting is more difficult and energy-draining. It takes a lot of energy to prepare the harvested crops (FG_VPW_2015-05-21).

This debate illustrates how the range of activities that were ascribed to women have changed over the past decades. In line with the general perception from the literature, the genocide was noted as an important factor to account for this change. Yet, as one of the female cooperative members explained, women's more active engagement had set in earlier, already in the 1980s. According to the cooperative women's perspective, their "traditional" agricultural activities were few, and they claimed that their grandmothers had not been cultivating in the marshland. As we know from other sources (see chapter 3.5), this description is not generally valid. Helen Codere's (1963) collected Rwandan autobiographies from the 1960s show that only women from better-situated families could afford not to work in the fields.

As the cooperative women further noted, their new responsibilities in modern-day Rwanda have made them very occupied with work. "We don't sit down anymore!" one of the women had said and she had sounded both proud and drained at the same time. The debate among the female cooperative members further points to the differences between women in rural and in urban contexts. According to one of them, the "mental" work done by the "women from Kigali" could not be classified as "hard" work. This view was contested by the other women of the cooperative. However, they all agreed that the agricultural activities they now did in the marshland as well as the harvesting and processing of the crops truly were to be considered "hard" work.

7.4. "We Never Sit, and We Never Talk"

The women in the Sweet Salvation cooperative equally emphasizsd the enormous work-load they had to accomplish, most especially in the beginning of the sunny season. One of the widows recalled the various activities she had to do once the rains ceased and the major cultivation period in the marshlands started:

> In the sunny season we have to do the watering: that is why we have a lot of work to do, we also have to put the pesticides in the marshland because that's what we do when the seeds are starting to

> grow. So we have to carry those pumps to get the pesticides in the gardens, either that or we use the watering cans to water our seeds. And also not only that, but also on the hilly areas. It's the time when crops like sorghum and beans are also getting ripe, between June and July. Then we also have to harvest the sorghum, and maybe in July we are trying to harvest the beans and also to harvest the potatoes. So most of the time that's what we are doing in the sunny season. Especially those who work in the marshland, we never sit, and we never talk (FG_SSW_2015-05-12).

This as well as the earlier statements show how women's engagement in marshland agriculture comes with a lot of efforts. The many kinds of marshland-related work further overlap with the post-harvest tasks such as the processing of the harvest or the selection of the seeds, which, according to the agricultural activity profiles (table 4) were primarily ascribed to women.

"I can't say, no", the Gender Coordinator at the MINAGRI said, when I asked her whether there was something like typical men's tasks or women's tasks in agriculture. But then she countered:

> But all the tasks can be shared between men and women in Rwanda. Although we are also struggling to encourage people to change their minds in terms of sharing roles at home. Actually the challenge is still at the household level. They go together to the farm, but when they come back home, then the woman is overloaded by these household chores. That's where the problem acutally is. Even the post-harvest work is more a task done by a woman at the household level, as compared to a man. We are struggling to change those negative aspects of the culture or the mindset. (…) But it is a process. It doesn't change in one second (I_GC_2015-06-18).

This statement shows that while on the one hand, Rwandan women nowadays have better access to land and are more involved in agricultural activities than before, on the other hand their workload at home has not changed. The Gender Coordinator therefore concludes that one of the core issues that remains to be resolved is the unequal distribution of labour tasks at the household level. Note here, that the MINAGRI Gender Coordinator's perspective conflicts with the statements by other officers and cooperative members I quoted in chapter 6. The Gender Coordinator challenges the fact that men are not more involved in household-related activities. She further noted that this was an issue of the "culture" or the "mindset".

"*Mu mitekereeze* – it's in their mindset"; "These things are like that culturally!"; "They think that they are doing what they have to do", some female cooperative members of the Vegetables for Peace Cooperative explained. Just previously, one of them had told me that obviously girls would "(…) carry their young siblings on their backs" whereas boys would "(…) take a machete and go looking for some wood to build a house". "A girl grows up thinking that she has to do all the housework and also she knows very well that the time will come and she will also carry her own children", one of the women further explained. "And then if it's a woman building a house she turns into a man?" I asked to challenge this logic. "No", she said laughing, "we build houses as well because there is a gender balance. (…) Some women build houses and sometimes they do the roofing because if a woman studied construction, she does what she followed up on. (…) Before, no

woman was allowed to go on the rooftop of the house; if she did, it was considered a scandal, but now everyone has the right to do what they want and they also get some money from it to take care of their families" (FG_VPW_2015-05-21).

Such statements often left me somewhat confused. For me, these different arguments were incompatible, and I wondered how the cooperative members could be so definite in their argument about culturally formed gender norms at the same time as they used gender equality as an ever valid argument whenever these norms were not followed. What concerned me most was that these different explanations were not put forward by different people, with different thoughts and opinions, they were uttered by one and the same person. What to me sounded like a contradiction, to them apparently was not. And only after some more and similar incidences did I start to get the point. For them, gender equality was a vision, a principle rather than a lived reality: women could construct houses, in principle, but only if they had studied construction. Their husbands and sons could do the cooking, but only if all other female members in the household were absent. Women nowadays did grow and sell bananas, but only because their husbands were dead or "no longer around". Women could go and have a drink at the centre, but they would have to make sure that at home, everything was in order. Women's opportunities had changed, but not their responsibilities.

This double-faced understanding once more points to a gap: women's lived realities on the ground were, at times, hard to reconcile with the public discourse on equal rights and opportunities for both women and men. The cooperative members' statements further clarify that the gendered division of labour intermingles with meanings of male and female behaviour, attributes and responsibilities so that these subjects can hardly be considered independently. This also concerns the labour relations in the marshlands: even if the marshlands are not spaces where gender disparities are the most evident (probably also because most of the female members were widows), they are not equal spaces simply because they are part of a bigger system where the gendered division of labour remains effective. Thus, one of the core insights that emerged from the first round of focus groups was that my initial focus on agricultural production in the marshlands provided only a very narrow picture of gender relations in rural Rwanda. The marshlands appear as rather artificial spaces where gender equality is prescribed by state policies (see chapter 6) even if it is not yet fully achieved. Gender-based imbalances are detectable yet not very dominant. However, they do appear more clearly once the agricultural production in the marshlands is put into the larger context of rural everyday life.

In trying to develop a more holistic understanding of how the marshlands were embedded in the specific requirements of rural life, my focus gradually shifted away from the marshland. From a methodological perspective, this required a continual process of zooming in and out, and in again, and out again. Zooming into the marshlands, observing the peculiarities of the agricultural activities

and dynamics there, searching for the details. Zooming out to see how these activities and dynamics relate to the people's homesteads on the hills, to the small centres, to the networks of roads and paths, state institutions, to the marketplace, the church etc. By and by, the members of the cooperatives became, for me, individuals with distinctive faces, names and habits. They taught me not only how seasonality regulated the types of crops they planted, but also how wet and dry season shaped their daily working routines or were related to weddings and other festivities. I gradually came to understand the Rwandan marshlands as part of an interrelated system between the hills and the valley bottoms.

7.5. Localities and Temporalities of Gender

To obtain a better understanding of how the marshlands were part of a bigger picture, the second round of focus groups took place in the home of one of the cooperative members. Following a walk around the homestead, where the cooperative members would point out anything they considered relevant in their lives, we sat down together and drew a resource map (see chapter 2.7.1) that linked the homestead to other relevant places and institutions such as the market, the marshland, the church, the local leaders and so on. Two examples of such resource maps can be found below.[116] The first one (figure 12) was drawn by female cooperative members, and the second one (figure 13) by the men of the same cooperative. The resource maps picture the cooperative members' relatedness in their rural setting in what concerns access to resources or flows of cash, goods and services.

Originally such maps were designed for household interviews (Lightfood, Feldman, and Abedin 1994). The fact that I decided to use them in a group setting had both positive and negative sides. On the positive side, the cooperative members enjoyed drawing the maps together and it stimulated interesting discussions that provided rich material for my analysis. Extracts of these discussions are found throughout this work. The diagrams further helped me to get acquainted with the various dependencies, social and business networks on a Rwandan hill. On the other side, the fact that the diagram does not depict a particular household/cooperative member but emerged from a group process with different people and different personal backgrounds somewhat blurred the differences between and within genders. I think that this is one of the reasons why the two diagrams ended up looking more alike than I had originally expected.[117] Nevertheless, they do reveal some gender-specific differences. In the following I present and discuss the most central of these differences, also taking into consideration the focus groups and resource maps I did with the other cooperatives as well as the participatory methods I used, most particularly the day activity clocks and the spatial time-allocation games (see page 52).

116 For reasons of clarity, I reproduced a digital version of the original maps.

117 Retrospectively, it would have been wise to separate the widows from the other female cooperative members or to make a distinction between wealthier cooperative members and poorer ones. In some cases these differences were addressed in the discussions, but the maps themselves represent a mixed version of these perspectives.

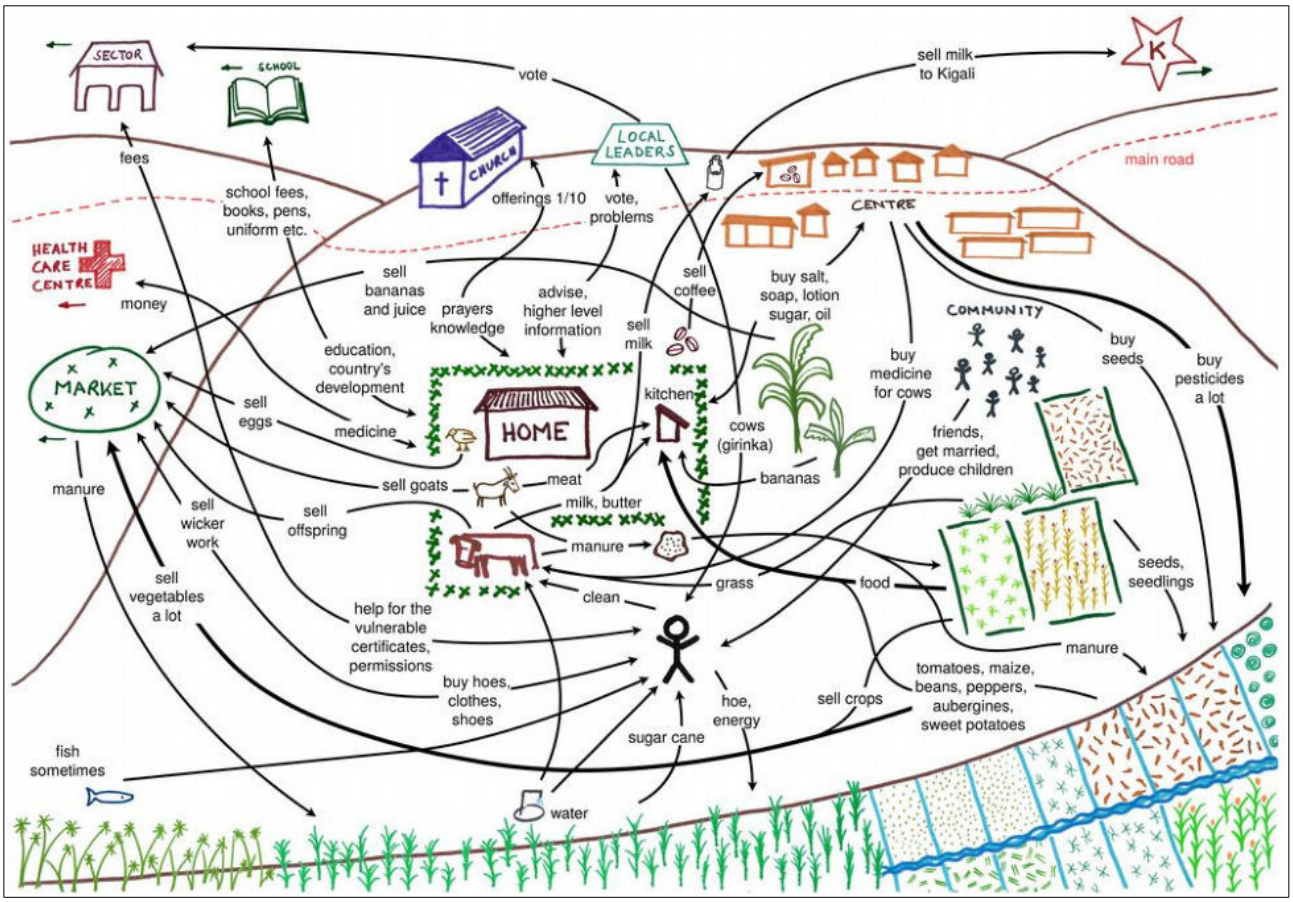

Figure 12: Resource map of cooperative women

Guide for a better reading of the maps:

In their lower part, the maps show the valley with the cooperative's marshland where sugar cane and different varieties of vegetables are grown. As the arrows indicate, these either are sold at different markets or provide food for the cooperative members' families. The homestead called *urugo*, is located at the centre of the map. Apart from the family members (who are not made explicit in the map) animals such as cows (if it is a wealthy family), or smaller animals such as goats, pigs and chickens are also part of the *urugo*. The physical boundary of the *urugo* is usually fenced by hedges. The cooperative member stands in front of the *urugo*.

As is typical for most homesteads in Rutunga, the banana plantation is located directly adjacent to the *urugo*, so that the precious banana plants can be easily maintained and supplied with manure (household waste in some cases mixed with cow/animal dung). Close by the homestead, we find the hillside fields which are cultivated during the rainy seasons. On these we find sorghum, sweet potatoes, beans, cassava, and also vegetables such as tomatoes or aubergines. Coffee was also one of the crops grown on the hills of Rutunga.

The upper portion of the map represents the top of the hill, where we find a little commercial centre consisting of a few houses, shops and bars lined up directly next to the main road. The main road (red dashed line) runs along the top of Rutunga's hills. It connects the small rural centres and markets with the urban ones in Kigali. Three times a week there is a regional market in Rutunga, located further west along the main road (figure 12). The big markets of Kigali lie further away in the other direction along the main road (figure 13). On top of the hill, there also are churches, schools, a health care centre, and the sector office.

Many arrows lead across the diagrams. They symbolise how things are used, what is obtained from where, and what, in turn, needs to be given. They show, for instance, that the cooperative members in figure 13 pay taxes to the sector to obtain the use-rights for the marshland. Bananas are eaten but also used to brew beer which is sold to the local bars in the little centre or at the local market. The arrows show how cooperative members give their "vote" and their *umuganda*-day labour to the local leaders, who in turn provide them with advice, information and problem counselling. In figure 12, they also show how expenses are made for school fees, teaching material and appropriate clothes to send the children to school so that hopefully they learn something and can contribute to the country's future development.

Box 4: Resource map guideline

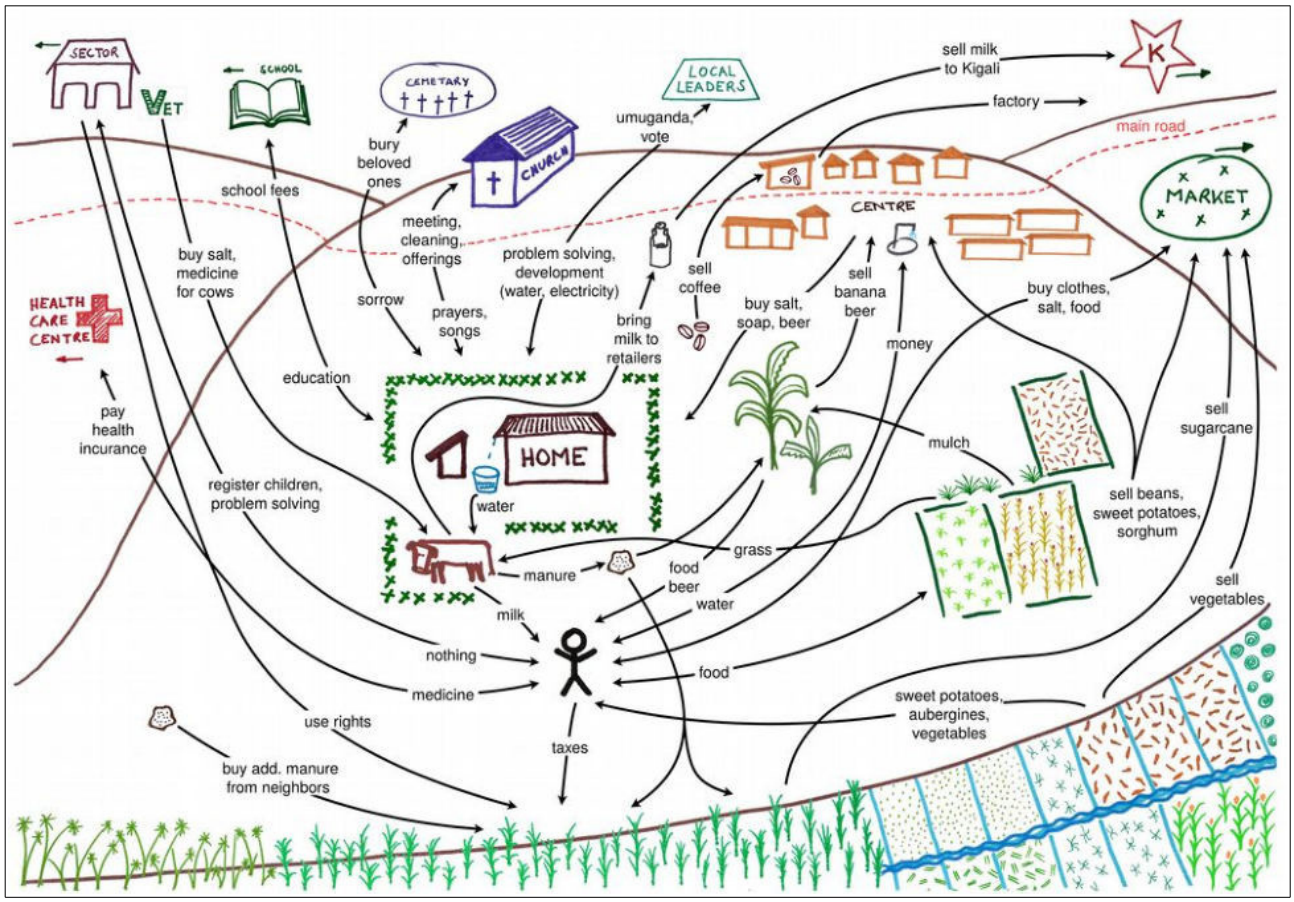

Figure 13: Resource map of cooperative men

7.5.1 Markets as Gendered Places

One of the differences that appears on the two maps was that while women had referred to the local market of Rutunga and consequently placed the market on the left side of the diagram, the men of the cooperative had located the market in the other direction, where, in some further distance away, we find the urban markets of Kigali. As some men of the cooperative explained, the highest profit was obtained in the urban markets. These, however, were far away, and the act of selling there took much more time and was worthwhile only if they could sell a larger quantity of their yields. If money was needed quickly they would rather sell a smaller part of their harvest at the regional market, or, if they really needed money quickly, at the little centre, with was the least profitable option (FG_VPM_2015-06-16).

The fact that the women rather situated their selling activities at the regional market of Rutunga was also related to the spatial attachment to their homes. From the spatial time allocation game it became clear that women spent much more time at the *urugo* than men. The day activity clocks confirmed this insight and further clarified that this was due to the fact that women were considered the main person responsible for many home-based activities, ranging from preparing the meals, to cleaning the house to washing the children and putting them to bed. Considering women's stronger

spatial attachment to the home explains why a short visit to the nearby regional market for selling or buying products was easier for them to fit into their daily schedules. To give an example: one of the widows of the Bright Future cooperative told me that if she wanted to visit a more distant market, she would get up at five in the morning to take her products there. Before noon, she would be back to get cow grass and to start with the preparation of the meal for her family (FG_BFW_2015-05-25). A male member of the same cooperative explained how after lunchtime, he had left home to meet a businessman in one of Kigali's trading centres. Having closed the deal and sold his products he had stayed there to enjoy some banana beer. He was back home at around six, where he found the dinner ready, and ate (FG_BFM_2015-06-12).

The juxtaposition of these two cases shows how women's responsibilities at home restrict their opportunities to visit a more distant (and also more profitable) market. This insight from a rural area in Rwanda indicates that food markets are "gendered" spaces. This has also been found in other contexts in the world. The feminist economist Razavi (2017, 55), for instance, argues against neo-classical development economists who principally understand "free" markets as gender-equal, stating that in fact, free markets are not gender-neutral spaces. Razavi's analysis refers to gender inequalities in the land and wage-labour market. However, the upper example demonstrates that food markets too are socially embedded and gendered institutions. Hence, if the Rwandan government promotes commercial and market-oriented production, it must be aware of these kinds of gender-specific market constraints and how they may work to the disadvantage of many rural smallholder women, whose time and travel radius is more limited than men's.

7.5.2 The Urugo

The spatial aspect of the gendered division of labour also emerged in the way the cooperative members introduced me to their *urugo*. During the women's transect walks and in the subsequent maps, the kitchen for instance was drawn as a central part of the *urugo* where food entered and was stored and prepared (see figure 12). In the men's map, the food arrows directly entered the cooperative member. This difference in perception nicely reflects the fact that food preparation was considered a woman's task.

Another difference the two maps revealed with regard to the *urugo* was the kind of animals that were mentioned. In both, the men's and the women's maps, cows took a central position. They provided milk that could be fermented or transformed into butter. Milk could be sold to the little centre or brought to distributors, to be taken to Kigali. The cows further produced dung which was needed for the members' gardens. The day activity clocks revealed that the day routines of the cooperative members who had cows, were strongly marked by cow-related activities such as getting

fodder[118], watering the cows, milking them and cleaning the cowshed or the milking pots (the latter was only mentioned by women). Traditionally, a woman milking the cows was considered taboo (see footnote Fehler: Verweis nicht gefunden). But this taboo was no longer strictly maintained, as some women in the cooperatives explained. The following discussion among the women of the Bright Future cooperative is instructive: "Who milks the cows?" one of the women repeated my foregoing question. "If you have a cow to milk at all!", another woman noted. "If you have a child who is older, it helps you with the milking, otherwise you rather do it yourself" (FG_BFW_2015-05-25).

Apart from the cows, the women of the cooperatives more often mentioned small animals such as goats and chickens (compare figures 12 and 13). Small domestic animals were the cheaper alternative for those who could not afford a cow: while the price for a small goat was 30,000 RWF, a cow was at least five times as much, plus a cow needed much more grass and water, which for smaller households with lower financial and labour capacity was not easy to provide. Thus, the women's emphasis on small animals was likely related to their economic situation. This presumption is also supported by the fact that only the women's diagram notes the *girinka* programme,[119] a pro-poor programme that was initiated in 2006 to support vulnerable families by giving them cows. Many of the households targeted by this programme were female-headed households. As shown in the previous chapter, one of the reasons why government programs such as *girinka* focus on women is that they are expected to use the government's support in a more reasonable way and do not spent the money they earn from selling the milk on alcohol.

7.5.3 Meanings of "Amazi"

Amazi, in Kinyarwanda, literally means "water". In everyday language, however, the word offers multiple ways of interpretation. As the day activity clocks revealed, for many men in the cooperatives the late afternoon walk to the centre to have some "*amazi*", as one of them had noted, was a confirmed habit. "Water?" I was wondering aloud, but already guessed what kind of "water" he had meant when I saw his broad grin. *Amazi* also stands for the various brews: local *ikigage* (sorghum beer) or *urwagwa* (banana beer),[120] or bottled beer, which were sold in the small *kabarets* (FG_SSM_2015-05-27).

118 With the introduction of zero-grazing policy, cows are no longer taken to open pastures but are kept in stables and fed from there (Nabahungu and Visser 2011, 9).

119 The *girinka* programme, also known uas the "One cow per family" programme, is one of Rwanda's so-called home-grown solutions. It actually is an old concept that was taken up by the Rwandan government to fight malnutrition among children. The "exotic" cows – as local Rwandans call the new cows which are distributed, are also found also on the 500 RWF bank notes. For critical assessment see Hahirwa and Karinganire (2017). Here too household capacity proved to be one of the obstacles in this programme.

120 For most locally produced drinks there exists an alcoholic and a non-alcoholic version: *ubushera/ikigage* (sorghum juice/beer), *umutobe/urwagwa* (banana juice/beer).

The resource maps confirm that the cooperative men paid more attention to the consumption of local brews. This became most obvious when discussing the local importance of banana trees. The cooperative men not only provided a lot of information about how they catered for these plants – by enriching the soil with cow dung and by mulching the ground with sorghum stalks – but also in the way they described the various forms of usage of bananas. This reflects what was expressed in the earlier quote by Vansina, that the banana grove classically is a men's business. There existed all kind of different banana varieties in these groves: *ibitoki* for cooking, *imineke* as a sweet snack and energiser and beer bananas for brewing. Banana beer played an important role in various social contexts and festivities. It was consumed in their own homes, and shared with friends and neighbours whenever there was some fresh beer available. It was sold to and bought from the local bars in the centre. All kinds of beer equally served as a form of payment for labour and other services. The cooperative women had also mentioned banana "juice" which they sold to the local market, but the men of the cooperative were obviously interested in the beer rather than the juice: "We can make beer from that juice!" one of them explained (FG_VPM_2015-06-16). The pleasure of beer played a much greater role in the men's accounts.[121] Only the "saved ones", as they called people who had become born-again Christians, would refrain from this habit.

And while it was men in the first place who talked about how they consumed these local brews, women were often involved in their production and sales. During the transect walk with the women of the Bright Future cooperative, I was made aware of the difference between white sorghum grains, used for porridge and red sorghum grains used for brews. In order to produce beer out of sorghum, they would mix the soaked grains with ashes from banana leaves and lay them out to germinate. Then the grains would be dried up and the sprouts were rubbed off. The grains were then crushed and ground to fine flour, which was boiled with water. The mixture was covered with some additional flour and left to rest for the fermentation to proceed. "And then do you drink them [the brews] yourself or do you rather sell them?" I had asked the women at the end of this little lesson on local sorghum beer production. "They are sold, and even those bars you passed by, they sell them there", one of them told me. "Then who are the ones who drink them mostly?" I continued to ask. "Men!" they agreed, laughingly. "I drink it!" one of the widows countered and a second woman also confirmed that she liked beer a lot (FG_BFW_2015-06-03).

Later on, as we had launched into a discussion about alcoholism I wondered why it was mostly men who had the problem with drinking too much. "Because men have a lot of money", the youngest

121 This does not mean that women never drink beer. It simply reflects that beer consumption was regarded a much more sensitive issue among women (see chapter 7.5.3). De Lame observed, about the ritual importance of sharing beer in Rwanda in the 1980s: "(…) [T]wo elements stand out: the structure of the speech that accompanies the drinking of banana beer (a masculine element) and the silence linked to the drinking of sorghum beer (a feminine element)" (de Lame 2004, 299).

and still unmarried woman said. Another female cooperative member further elaborated: “And also because women stay with their children. In the evening they take care of them, they wash them, they cannot get time to go and have a drink in the bar. But then the men are already there”. “Men cannot wash the kids?” I asked. “Never!”, one of the women shouted excitedly, “not even if the woman is sick, unless she has poisoned him! If people saw him washing the children, they will believe he was poisoned” (FG_BFW_2015-06-03).

The woman rejects the idea that a man could stay at home to take care of the children, while his wife would go to the bar and have a drink. The fact that, as she argues, only “poison” or “sorcery”[122] would incite men to engage in such “unmanly” behaviour shows once again how certain activities are associated with a very normative understanding of gender-specific roles. What sorcery here classically implies is a break with the social norms, “(…) of upsetting a particular order of things and turning it into its opposite” as de Lame (2004, 303) writes in her ethnography of a Rwandan hill. However, de Lame also points to another aspect of sorcery as she writes a few pages later: “Envy and sorcery were also brewing around the exclusive management of access to monetary resources (…)” (de Lame 2004, 305). This relates to the other explanation for men’s drinking, brought up by the female cooperative members: men’s access to money and control over the family‘s finances.

In the previous chapter I have already touched upon this issue when discussing the case of Marie (see page 161). Even if a woman puts a lot of effort into cultivating tomatoes on her own plot, in the end what will happen to the harvest is not necessarily her own decision. In the activity profiles too (table 4) men were considered more often responsible for “storing” the harvest. From that point of view, one may question what women’s new role in the marshlands and their official membership status is worth if, once the yield has left the marshland and money has be earned for it, women then rely on their husbands’ consent as to how they may spend their earnings. Such questions, of course, were of lower significance for the widowed women in the cooperatives, but to me this is a question of principle. Gwako (2002) in his work on female farmers among the Maragoli in Kenya shows how women’s control over the harvested crops and finances had a positive impact on the way they invested their labour and money into the agricultural production. His findings indicate that gendered aspects of crop control considerably influence output levels. In Gwako’s approach, women’s crop control was measured as the crop yield used by themselves as compared to the total yield of a particular plot in monetary terms[123] (Gwako 2002, 9). It would have been interesting to learn what Maragoli women and men spent the money on. In Rwanda there exist clear gender specific expectations regarding how women or men should use the money they earn. As discussed earlier, the social

122 Sorcery and poisoning share the same term in Kinyarwanda (de Lame 2004 p. 301).

123 From the example Gwako gives it looks as if the harvested yield was entirely sold. What remains unclear is how exactly he took into account the percentage of yielded crops that went directly into the family’s subsistence.

acceptance of women spending money for their individual amusement (such as drinking beer) is much lower than for men.

7.6. Conclusion: Divided Spaces in Times of Equality?

As this chapter has shown, the Rwandan marshlands are not the spaces where the gendered division of labour is most manifest. Not a single crop in the marshland was said to be exclusively grown by women or by men. Gender-specific task preferences are detectable, but not very pronounced. We can thus conclude that essentialist statements about "men's" or "women's" crops or tasks do not take us any further in investigating gender (in)equalities in the Rwandan marshland context. In the marshland, gender is one, but not the only, social determinant that explains preferences or responsibilities over crops and tasks.

However, once we zoom out of the marshland and understand agricultural labour and the power relations in the marshlands as something that relates to the social affairs on the hillsides, the marshlands emerge as gendered spaces. They are gendered in the sense that they underlie gender-specific rhythms, spatially bound labour responsibilities and risk capacities. These interfere with opportunities such as to enter a cooperative in the first place, and decisions of what to grow and where to sell.

Thus, despite the fact that we should not draw hasty conclusions about women's or men's crops, the chapter has also shown that the cooperative members' arguments linked gendered patterns of labour with ideas about gender roles (who takes care of the children, who has a drink after work) and attributes (who is strong enough for heavy work, who is too delicate). And while some uttered very clear ideas about the physical differences between women and men, others were more hesitant and reluctant and also pointed to intra-gender differences between individual women and individual men.

Furthermore, I have argued in this chapter that the way gender roles are reaffirmed at the same time as they are challenged, sometimes by one and the same person, exhibits a double-faced understanding of gender equality, in which women's theoretical opportunities are far from their lived realities at home, where cultural perceptions over women's tasks and responsibilities are still strong. However, they also are not absolutely rigid. Women today do engage in activities that for a long time used to be considered a man's duty. They milk cows and cut bananas. They do so because their husbands have died, and they are not stigmatised for their work. We see that gender is not the only factor that must be considered here and that gender intersects with other criteria such as age, family situation and household composition or financial capacity. Returning to Allman, Geiger and Musisi's words, we can conclude that not only the female "subsistence farmer" as such, but more generally notions of a gendered division of labour emerge as "(…) nuanced, multifaceted, and complicated" (Allman, Geiger, and Musisi 2002b, 7).

CHAPTER 8: NEOLIBERAL ENCOUNTERS – A FOREIGN INVESTMENT PROJECT IN KAJEVUBA VALLEY

> This marshland that you did not maintain properly has become profitable thanks to the investment (...) [the export company] infused in. It will not be taken to any elsewhere; it's yours and its future depends on your vision" (NAEB-officer quoted in an online newsletter from April 2015).[124]
>
> [The cooperative members] are saying that maybe the Kajevuba marshland will be taken away from us, but this is impossible, unless Kajevuba was something that could be carried in a bus or in a plane or taken somewhere else. Otherwise, as long as this cannot be done, it will be here. Kajevuba has to help those people living around it (Interview Abakumburwa Cooperative President 04-06-2015).
>
> Although the term 'land grab' served a useful polemical purpose in 2008, on reflection it is clear that land cannot in fact be grabbed because it stays where it is. The most forceful action that agribusiness firms can take in relation to farmland is to exclude people from it by means of fences and armed guards (Li 2015, 562).

A group of young men was standing in front of a small shed. The shed was constructed of shiny, new iron sheets. It was used by the marshland cooperative to store their tools and chemicals. The young men, *abasore*, as Rwandans would say, were waiting for instructions. In the meantime, they were curiously eyeing the respirators and rubber gloves they had been given. It was about half past seven in the morning. They had come to the marshland to earn little extra money. For 1000 RWF[125] a day, they were hired to treat the young plants of green beans with pesticides. This also accounted for their "unusual" equipment (see pictures 15 and 16).

My assistant and I were introduced to a man in his mid-twenties. In this work, I will refer to him as Johnny. He presented himself as the "farm manager" of the project. His English was fluent, but it revealed a subtle Kinyarwanda accent. Politely he showed me and my assistant around the neat fields of green beans, row by row, plant by plant, not yet flowering. As was further explained to us, the fields belonged to a foreign investment project. In cooperation with the local marshland cooper-

124 http://naeb.gov.rw/index.php?id=24&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=64&cHash=12584003fe3c7112767aa2311934bcf2 [accessed: 07.04.2016].

125 In 2015, this corresponded to the local salary for one day of agricultural labour. One kilogram of sugar was around 800 RWF.

ative, they were cultivating green beans for export on 20 ha of the cooperative's land. The project was new in this marshland, but Johnny assured us that the company which handled the export business already had some previous experience in Rwanda as well as in other East African countries. Then he introduced my assistant and me to another man. It was the company's agronomist, a Kenyan, who, as he said, would give us all the information we needed. Johnny excused himself. He needed to go back to his workers, the young men who were still waiting for his instructions.

The agronomist explained that they were currently spraying Thiovit, a fungicide, as well as Trazel BZ, a mix of micronutrients. The use of such chemical fertilisers was of particular relevance in the context of marshland agriculture, he explained, because the water depletes the soil. He continued by introducing us to the different specifications of each and every chemical they were using. While I was noting down the information, my assistant took pictures. With much interest, I listened to his accounts about the regular crop walks they were doing to find out what kind of diseases they had to treat or prevent, or about the different European regulations and prescriptions they had to follow since they were producing for the European market. At length, he reasoned about the products they applied at a specific stage of plant growth to ensure that the pesticide residues in the final product would not exceed the allowed levels. There would also be other good products to use, he informed me, but these often were hard to find, here in Rwanda. So the main challenge, he concluded, was not a problem of not knowing the right treatment, but rather an issue of availability. Most of their chemicals were imports from Kenya and usually they would buy them in an Agro Vet shop at the Nyabugogo bus station, one of Kigali's major trading centres.

Loud engine noise directed our attention to the young men who had taken their positions in different parts of the field. On their backs they were carrying yellow containers – all but one, who was using a more powerful, motorised sprayer which was producing the loud engine noise. "Why are there no women doing this kind of job?" I shouted at the agronomist. He looked slightly confused about my question. After a while he replied that this was due to the EurepG.A.P. standards[126] which would prohibit women from doing the pesticide spraying, and besides, he noted, carrying the heavy containers was a hard job. Women would rather do the weeding and picking (FN_2015-02-25).

***

This little episode marks my first encounter with a foreign investment project in Kajevuba marshland, at the end of February 2015. The present chapter deals with that project and how it evolved

126 EurepG.A.P., today known as GlobalG.A.P., is a private sector initiative founded by European supermarkets. It offers an independent certification system for good agricultural practices with regard to food safety, sustainable production, traceability, and also workers' health and safety. For more information see: https://www.globalgap.org.

over the coming months. It is an exemplary case of how, in the name of "development", local smallholders gradually lose access to an important land resource.

Agricultural investment projects exist in many countries of the so-called Global South. They usually involve the transaction of farmland, which, in the current literature is controversially discussed under various terms such as land acquisitions, corporate land deals, farmland investments, land appropriation or land "grabs"[127] (A. Zoomers 2010; Hall 2011; Borras et al. 2011; Li 2015). Particularly prone to such kind of investment projects are areas that are said (often, however, wrongly) to be unused or at least "underused" (GoR and MINAGRI 2004, 17–18). Mostly, these agricultural investment projects operate under the label of "development", by integrating local production into a global system of transfers (of money, of knowledge, of goods etc.) and by promising new income opportunities and economic growth. While not being an entirely new phenomenon in itself (Huggins 2011; Englert and Gärber 2014; Verma 2014), we can currently observe growing scepticism with regard to the enormous speed and size of this "land rush" (Borras et al. 2011; Verma 2014). Critical contributions over the past ten years have challenged the win-win model of such investment deals and have raised awareness of possible negative social as well as environmental consequences on the ground. More recently, the role of state agents and government elites in such investment deals has also come into the focus of discussion (Lavers 2012; Peters 2013). "Land deals, acquisitions, and investments provide ample opportunities for elite and male capture," writes Verma (2014, 68), and thereby hints to the gendered aspects of such "neocolonial" enclosures. However, the number of explicitly feminist works in this context is modest and many of them call for the need of in-depth case studies that pay attention to the gendered facets of such land deals (Daley 2010; Behrman, Meinzen-Dick, and Quisumbing 2012; Verma 2014; Wisborg 2014; Doss, Summerfield, and Tsikata 2014).

This final chapter provides a detailed study of the Kajevuba investment case. I have chosen to give such a detailed account because it shows once again how the three core themes discussed in this work are intertwined. In a sense this chapter therefore brings together all the three theoretical threads – agrarian change, governance, and feminist analysis – into one case. At the same time, it is also clear that the investment project depicts an accelerated dynamic of what is currently happening in Rwanda's marshlands. By juxtaposing perspectives from the different parties involved – the cooperative and its members, state agents, as well as the investor and his workers – the chapter discloses the complex dynamics and frictions that may occur when such an agricultural investment project fails. In particular, I am focusing on the implications the investment project has for rural

127 Hall (2011, 207) criticises the term "land grab" for drawing "(…) attention away from trends that involve not the mere capture of land but the capture of labour, water, and most of all, the adverse incorporation – rather than exclusion – of smallholder agriculture into new value chains, patterns of accumulation, and the wider transformations in agrarian structure and agro-food systems that these precipitate".

livelihoods and the lives of female farmers on the ground. Furthermore, I am investigating the issues of legal frameworks both at the international and local level, power imbalances, the state's role and governance performance in the realm of agribusiness, and the gender-specific outcomes in such large-scale investment projects. It also touches upon farmers' resistance, and the importance of being aware of the local environmental and social conditions before launching such a joint venture.

What is probably specific in this case of foreign investment, is that it evolved over two stages (see figure 14). In the first stage, it took the form of a joint venture (chapters 8.1 and 8.2). When this failed, the investor was given part of the marshland to start his own solo production (chapters 8.3 and 8.4). In this second stage, he was hiring local farmers on a daily basis.

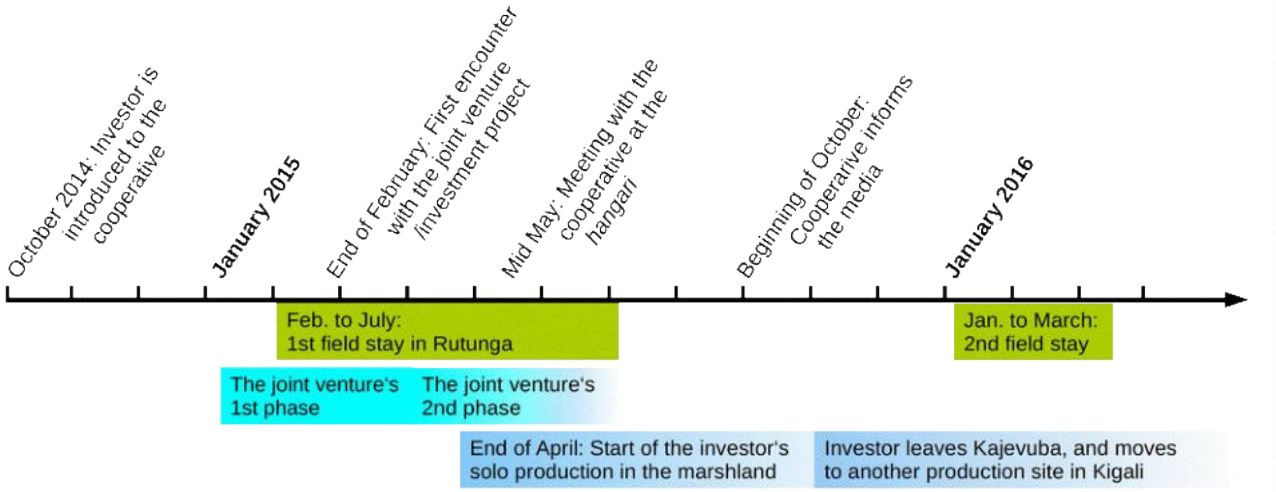

Figure 14: Overview of the different stages of the investment project

8.1. A Joint Venture in Kajevuba Valley

My initial encounter with the investment project provided valuable information. I learned about the project's aims, and how it was roughly organised. I was introduced to the subject of export production and related challenges in the production process. But even more so, the entire situation revealed some fundamental conceptions of this project about modern agriculture, and also about underlying gender norms.

The agronomist's confused reasoning about the EurepG.A.P. standards as one of the reasons why no women were part of the spraying team had caused at least as much confusion on my side. I had not expected an answer such as a "European" framework being the reason for men's "monopoly" on spraying work in a Rwandan marshland. My assistant came up with a reasonable explanation: "probably because of pregnancy". But then again, was not it quite unfair to generally exclude women from this job opportunity just because of the general possibility of pregnancy? Was this not a very reductionist argument constructing all women first and foremost as potential mothers? In

addition, I was asking myself if this simplified interpretation of EurepG.A.P. standards was not probably at odds with the Rwandan constitution and the state's efforts with regard to gender equality. Back home, I made myself familiar with the concept of EurepG.A.P. and found that while it entailed a point regarding workers' health, safety and welfare, it did not really specify anything about extra safety measures in cases of potential pregnancies or for women in general.

The second argument the agronomist had brought up was about women's physical capacity to do such a "hard" job such as carrying the heavy containers of chemicals on their backs. As elaborated in chapter 7.3, the argument of physical capacity or strength is a wide-spread one regarding the gendered division of labour. However, very often the argument was expressed in a very essentialist manner: the idea that women would carry those sprayers was regarded as about as "impossible" as it was for a man to carry a child on his back. The average weight of such a container is around 16 kg, if it is filled up to its very top. True, this is a heavy load, but it is not much heavier than a toddler, who is carried on his mother's back over long distances down to the marshland, up to the shop in the centre and back home again. This simple comparison indicates that women's absence from the project's spraying team was not just about physical strength, but also about a normative understanding of gender-specific role models and labour tasks. Throughout my fieldwork, I never saw a woman doing the pesticide spraying. In contrast to other countries such as Indonesia, where spraying is considered a female domain (Behrman, Meinzen-Dick, and Quisumbing 2012, 69), in Rwanda, this kind of job seemed to be typically men's work, and as I can say from my more general observations, they usually did this task without wearing any rubber gloves or respirators.

This latter detail leads to another interesting observation: the investment project was designed as a project for "modern" marshland agriculture. The idea was to train the members of the local cooperative in modern export production. This claim was manifested not only in the neat green fields (see picture 17), the meticulously set climbing aids, or the agronomist's expertise about chemical inputs but also in the kind of tools and techniques that were applied. The rubber gloves and the respiratory protection, which most of the young men had soon slipped up to their foreheads, thus served not only as a special precaution against toxic chemicals, but also as a distinction marker from "traditional" agriculture. Seraphine, a long-standing cooperative member, whom we know already from chapter 4, told me how the investor had taught them to cultivate French beans in a "modern" way: "After preparing the land, we make lines, like this!" she said, and moved her arm to visualise the line. "We do not make holes! Holes were for the former time! We make lines every 20 cm, and after that you put in organic manure, then you put in DAP (Diammonium Phosphate), and after that you cover it with soil and then you put the seed and again some soil" (I_S_2016-02-22).

Seraphine was born around the time of independence. Already her parents had been cultivating under the glorious Kajevuba vegetable project in the 1970s (see chapter 4). She herself had started to cultivate in the marshland in the 1980s. During her life, she had been involved in different projects in the marshland. The joint venture with the foreign investor was the most recent one. By the time of our interview, the investor had already left Kajevuba. As we were sitting at her place near the marshland, Seraphine summarised her recent disappointment. She as well as many other cooperative members had expected good profits from this new joint venture.

> The good thing is that he [the investor] taught us how to cultivate French beans in a modern way. Like in the former time we were not interested in watering the French beans, but he showed us the interest of watering during the dry season. What we did not like about him, although he taught us all that, is that he came into our cooperative and destroyed it. We thought that he was going to develop us, because he was a *muzungu*. We sold off our cows, spent our money and invested in the fields applying what he was teaching us. So we lost our cows, our money, we lost everything! (I_S_2016-02-22).

Seraphine's quote anticipates an unexpected turn in the course of the initially very positively projected export project.

About six weeks after my first encounter with Johnny, the farm manager, and the project's agronomist in Kajevuba marshland, my assistant and I set out for a meeting with some members of the Abakumburwa cooperative. The meeting took place at an old storage facility, locally known as *hangari* (see picture 9). I was a bit early which is why I proposed a little a walk through the lower part of the marshland to see what was going on there. Several people were working in the fields. In small teams, they were stretching cords across the fields to mark the lines for the seeding. Some others were preparing the soil with their hoes. I found Johnny and greeted him. He told us that the heavy rainfalls in the past weeks had flooded their fields which is why they now had to replant. We were just about launching into a discussion on the unpredictability of floods, when I saw a group of people strolling towards the *hangari*. So we said goodbye and hurried back to our appointment in the *hangari*, where about twenty cooperative members had already gathered.

Following a short introduction about my research, I started to ask some questions about how the marshland was helping the cooperative members them in their lives. An old man got up and started to introduce us to the history of Kajevuba marshland and how the marshland had helped them in their development (see chapter 4). "The people living around here", the old man said, "survive because of this marshland!" (M_AC_2015-05-13). The way he was speaking made me wonder if ever they had ever feared that someone could take this marshland away from them. While my assistant was translating this question, the atmosphere in the *hangari* changed all of a sudden. There was a long silence. Finally, a woman in a blue dress rose to speak.

The woman explained how in October last year, a foreign investor had come and proposed to work with them, the cooperative. He was accompanied by the Ministry of Agriculture. They were promised training in export production, and they agreed upon a good price of 420 RWF/kg for first-class harvest and 350 RWF/kg for second-class harvest. But on the day of payment, after having deducted the expenses for inputs such as seeds, pesticides, fertilisers from the final revenue, the cooperative farmers got much less than what they had expected. Instead of 420 RwF/kg they only got between 50 and 80 RWF/kg. Considering the amount of time, the hard work, and the additional expenses the cooperative members had put in for transport, or for hiring labour, they ended up making a loss, the woman declared. But what made her even more angry than her financial loss was the way the investor had treated them. He accused them of not working appropriately. He had even called them lazy, as compared to Kenyan workers, who would be able to harvest 50kg a day, which she found almost impossible for a single worker. The woman further challenged the fact that additional workers from outside the cooperative had been hired to work in their fields. All these additional costs were also deducted from the cooperative members' final revenues. The woman in the blue dress further explained that if she had sold the beans to Kigali herself, she would have remained with about 60,000 RFW which now could help her to pay for the school fees for her children and to buy new iron sheets for her place (M_AC_2015-05-13).

During her account, the other cooperative members were humming and nodding their assent. Emotions of disappointment and anger became explicit in the farmers' statements. Their way of talking about these happenings and their – by Rwandan standards – unusual frankness vis-à-vis two strangers was rather surprising. Quite obviously, the cooperative members' behaviour reflected upon the topicality of the matter. As they informed us, the cooperative was no longer working with the investor. The investor had been given 30 ha of land by the Ministry for a trial period of three months, where he now was working with his own wage workers – the ones my assistant and I had just met in the fields before.

The news had agitated me. Was this a case of land grab? But then again, the old man had said that it was only for a trial period of a few months. However, a young man at the meeting had insisted that rumours said the investor intended to lease the marshland for the next twenty years. The whole meeting had taken a very different direction from what I had planned to inquire about, and the several questions I had prepared no longer fitted the context. Instead, I asked the cooperative members what they wanted to do about their situation? "It is state property", they explained, "there is nothing we can do!"

The meeting was about to be over when a well-dressed man entered the *hangari*. It was the Kajevuba scheme manager, who had come to put up an *itangazo*, an announcement. It requested the

cooperative members to clean the irrigation and drainage channels, otherwise a fine of 1,000 RWF would be charged. The cooperative members protested. They asked why they should clean the drainage if they were no longer working in the marshland. The scheme manager patiently listened to them, but in the end, unimpressed by their accusations, he remarked that this situation was the Abakumburwa cooperative's own fault. They should not have singed the contract with the investor in the first place (FN_2015-05-13).

I do not think that the rising conflict between the Abakumburwa cooperative and the investor was somehow planned beforehand. From my investigations, interviews and observations, I rather think that the project was really intended to help the local cooperative and to turn out as a win-win situation for all the parties involved. In highly simplified terms, the cooperative members would acquire knowledge in export production; they would have a good market and make more profit than before. The investor would be able to work with a well-organised cooperative, thus making the production management easier. Furthermore, the cooperative members knew the characteristics of this marshland and could share their knowledge. And finally, the government would benefit by bringing development to the citizens and by increasing the national income through export. However, as Li (2005, 560) notes, such transnational farmland investments "(…) are risky for all parties involved: agribusiness firms, and their financial backers; host-country governments; and the people on the spot".

8.2. Losses in the Name of Development

On the basis of my investigations there were three major aspects that were commonly brought up to explain the failure of the joint venture. The first concerned the legal frameworks in which the investment project operated, most particularly the contract that was used between the cooperative and the investor and the expensive inputs that, as per contract, were deducted for the cooperative members' revenue. The second concerned the internal organisation of the cooperative, the heterogeneous background of the members, and their fragile tenure situation in the marshland. The third and final aspect concerned the environmental challenges of Kajevuba marshland.

"The truth is that he [the farm manager] has used very expensive chemicals", Seraphine said, to explain the losses they had incurred. I had not asked the agronomist, when I had met him, about the costs of the chemicals he had introduced to me. The production plan of this first trial,[128] which was given to me by the investor himself, reveals that one of the fungicides used cost 85,800 RWF a kilo,

128 I was given two production plans from the time of the joint venture with the cooperative. Unfortunately these plans did not cover the entire production with the cooperative. As some cooperative members claimed, the expensive chemicals were no longer used when the investor started his solo production. It would have been interesting to compare the different production plans of both stages, the joint venture with the cooperative and the investor's solo production, but my request to obtain further production plans was to no avail.

which according to the cooperative members corresponds approximately to a very good net profit they can yield from their marshland plot in a good season. Even though the cooperative members were aware of the cost deduction from the cooperative's final revenue, they were not aware that these chemicals would far exceed the usual expenses for pesticides.[129]

The first bar in figure 15 shows the approximate production costs and net profit of the cooperative farmers for green beans planted on a marshland plot of 5 ares. The second bar shows the production costs for green beans during the joint venture, based on the investor's production plan, and scaled down to a plot size of 5 ares. As we can see, not only was the joint venture's expenditure on seeds and chemicals much higher than the farmers' usual expenditure, but the gross income was also much lower.

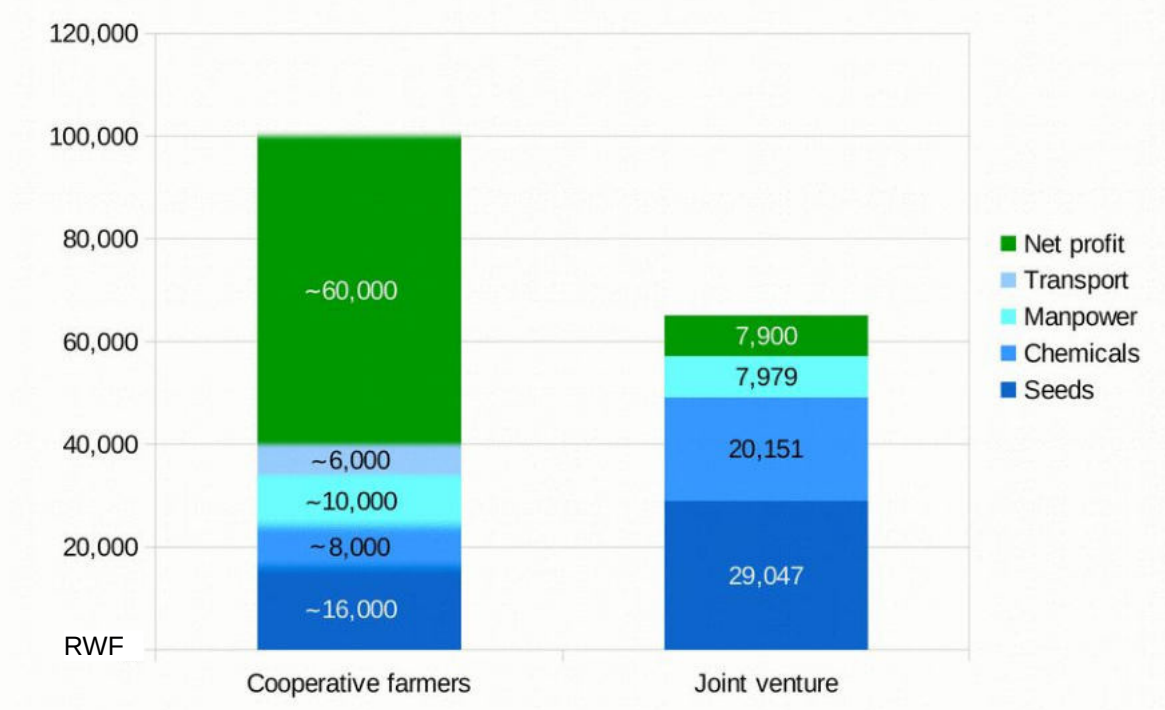

Figure 15: Comparison between the production costs of green beans by cooperative farmers (based on several interviews) and the joint venture (based on the numbers provided by the investor)

Robert, a cooperative member who had attended the meeting where the contract was signed, confirmed that as per contract, the production costs were deduced from the final revenue of the cooperative. Yet, as he noted, the contract did not specify the exact costs for the different inputs. Robert was working as an agronomist for a local NGO, and since he was staying around Kajevuba for most of the week he had joined the cooperative some time ago. With much regret, he noticed that local farmers in Rwanda were lacking legal support in such a case.

According to the head of the horticulture department in the NAEB, the contract the cooperative had signed was based on a standard template the NAEB generally uses for such kinds of joint venture. "We have contract models that we give to facilitate contract farming. So we facilitated them to

129 Cooperative members informed me that they spend around 5,000 to 8,000 RWF for one kilogram of pesticide.

negotiate the contract. It's a general contract model that we give them, to the people, and then they adapt", he noted during an interview (I_HH_2016-02-05).[130] He further explained that these contracts commonly agreed upon a price and the terms of delivery.

> We don't want people to grow something and the investor comes and says: "I am not taking your products". And (…) we also don't want the farmers to pledge some volume to the investor, and later when he comes to find the volume, he doesn't find it, because he made commitments to the clients too. So those are the terms that we look at. (…) We have experienced it both ways, where an investor does not get a volume as pledged, or the investor does not take the products as contracted (I_HH_2016-02-05).

The head of the NAEB Horticulture Department told me how eager he had been about this project in the beginning: "I remember, I took a leave, fifteen days of leave. Almost every day I was going there, in my leave, because I wanted... It was like a project starting. I wanted it to be good and well run!", he said and then added in a low voice: "If there's someone who got frustrated with that, I am the first person!" (I_HH_2016-02-05).

His account sounded sincere. However, asking him about the reasons why the cooperative at some point refused to work with the investor, he evaded the question. With regard to the unexpectedly high prices of pesticides, he started to enumerate the case:

> "You get maximum profit from maximum output, maximum yield. So the same input that you use when you get three tones/ha is the same input you would have used if you get 10 tones. But there were some agricultural practices that were supposed to be carried out by the farmers [of the cooperative]: weeding, irrigation... Sometimes people did not even come to irrigate, and they had to add labour for irrigation. (…) So we had to protect that point in the contract, and they agreed. So once, you don't do that, and the investor does it to save the crop. So it increases the input costs. And when you deduct it from the low production, you get, what you get: you get negative! (…) But you can see it was not an issue of the prices or not respecting the contract. The contract was respected. I have the numbers of how it was respected. I have the numbers of what was the yield what was the input, the chemicals, the fertilisers... (...) but the farmers will not tell you this side of that story", he closed his calculations.
> "Maybe they don't even know?" I interposed, yet he was very convinced:
> "I am sure, I am sure! They know! Because the farm manager, who was there, had these papers. He explained to them: 'This is how we deducted, this is how we… this is what we put in…', and they were only saying: 'Oh! A chemical of 85,000 RWF!' But that's what it costs! There are some diseases that are too expensive to eradicate so they use a lot of chemicals!" (I_HH_2016-02-05)

In this quote the NAEB officer defended the investor, at the same time as he was blaming the cooperative members for not doing their jobs properly. According to him, everything had been specified in the contract. He concluded that the explosion of the production costs was due to the farmers' own mismanagement. While the head of horticulture was emphasizing the importance of "protecting" the investor, by making sure that he would find the products as planned, the contract seemed to fail in protecting the cooperative members from unexpectedly high production costs. This

130 Unfortunately, I did not manage to get a copy of such a generic model contract, nor was I able to get access to the cooperative's effective contract with the investor.

unequal distribution of risk is a wide spread issue in such contracts (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010, 46).

There exist different types of agricultural investments and respective contracts. In their survey, Vermeulen and Cotula (2010) distinguish between contract farming, leases and management contracts, tenant farming and share cropping, joint ventures, farmer-owned business, and, finally, upstream and downstream business. The authors note, however, that this categorisation is more of an analytical nature, and that real contracts may be a "hybrid" of these business models (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010, 30).

In the case of the Kajevuba investment project, this definitely holds true. While in the first phase it took the form of a joint venture between the cooperative and the investor, at the same time as it included a kind of management contract in which the production was supervised by the investor's farm manager who also managed the cooperative member's supply with the necessary inputs and tools, in the second phase it turned into a more classical management contract, where the investor's employees managed the production without the involvement of the cooperative.

Let us now return to the production costs. "That's what it costs!" the NAEB officer had stated. The matter of the expensive chemicals, however, was somewhat more complex than described in his argument. As the investor himself leaked to me, after having turned off the voice recorder, the issue was that the cheaper version of some chemical treatments they were using in Kenya was not available in Rwanda. The project agronomist had casually mentioned this point during my first visit in the marshland. Apparently the investor had discussed the matter with the Ministry and asked them to change the import regulations for the cheaper chemical sprays. He was told that changing the law would take too long and that it would be more efficient for him to illegally import the needed products in his suitcase, risking a fine (I_AR_2016-01-21).[131]

An "ordinary" Rwandan farmer, of course, rarely has to deal with these details of export business. And I too was struggling to grasp all these facts and facets. The collected stories sounded at once both similar and different. The investor, for example, insisted that the failure of the project had cost him much more money than any of the cooperative members had lost (I_AR_2016-01-21). Obviously, these losses had a very different outcome qualitatively for him than for most of the cooperative members, who now faced serious hardships because of the "muzungu", as they commonly called the investor.

131 Unfortunately the investor only gave me the production plan of the first trial and not the production plans that specified the cost of input during his solo production. It would have been interesting to see whether the same expensive chemicals were also used under his solo production.

"The people living around here don't like to talk about the muzungu", Ancilla remarked when I was asking her about her personal experience with the recent export vegetable project. "It makes us think of all the losses we had because of him. It was a nightmare!" she added. As members of the cooperative, Ancilla and her husband had joined the investment project during its first stage. Ancilla told me about their great hopes and their disappointment, when they did not get what they had expected. "It was like slavery!" she said. "Several members have sold their cows to be able to work with him in the marshland", Ancilla complained, and expressed her relief about them having not done so either. Never again would they engage in such an unprofitable joint venture, he concluded about his and his wife's experience (M_AB_2016-02-26).

Another issue that came up in this regard was the cooperative's limited tenure security in the state-owned Kajevuba marshland. As Robert had noted, the cooperative was sitting on the shorter end of the lever. They could hardly have rejected the investor's offer, since he was supported by different government bodies, most importantly the National Agriculture Export Board (NAEB) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI). "It is because of the taxes, the money they can get from export", Robert answered to my question why the government would support such an unfair joint venture. He explained that the cooperative had signed the contract, because they feared losing the marshland if they would not join in. "We are really unhappy now", he concluded about the cooperative members' current situation (C_R_2015-05-15).

As must be noted here, this was not the first incident in which the Abakumburwa cooperative had lost some part of their marshland. Already earlier the government had urged them to free 7 hectares of marshland for a local women's project.[132] The cooperative's fragile position regarding the use-rights of Kajevuba marshland was also confirmed during an interview with the investor, a foreign entrepreneur of about 30 years of age. He mentioned:

> Kajevuba's situation is a bit tricky, because the marshland is owned by [a cooperative]... I mean it is MINAGRI land basically. The cooperative working there actually has no documents or rights to use the marshland. But it has been there for the last, I think, 10 years or something like that. (…) So the marshland is a cooperative marshland, more or less. So they [the ministerial officers] have not changed anything, they have not disrupted what was in place and… However, they wanted us to do a project there, and we had to choose the cooperative because the government pushed us to do so... to take some of the marshland, and they were saying like: "Anyway, if the cooperative does not agree, we will give you the land because the land today is nobody's land, somehow" (I_AR_2016-01-21).

The compulsory character of this joint venture, due to the cooperative's fragile tenure situation, definitely contributed to the subsequent failure of the project. According to Vermeulen and Cotula, who refer to similar cases reported from other countries, this is one of the possible negative aspects of such joint ventures (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010, 70).

132 As I knew from one of the cooperative members, it was one of the bad parts of the marshland, known for its low productivity and recurring floods.

Another interesting character in the Kajevuba investment project is Johnny, the farm manager, who was responsible for the supervision of the production process. While, according to the contract, the core responsibility for the cultivation lay with the cooperative and its members, who were each cultivating on their individual plots, Johnny was the one who observed the production, who bought and provided the necessary inputs and tools, and who decided when additional wage workers were needed. That way, important information slipped past most cooperative members, who, in the end, were surprised about the enormous expenses they had to cover. Johnny thus had a very ambiguous position in the whole scenario. Nevertheless, most of the cooperative members respected him. Even at a later stage, when Johnny was already working with his own workers, they were not blaming him directly. Seraphine, for instance, said when I asked her about Johnny: “He was the investor’s agronomist. He is the one who showed us how to cultivate the vegetables. He was not a bad guy. He was just a worker, like us” (I_S_2016-02-22). Several other co-op members, including the president, shared a similar view on this matter.

The fact is, however, that Johnny was in quite a different position than most of the cooperative members. As farm manager, his salary varied between 250,000 and 400,000 RWF a month, depending on the bonus he got for good productions. Consequently, his incentive to ensure high yields was greater than the interest he had in keeping the production costs low, because those were covered by the cooperative in any case. Thus, structurally, the joint venture was organised in such a way that the farm manager, Johnny, had to take crucial decisions that affected the cooperative members more substantially than himself (I_J_2016-01-15).

Only once the project had left Kajevuba did the now-resigned Abakumburwa president critically remark about the position Johnny was in:

> He [Johnny] was bringing the manure, seeds and chemicals, but he never revealed to us how much they cost. At the time of harvest he deducted according to how he wanted, and we were in losses. Everything was in his hands; he could probably say, “take this one million as a cooperative and share it”, just according to what was on his mind (I_AP_2016-01-19).

It would be speculative to reason that the exploitative character the investment project took was intentionally planned from the very start of the project. However, my data suggest rather that this contractual imbalance only came into effect when the production started to face serious trouble.

“We started on the 7th of January and it was a very dry season. So like most of them [the cooperative members] they are really lazy, they just came and planted and then they disappeared. So in the beginning we almost lost about 40 percent of the crop”, Johnny openly shared his frustration with the cooperative members, who did not show up to do their tasks (I_J_2016-01-15). By the time I met him for this interview, the investment project had moved to another production site in Rwanda.

It was a comfortable conversation. He told me about how he had got this job as the investor's farm manager. It had all started with an agricultural internship he did in Israel together with some other students. Upon their return to Rwanda, they were given the opportunity to work with this investor. The managerial position in this project was a great opportunity for him. Together we debated why the cooperation with the Kajevuba cooperative had failed. According to him, one of the core issues was the low level of understanding of some cooperative members:

> You see, cooperative people have different understandings or perceptions. (...) There are some farmers where you can sit and discuss on some issues. (…) And some of them will not understand. They will not have the same level of understanding. So one will say: "Ah! Today I have to go somewhere!" (…) Some of them are not interested, but since they are members of the cooperative they are forced to participate (I_J_2016-01-15).

The cooperative members' lack of commitment and low level of understanding was a recurring argument, and not just from Johnny's side. The afore-quoted government officer at NAEB, for instance, explained in very similar terms:

> The difference is at the level of understanding. (…) These farmers, a bit away from town, they don't understand business in such a way. So he [the farmer] feels he can work in the field today, and tomorrow it is a market day, he goes to the market. He just forgets there are beans in the field that need to be irrigated! (I_HH_2016-02-05).

Even the president of the cooperative had raised this point as one of the challenges they faced as a cooperative. In one of our first meetings he had revealed to me how difficult it was, at times, to communicate and to find a common solution since the cooperative members had different ideas about how they wanted to use the marshland. It bothered him that some members disrespected their agreements or did not join for community work, especially now that they had this new investor (C_AP_2015-04-15).

We see, once more, what has been discussed already in earlier chapters: that a cooperative must not be understood as a homogeneous entity. By the time of my research, the Abakumburwa cooperative had slightly more than 300 members who were working on about 57 ha of marshland. Most of the cooperative members were living on the surrounding hills. However, there was also a considerable proportion of cooperative members who were staying in Kigali and who hired local labourers to work on "their" plots (M_SLA_2015-05-20). The marshland was divided into plots of 5 ares each, and the cooperative members cultivated their plot(s) individually or as families. Some of them owned only one plot in the marsh, while others owned two or more plots according to their physical and financial capacity. Some were long-standing cooperative members, who had cultivated in the marshland even before the genocide (see chapter 4); others again had joined the cooperative only recently. There were members who were using their plots to cultivate vegetables for Kigali and who sold their harvest to wholesalers or retailers, while other members were keeping most of the harvest

for themselves as a food backup for the long dry season, occasionally selling some of the surpluses at the local market.

A further difficulty apart from the cooperative members' diverse backgrounds was the heterogeneous constitution of the marshland itself. While at first glance the marshland looked very uniform as it was organised into equal plots of 5 ares, there were quite substantial differences with regard to the quality of each plot. For example, the plots close to the central drainage were easier to irrigate than the plots at the outskirts of the marshland. Some plots were more likely to be flooded than others and some parts were easy to drain while in other parts, the water would be stuck for days.[133]

Under the new and modern agricultural investment project, the cooperative members' heterogeneous backgrounds and interests as well as the environmental constraints became even more relevant. Since the exported vegetables had to meet European standards, they required a lot of commitment and care. As a result, the production became very labour-intensive. Claire, a cooperative member who was running a little bar she where sold local brews remembered (I_C_2016-02-24): "What we learnt from him [the investor]? First of all: hard-working. Because he came and we started working from the morning till evening, we didn't work for so many hours before him. So that's what he taught us!"

The problem was, as Johnny had pointed out, that while some members of the cooperative were passionate about this new project (at least in the beginning), others were not really interested, but had to participate, because they were members of the cooperative. In addition, the first phase of export production overlapped with the long rainy season. Already in the beginning of February, the first heavy rainfalls had announced the beginning of the main cultivation period on the privately-owned hillside fields. The cooperative members prioritised these fields, and the export production in the marshland slowed down. Some farmers were aware of this problem. They would ask family members to help them out or hire workers, but others could not easily afford such investments and delayed. In consequence, the farm manager struggled to motivate the cooperative members to work on their plots and finish their tasks on time. At some point, he decided to hire additional workers to avoid serious losses. As specified in the contract these costs were once more deducted from the cooperative members' final revenue.

When after the harvest the payments to the cooperative were delayed and the final revenue was much lower than expected, the cooperative members felt betrayed. The government officers tried to

133 Even though this was never made explicit, I am quite sure that all these differences also accounted for the fact that the cooperative was still organised into individual plots instead of working the land collectively. Those who had good plots did not want to give them up in order to engage in a collective production. The issue of floods was a serious problem in Kajevuba marshland. The cooperative members' crops had been destroyed several times and many of them were discouraged and no longer risked cultivating during the rainy season. I will discuss this issue in more detail later in this chapter.

mediate between the cooperative and the investor. Finally, they "agreed" upon giving the investor 30 ha of the marshland for another trial. The investor should prove that he really was able to produce the projected profit, if he was working with his own wage workers.

8.3. The Investor's Solo Production

On the 25th of April, a special *umuganda*[134] was organised as a kind of-kick off event for the investor's solo project. A NAEB online newsletter proudly welcomes the "new" initiative to Kajevuba valley (NAEB online 2015). The picture under the headline focusses on four people: two men and two women, all with big smiles on their faces. In their face. In their hands they have hoes as if they were preparing the marshland's soil, but quite obviously they were posing for the picture. The two women are wearing clean loafers. One of them even is carrying a handbag over her shoulders. They were probably NAEB staff members or Sector officials, but definitely not rural farmers who had come to clean up the marshland for the new investment project. The composition of the picture reminded me of similar photographs I had seen from the times of the Second Republic, when the former president Juvenal Habyarimana was trying to present himself as the leader of a "peasant state" (see chapter 3.3). Not a single word in the newsletter mentions the previous failure and ongoing dispute between the investor and the local cooperative. However, the quoted speech of one of the NAEB officers subtly refers to the smouldering conflict: "You are the creators of your future. This marshland that you did not maintain properly has become profitable thanks to the investment (...) [the export company] infused in. **It will not be taken to any elsewhere** [emphasis mine]; it's yours and its future depends on your vision" (NAEB officer quoted in NAEB online 2015).

A very similar wording was used by the president of the cooperative as he answered my question about some the cooperative members' fear that the marshland could be taken away from them forever:

> They [the cooperative members] are saying that maybe the Kajevuba marshland will be taken away from us. But this is impossible, **unless Kajevuba was something that could be carried in a bus or in a plane or taken somewhere else [emphasis mine].** Otherwise, as long as this cannot be done, it will be here. Kajevuba has to help the people living around it (I_AP_2015-06-04).

It is interesting to note how the president had reproduced more or less identically the NAEB officer's statement in the *umuganda* speech. As I will show in the following, such a simplistic rhetoric easily turns a blind eye on the lived realities of rural farmers. The fact is that Kajevuba marsh-

134 *Umuganda* is a collective working day which usually takes place on the last Saturday of each month. In the international political and media discourse, *umuganda* has a very positive reception. Often it is praised as the key to Rwanda's cleanliness, as a centerpiece of development and as an important contribution to the ongoing process of reconciliation after the 1994 genocide. However, insights from my own fieldwork show that the local perception does not necessarily support this view. This likely has to do with the historic roots of the *umuganda* concept, which stands in a tradition of elitist capture of labour force (Bates 2012; Uvin 1998, 130–31). Jefremovas (2002, 73) goes as far as calling *umuganda* under the two Republics a "disguised" form of *corvée* labour (see chapter 3).

land had been gradually turned from being local people's main source of food and cash income during the dry season into a foreign-managed production site for export crops. Or, in the more general terms of Zoomers and Otsuki (2017, 164): A "local and place-based asset" had become a "global good for investment". In the following section I will focus on how the investor's solo project was experienced by local female farmers.

Under the investor's new solo approach, several things changed in the marshland. Instead of working with the cooperative, Johnny started to contract farmers on a daily base. Between 40 and 250 people were hired under the investor's solo project. They were paid the usual wage of 1,000 RWF for a day's work, and the wages were distributed every 15 days. If they did not show up, or came late, they were quickly replaced by other workers. About 70% of the workers were women, which Johnny related to the fact that women, in general, were more involved in agriculture activities than men[135] (I_J_2016-01-15).

However, in some cases women's limited access to other sources of land might also explain the high number of female wage workers under the investor's solo production. One if these women was Kabahire. I had met her during my second stay, when my assistant and I were taking a walk through Kajevuba marshland in February 2016. By that time, the investment project had moved on to another production site in Kigali and only few people were working in the marshland. We approached two women who were collecting grass from uncultivated marshland plots. They explained that the marshland had been flooded in the previous weeks and we began to chat about the marshland and its different forms of use, and its value for the local population. Soon we learned that both of them were not members of the cooperative, but had worked as wage workers for the investor. One of them, called Kabahire, explained: "To become a member you have to pay a membership fee, and we do not have the money to pay that fee". At that time, the fee was 7,000 RWF, slightly lower than before the tragedy with the failed joint venture. I asked her if she could become a member of the cooperative if she had those 7,000 RWF, and she replied: "Yes. Everyone would like to have that opportunity of working with the cooperative here in the marshland!" (FN_2016-02-02). Wondering why she had not used the money she had earned to join the cooperative, she replied that by that time, they had a lot of needs in her home so she had spent the money otherwise.

My encounter with Kabahire opened up a new perspective. It demonstrated that cooperative entry fees could pose a challenge, especially for women or, more generally, families with low financial capacities. Due to such monetary barriers, the cooperative was not open to everyone. Owning a plot in the marshland was already a privilege (see also my findings about other cooperatives' exclusive

135 According to the Gender Monitoring Office, 79.1% of Rwanda's female population is involved in agricultural activities while it is only 54.4% of the male population (Gender Monitoring Office 2017, 10).

character in chapter 5.5). I began to wonder whether the investor's solo project was not possibly more inclusive even than the cooperative, in the sense that it offered new income opportunities for the poorer segments of the rural society, for those who otherwise could not afford to register as a member of the cooperative. As Johnny had said, most of the workers during the second stage of the investment project were poor. Many of them were old women, but the investor's project also hired high-school students who came to earn some extra money during their holidays, and even some cooperative members were working for the investor after the failed joint venture.

Two weeks later, I visited Kabahire at her place. Her husband was not around. As she told me, he was out, looking for a job. Her husband was doing all sorts of different jobs. They had six children and owned a small plot which was not enough to provide food for all of them. This was why they had to look for additional means of income. Mostly, her husband was working as a cultivator on other people's farms. "Sometimes I go with him, sometimes I remain here when some of our children don't go to school or we all go together when none of them attends school," Kabahire explained (I_K_2016-02-16). Her little remark points to the structural limitations also other women face in the wage-working sector. As feminist scholars have pointed out, job and land markets are typically not isolated or "egalitarian" entities, but are permeated by gender and power relations (Razavi 2009, 211). Behrman, Meinzen-Dick, and Quisumbing (2012, 60) note that "(…) formal-sector jobs are largely or exclusively for men" which according to them explains women's low representation in such kinds of jobs. Even though this was not the case in the investor's solo project, which employed more women than men, Kabahire's situation shows that her reproductive responsibilities at home sometimes prevented her from taking advantage of such employment opportunities. To my own fortune, that day too, Kabahire had to stay home with some of her children.

During our conversation, she did not complain about her experiences with the investor. She had worked for him and she had been given her wages on time. Interestingly though, she replied in the negative when I asked her if she wanted the investor to come back. "I wouldn't be happy with him coming back, because when people cultivate for themselves, they get enough vegetables to sell and to eat and even reserve seeds to use in the next season. But when they are working for him, he doesn't give them such opportunities," she noted, and then she explained why for her, working on other citizens' marshland plots was more profitable than the wages she had received from the investor: "Working for a person from here means they give you some part of what they harvest, but the investor doesn't give you anything of the harvest" (I_K_2016-02-16).

Kabahire's answer rejected my earlier idea that the investor's solo project might have created better opportunities for women. Quite contrary to my expectations, the several female wage workers I talked to did not consider the investor's wages as really helpful. They were valorizing the payment

in forms of food higher in value than the monetary income they had received from the investor. This attitude once more reflects a more general pattern I outlined already in the previous chapters. Not all, but many of the female farmers understood cultivation very much in terms of food provision. When asking them how much they could gain from a plot of sweet potatoes, they would name a certain amount of money and add: "plus food for the family" or they would express the value of the plot by telling me how long their families could eat from it. The marshlands play a significant role in this regard, because they are the only areas where food can easily be produced during the dry season. The statement of Veneranda, a female cooperative member, nicely illustrates this point:

> Do you think if we had not worked for him [the investor], we would be this hungry now? The major advantage of the marshland is that we can cultivate there in the sunny season. (...) In the sunny season we all go down there and cultivate instead of sitting back home doing nothing. But when the investor came, many of us were unemployed because we were afraid of that kind of job. We usually start to cultivate the *igishanga* at the end of May, and by July the beans start to grow and become green beans. When we harvest and sell the beans we get much money, and that money saves us! (…) Before, we were so fine with planting French beans. We were all doing fine and it was better for the people who had two fields, because they were also able to plant *ibishyimbo* [the classical dried beans, one of the Rwandan staple foods] and that was so helpful! (I_V_2016-02-27).

Veneranda's statement argues that the marshland's transition from a local production site for both food- and market crops into an investment farm under external control, and exclusively producing cash crops, has put her food security at risk. Behrman, Meinzen-Dick, and Quisumbing write about the structural consequences when "traditional subsistence farming"[136] is replaced by "large-scale commercial-oriented agricultural systems":

> Such a shift can be detrimental to the livelihoods of rural farmers, who lose the direct use of their land and thus must sell their labor to work on their former land to gain income. This wage labour [*sic*] does not guarantee the cash necessary to maintain a quality of life comparable to that prior to the sale of land (Behrman, Meinzen-Dick, and Quisumbing 2012, 64).

The year-round provision of food has definitely been a common concern among women such as Kabahire or Veneranda. In addition, seasonality heavily impacts upon the availability of staples on the local market as well as on their price. From that perspective, it is understandable why Kabahire, Veneranda and also other women I met would have preferred to get a share of the harvest instead of being paid a wage which, later on, had to be transformed into food under fluctuating and maybe unprofitable conditions. And, as I have shown in the previous chapters, family internal hierarchies and men's appropriation of cash income (see chapter 7.5.3) also explain why some women prefer food payments.

136 For a critical reflection on the opposition of terms such as "subsistence farming" versus "commercial farming" see Little and Horowitz (1987) or Peters (2006, 328)2006, p. 6.

A further structural adjustment that happened under the investor's solo production was that the hired farmers no longer worked on individually assigned plots, but were given specific tasks. After a while, Johnny started to group the workers into different teams:

> We would have these teams for land preparation, we would have a team responsible for harvesting, a team responsible for irrigation and another team responsible for weeding; we had a team responsible for making the drainage. So everyone knew their tasks for the next day (I_J_2016-01-15).

Since Johnny had supervised the farmers and knew their qualities, it was easy for him to assign them with the most suitable tasks. As for the task of spraying discussed at the start of this chapter, the attribution of tasks followed a gendered labour division. Hitimana, who was one of his workers, had observed:

> There were no special criteria, but women were assigned to do light work, for example weeding, putting the manure on the plants, and harvesting. Because for example a woman cannot load things onto the lorry when men are around, or spray the pesticides because normally the sprayer is heavy (I_H_2016-01-13).

The division of his workforce into teams helped Johnny to coordinate and manage the different tasks that needed to be done. But apart from that, the teams had an additional advantage, as he explained:

> Teams were competing. We were sometimes awarding the best team. Like, in the process of production, there is one team with 500g and then you see the other team has only 200g we were planning to give the winner a bonus. So it created some kind of competition. I think that was what motivated people (I_J_2016-01-15).

Proudly Johnny recalled how he finally managed to have a successful and stable production in Kajevuba. While he was talking, my own thoughts wandered back to the time of my first stay in Rutunga. I remembered seeing him and his workers in the rich fields of beans. It was in the beginning of June and Johnny eagerly told me about the good yields he was expecting. If it was for him, the project in Kajevuba would not be over after the three months of trial (FN_2015-06-02). There was another encounter about one and a half months later, mid-July, where he was sitting in the *hangari* with big grin on his face. Together with some women he was sorting piles of green beans: straight green beans of a certain size and colour were carefully placed in plastic boxes to be exported to Europe, while crooked, too-small or too-big beans were put separately to be sold at the local market (FN_2015-07-15). Not even half a year later, all this had turned into yet another finished chapter in Kajevuba's past.

However, what to Johnny was the key to finally achieving a stable production soon evolved into a new level of exploitation of farmers. Veneranda recalled, about her time as a wage worker under the investor's solo project:

> He hired people to work for him and he paid them 1,000 each. We started working for him as well. He was kind enough to pay us all on time. We got our wages after 15 days. So we kept working for him and after some time, the whole *igishanga* was flooded, and we went home. When the water was drying up, we were called again to come back and work. So we worked and then he was like: "Even though water made it hard for you to work, but still my workers worked and I have to give them their wages!" and he gave us our wages. After that we continued working for him and we received all our wages on time. But then he realised how he was making losses, because of the flood and all the money he had paid to his workers. He changed the strategy and we started creating small teams that were working in different fields. So the time came to harvest and he gave 1,000 to the workers who got a full basket and 500 to those who didn't get a full basket (I_V_2016-02-27).

The interview with Diane, a landless woman who had been working for the investor as well, adds to this information:

> Each field was worked on with five people, and when they didn't finish the whole garden, they were paid 500 each. It was too little for us, because sometimes some groups were given a field which is not easy to cultivate on. Some people started to resign because of that reason. Five hundred was not enough (I_D_2016-02-27).

These two statements indicate that the new strategy applied by Johnny also worked the other way round: not only was there a bonus for the team with the best performance, but a farmer's day revenue was halved when the given task was not fulfilled on time. Modern Times had finally reached this Rwandan marshland in the sense that similar to Charlie Chaplin who, in his film of the same name, fails to keep up with the ever-increasing speed of the assembly line, farmers were now struggling to fulfil their day's tasks to receive their full payment. In addition, the new "team" setup provoked competition between the teams and a high pressure of commitment for individual farmers to not make other team members lose because of their slow performance.

The new production setup was critically eyed by local citizens, in particular the cooperative members. "It usually takes twelve days to cultivate a plot, and the investor brings two people and tells them to do it in one day," Hitimana's father, a long-standing cooperative member, angrily noted. But then he made an interesting remark: "So what they [the workers] do is, they cultivate badly, to make him [the farm manager] believe that they have cultivated the whole plot. Like for us, we pay 6,000 to have one plot cultivated and he wants to pay only 1,000. This is why people just dig the soil, and don't really cultivate!" (M_HF_2016-02-13).

The difference between "digging" and "cultivating", as it was explained to me, mainly referred to how thorough the soil was prepared. Instead of breaking up the hard soil and hoeing deep into the ground, the fields were tilled only very superficially to make them look "cultivated". Apparently, some workers had used this little swindle to ensure their full payment. It is interesting to note that a very similar tactic was already applied under Belgian colonial rule to deceive the local administration with regard to the earlier discussed *shiku* fields (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 2016, 278) (see chapter 3.3).

The new setup under the investor's solo project generically prompts the question of who were the winners and who were the losers in such a competitive system. "I can tell you at least five people who managed to buy a bicycle!", Johnny exclaimed, insisting that the investor's project had helped the local population. But the names he noted all were men's names. "What about the women?" I asked. "Women use all the money they get for food or for their kids' school fees", he said, confirming earlier accounts from other female informants (I_J_2016-01-15).

8.4. Degradations: Cooperative Struggles and Environmental "Calamities"

Upon my return to Rwanda about six months lager, in January 2016, the investor was no longer there. The drama with the failed investment project had made people suspicious, especially towards the presence of a white person. During my walks to the marshland I was eyed sceptically. Some people did not want to share any information about what had happened and expressed their concern that I might be one of the investor's spies. Others again, who knew me from my previous field trip, were pleased to inform me of what had happened.

The lady in the blue dress told me: "We decided to report the case to the media and we called TV1 and radio 91.1 FM and we explained our problem to the journalists. The radio station 91.1 airs the news around the country, every day at 8:30 p.m. If we had not chased him, the investor would have continued to work in the marshland" (C_BD_2016-01-16). She continued: "MINAGRI told us that we should not have taken the matter to the media. But we explained to MINAGRI that we were not ignorant. First of all the investor was brought by the government and during all that time when we were suffering, MINAGRI never came to us to hear our problems, so we no longer had trust either in the government or in the MINAGRI. That is why we decided to go to the media" (C_BD_2016-01-16).

I found this step quite remarkable, remembering my first encounter with the cooperative members in the *hangari*, where they had explained that there was nothing they could do because the marshland was state property. I further learned that the former president of the cooperative had resigned after the whole story was made public. The now ex-president of the cooperative confirmed that the cooperative members had decided to make the case public. He insisted, though, that the cooperative's decision was not the major reason for the investor leaving. According to him, the investor had left because of the difficult environmental conditions in this marshland, and because of the fact that he was making losses.

The investor's account actually supports this perception. During our conversation he explained that the project had shifted to another site because of the recurring floods in Kajevuba marshland. However, he also admitted that the cooperative's public accusations were the crucial trigger for him to

give up this marshland. He informed me that some of his workers had even started to secretly sell some harvest aside instead of delivering it to his farm manager.

The head of the NAEB horticulture department admitted that he felt really guilty for proposing the investor to work in such a bad marshland. “The marshland had its own problems that were not seen before”, he said in a sad voice: “Natural calamities – flooding came, like, twice. It was not sustainable. Investment was being lost. I understood him [the investor] actually leaving” (I_HH_2016-02-05).

Among the local farmers, the recurring floods were a commonly known and troublesome issue in this marshland, and MINAGRI must also have been well aware of this problem, since they had previously invested a lot of money into clearing and repairing the drainage system (see chapter 4).

According to Xavier, one of the core problems with most of the projects coming to Kajevuba marshland was their narrow understanding of the marshland’s ecological embeddedness:

> If they started doing the drainage from Kabuye near the sugar factory, by the time they would reach here, water would be dried up and able to flow. But because those private bodies come looking for their own profit, they don’t care about that, they just hear about Kajevuba marshland and they think it’s all about a marshland and cultivating and even when they fixed the problem, they only ever focused on Kajevuba, not caring about the main source of the problem. That’s why the flooding issue is always there, and never sorted out for good (I_X_2016-02-04).

All these accounts indicate that it is way too simple to make “lazy” farmers alone responsible for the damage due to recurring floods. The situation of Kajevuba marshland must be understood in a larger context of growing urbanisation and extraction of construction material as well as the fact that Kajevuba is part of a whole system of interacting rivers and marshlands.

After the investor’s departure, the cooperative had taken up their work in the marshland. However, instead of seeing the cooperative members happily engaged their marshland fields, only a few plots looked cultivated because yet another flood had flushed away their efforts (see picture 7).

The cooperative was in a very bad shape, as I was told during the meeting with Hitimana’s familiy:

> **Man**: It’s like there’s no cooperative.
> **Woman**: There is no cooperative.
> **Man**: A person cultivates beans and sometimes adds sweet potatoes when necessary.
> **Woman**: Also the fish from cooperative’s dam is useless to us.
> **Man**: Except that we cultivate according to the cooperative laws. But there is no cooperative. It’s a way of telling ourselves that we have a cooperative but in action, there is no cooperative and those laws of cooperative are not followed by anyone. If it was a real cooperative there would be leaders telling us that there is some money in the cooperative’s account. They would let us use it and find a way to clean the drainage. But we just go there to try cleaning it ourselves and we find the pesticides ourselves. So I don’t see any cooperative in that except only in thinking that the marshland is for cooperatives.

> **Woman**: Even though [the former president and founding member of Abakumburwa, my note] "ate money", at least he hired some workers to clean the drainage, but cooperative members also helped them to clean the drainage. When he left, the cooperative turned this way.
> (...)
> **Assistant**: So there's no cooperative there?
> (...)
> **Woman**: It is like seeing only that small house for the cooperative. The cooperative leaders are doing nothing (M_HF_2016-02-13).

This quote shows that the state of degradation not only concerned the environmental condition of Kajevuba marshland but also the solidarity and cohesion of the Abakumburwa cooperative. Some members no longer believed in the true benefit of a marshland cooperative. For them it was no more than "that small house", or "a law".

8.5. Counterfactual Considerations

This case of a foreign investment project in Kajevuba marshland shows how easily a promising joint venture can take a rather disastrous turn with serious consequences, most drastically for the local farmers and their cooperative, but also for the political prestige of the involved government bodies, and finally, for the investor.[137]

It can be argued that the severe failure of the project was due to a simplistic approach, where environmental risks such as floods as well as the seasonality and other dependencies of rural lives were underestimated. This is, I think, a true yet very general judgement. I would now like to reflect on the case by offering a short counterfactual analysis, even if this will not change anything about what has happened in Kajevuba already. Nevertheless, such an approach may offer ideas about how similar lapses may be prevented in the future.

What if, for instance, the cooperative had had a better tenure security in the state-owned marshland and they had therefore not sat "on the shorter end of the lever", as Robert had put it? Probably then they would not have felt the need to rush into this project. Maybe they would have taken more time to consider the proposal and they would have asked the investor to specify more details about the production – the costs for inputs, the labour intensity, and also what would happen in the case of crop failure due to the marshland's difficult conditions. Maybe such discussions would have also warned the investor's farm manager.

What if, we could further ask, the investor had asked for and listened to the cooperative members' knowledge from the very start? Maybe that way he could have learned about the harsh environmental conditions, about some of the cooperative members' limited labour capacities during the rainy season. Even if this might not have changed the outcome – the droughts and the floods would

137 The only one who probably profited from the project was the owner of the Agro Vet shop in Kigali, who had finally found a customer for his expensive chemical treatments.

still be there – it would probably have changed the way the entire joint venture had dealt with these situations.

What if there existed some sort of independent advisory office that had helped farmers to verify the contract for possible loopholes? Maybe that way the cooperative would have been warned not to sign any contract as long as the crucial production costs are not listed in detail. Or what if the state bodies such as the MINAGRI and the NAEB had considered this issue in their template contracts, to make sure that it is not only the farmers who account for unforeseen yield losses?

What if the cooperative had emerged form a genuine bottom-up movement in the first place? I would guess that in such a case the cooperative members' diverse backgrounds would have been discussed at a much earlier stage. Perhaps the cooperative would have found a convenient solution to make only the truly interested and committed members join the project while other members of the cooperative could first have a look to see whether they could bring up the necessary capacity to engage as well and whether the project really delivered the projected financial gains.

What if there were no floods in Kajevuba? What if the cheaper chemical treatments were available in Rwanda? What if… I am sure the readers could propose several more counterfactual considerations that would be worth a closer examination. These are just a few examples. Anyhow, they show that there is no simple answer, but several compounding factors that have led to the project's failure.

If we look at the case on a more abstract level, we see that several of the outlined frictions concern regulatory frameworks. I am not talking here only about the contract between the cooperative and the investor – which is, of course the most obvious example – or the wage-labour agreements between the investor and his workers. The issue of regulatory frameworks can also be found in the cooperative's insecure tenure situation in Kajevuba marshland, which has in a sense rushed them into this joint venture. Another issue that impacted on the production process relates to the import regulations of chemical treatments. Bilateral legislations also played a role when it comes to fulfilling specific European standards of crop treatment and export production. We thus see that partly conflicting regulatory frameworks at the local, national and even international level come together in this foreign investment project.

As scholars in the field of legal anthropology have shown, often such kinds of projects develop their own procedures and regulations that fall under the category "law of the project". According to von Benda-Beckman (2006, 60–61), project law refers "(...) to the complex of rules that emerges from the interaction of development project staff and their local target group, an interaction that often introduces new rules about access to resources and the distribution of authority in a project area", and some paragraphs later he further explains: "[p]roject decision-making procedures, legal con-

cepts, and rules of accountability may, however, be alien to the local situation. Resistance to these rules on the part of intended project beneficiaries creates a constant source of conflict and misunderstanding that may become a major obstacle to project success" (Benda-Beckmann 2006, 61–62). The Kajevuba investment project provides several examples of such a "law of the project": it introduced new production procedures and regulations; it introduced new plant criteria; it targeted a new market with different specifications from those formerly used by the cooperative members; the organisation of labour was restructured into full-time production, and later on into working in competitive teams. All this created new forms of dependencies and accountabilities but also, as we could see, conflicts.

Further, I would also like to use the case of the Kajevuba investment project to move, as Li (2005) proposes, "beyond" the state-society distinction made by Scott. As outlined at the end of chapter 5, Scott's "Seeing like a State" provides a useful analysis to understand the Rwandan cooperative approach in the marshlands not necessarily as a successful development policy but as a way to expand the control of the state. Li does not generally object to this argument, but goes a step further as she argues: "Scott's binary categories 'state – society,' 'state space – non-state space,' and 'power – resistance' provide insufficient analytical traction to expose the logic of these schemes or to examine their effects" (Li 2005, 384).[138]

Li's remark also holds true for the Kajevuba investment project. For sure, the Rwandan state plays a vital part within the whole project: by introducing the investor to the cooperative in the first place, by providing the contract template, by organizing an *umuganda* collective working day in the beginning of the investor's solo production, by advising the investor with regard to Rwandan import specifications, and so on. Disregarding this fact, the outlined investment case also demonstrates that within this high-modernist project, the state it is not the only actor that sets the agenda. There is also the investor and his farm manager; there is the cooperative with its diverse cooperative members and internal hierarchies; there are the wage workers (the students, the landless, etc.), and finally there is this white anthropologist, a friend to some, a spy to others, who is asking many questions. All these subjects (and there may be even more than the ones listed here) are part of this case. They define the project and thereby construct and actively shape the conditions so that the investment project evolved the way it evolved. The idea thus of an "all-seeing state", which enacts power and which transforms non-state spaces into state spaces is misleading, because, as Li argues, there is "(...) no spatial beyond of the state, and there are no subjects outside power" (Li 2005, 384).

A good example is the cooperative members' resistance. Whereas Scott locates resistance as something that rather happens at the margins or even outside the state spaces, as in autonomous territor-

138 This is, by the way, very much a feminist argument (see page 17).

ies, Li suggests a more sophisticated understanding of resistance. According to her, resistance has a lot to do with people's positions, not merely in geographical terms, but also in the sense of social and political positioning (Li 2005, 385). Understanding resistance this way, we find that resistance may occur even from within the state, and that the state may even provoke resistance as was the case in the Kajevuba investment project.

Nevertheless, Scott's analysis remains a useful framework for understanding the failure of the investment project. The most obvious example is the overly simplistic character of the investment project. "Simplifications", Scott argues, "are always far more static and schematic than the actual social phenomena they presume to typify" (Scott 1998, 46). The production plan of the Kajevuba investment project was simplistic, as it neglected two crucial factors: first, the environmental relatedness and difficult conditions in Kajevuba marshland (the recurring floods and the drought in the beginning of the joint venture). Second, the production plan failed to acknowledge the cooperative members' situatedness and responsibilities within a very particular social, ecological, and economical rural Rwandan setting.

The latter also links up with a major critique regarding the gender-specific outcomes of the failed investment project. Women did not benefit from the project's design, and the project was definitely not aware of the localities and temporalities of gendered labour patterns. It rather rendered an already vulnerable group even more vulnerable.

8.6. Conclusion: Ambiguous Developments

This chapter provided a detailed and polyphonic case study of the failed Kajevuba investment project that evolved over two stages: in the first stage, it took the form of a state-directed joint venture between a foreign investor and the Kajevuba marshland cooperative. After the failure of this joint venture, the investor was given part of the marshland to start his own solo production, where he was hiring local farmers on a daily base.

The collection of different narratives offered insights into the many compounding factors that accounted for the project's failure. The fragile tenure situation in the state-owned Rwandan marshlands, for instance, had rushed the cooperative members into this joint venture. Furthermore, the model contract, which was provided by a state institution, failed to protect the cooperative members from unexpectedly high production costs. Lacking transparency in the production process made it difficult for them to monitor the project's running costs, so that the low revenue at the end of the project came as a big surprise. Surprises were also experienced by the investor and his manager, when the cooperative farmers did not show up for work or when the cooperative turned out to be a quite heterogeneous group of farmers with quite different expectations, interests, and capacities.

When the investor was given a large part of the marshland for his own solo production, many of the cooperative farmers, most especially the mostly more vulnerable female farmers, faced serious hardships in feeding their families or in covering the expenses for their everyday-life needs. Even though the proportion of employed women under the investor's solo production was higher than in the cooperative, they did not really benefit. Female cooperative members argued that their own production in the marshland was more profitable than working for the investor. Similarly, the women hired under the second phase noted that the cash payments were less profitable and less sustainable than working for money and food on other cooperative members' plots.

At a theoretical level, this chapter has shown how the project's failure is linked to the interference of different legal and regulatory frameworks at different levels. The "project law" that evolved under the Kajevuba investment project created frictions and conflicts that partly account for the project's failure. In terms of governance, the case demonstrates that while the state and its authorities once more took a leading and important role inside the project, they were not the only actors involved. The Kajevuba investment case shows, with reference to Li (2005), that we need to go beyond a "state and its subjects" dichotomy if we want to understand modern-day processes of agrarian development on the ground.

Conclusion: Agrarian Change, Gender and the State – Marshland Development in Rwanda

More than a quarter century has passed since the 1994 genocide destroyed many lives in Rwanda. Since then things have changed, and they continue to change every day. Rwandans in the rural areas and in the cities, Rwandans in the fields, in the schools, on the streets and in the offices are committed to work for a better future. “Development” is the magic word that fuels their deeds.

Indeed, as noted in the introduction of this work, Rwanda’s progress in terms of development statistics is impressive. Between 1990 and 2018, life expectancy rose from 33.4 to 68.7 years, the mean years of schooling have increased from 1.8 to 4.4 years and Rwanda’s GNI per capita has more than doubled from 865 USD in 1990 to 1,959 USD in 2018 (UNDP 2019, 3). According to the government’s statistics, poverty has declined from 56.7 to 38.2 percent, and extreme poverty even more so, from 35.8 to 16 percent between 2005/06 and 2016/17 (NISR 2019, 2). Apart from such statistical trends, Rwanda has also shown remarkable progress in many other fields. It has implemented several ambitious new laws and policies, such as the new land laws and the new cooperative law. Rwanda has the world’s highest number of female parliamentarians, and women’s legal position in Rwanda is better than in most other African states.

Since Rwanda is a landlocked country it has tried to develop a second mainstay in the provision of IT services and software development. Alongside electric wires, fibre optic cables also now run through the countryside and promise fast internet connection all over the country. Rwanda’s image of being a safe and well-organised country relatively free of corruption, has attracted international investors. In 2018, Volkswagen presented the first car assembled in Rwanda’s new production plant in Kigali. New business centres, hotels and prestigious buildings such as the Kigali convention centre have transformed Kigali into a modern metropolis, regularly referred to as the Singapore of Africa. The streets are well-maintained and clean, amongst other reasons due to the government’s ban on plastic bags introduced in 2008, and thus years ahead of many Western countries.

Furthermore, the countryside has undergone major changes. This work particularly focussed on the transformation of the marshlands, where the government has embarked on a science-based intensification of the country's agrarian production. To feed the country's growing population despite its very limited land resources, marshlands have been transformed into large-scale production sites with modern production technology. The cooperatives that were introduced in the marshlands are expected not only to facilitate higher economic benefits, but also to foster a sense of unity and create cohesion among the divided communities.

Rwanda has gone through a lot in the past decades and years. It has achieved a great deal, but obviously there still is a lot of work ahead for the proper making of a New Rwanda. Following Rwanda's latest development strategy paper, the Vision 2050 (GoR 2020), Rwanda shall develop into an upper-middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050. Birth rates are to be reduced so that development efforts will create a "healthy, well educated, and highly skilled labor force (...)". Agrarian production is to be "(…) totally transformed with professional farmers and commercialized value chains", and in terms of governance the country is planning to extend the rule of law as a foundation for sustainable peace and stability (GoR 2020, 5–6). All these ambitious development goals are captured under Kagame's three guiding principles, presented at his commemoration speech in April 2014: "staying together", "being accountable" and "thinking big" (speech by Kagame, April 2014).

Howsoever, Rwanda today is different from how it was 25 years ago. The strong upward trend is terms of development is no longer as reliable as it used to be around the turn of the Millennium (UNDP 2019, 3). Recently, more critical studies from qualitative as well as quantitative fields (Desiere, Staelens, and D'Haese 2016; Ansoms et al. 2018) indicate that the average figures presented in these promising development trends neglect one crucial aspect: not everybody benefits from the country's impressive progress in the same way. "Thinking big" or "looking far", as one of my female informants had put it, is currently a privilege enjoyed only by better-situated families, and not the lived reality of many of the rural smallholders I encountered during my research. Their lives do not align smoothly with the optimistic curve progressions that are found in the national development reports. While President Kagame still counts on broad popular support, his government's measures are not without controversy (Scott Straus and Waldorf 2011; Hahirwa 2014; Ansoms et al. 2017) and social inequality is still very pronounced (Dawson 2018; Orrnert 2018; NISR 2019, 2).[139]

139 The GINI index for Rwanda has decreased from 0.522 to 0.429, but still is rather high (NISR 2019, 2). A small addition regarding the issue of inequality in Rwanda: it is interesting that a country as densely populated as Rwanda, where land is a very limited resource and land scarcity provides a leading argument for agrarian intensification (our land is limited hence we must become more productive), no data are publicly available about the distribution of land, despite the fact that the process of land registration is very advanced.

As I have amply illustrated and analysed in different parts of this work, this ambiguity also finds expression in the way how Rwandans talk about the country's achievements. Even though, during our first encounters, people's answers usually adhered to the government's narrative, for instance when they praised the great advantages of the cooperative setup in the marshlands or when they valued women's new legal position, this work clearly shows that what people say is not necessarily what they think, and what they think is not necessarily what they do. For a researcher this creates several methodological challenges, most especially in such a politicised and firmly controlled research context as Rwanda. As I concluded in the methodology chapter, anthropological fieldwork because of its close and long-term engagement with local communities, is probably one of the best approaches to overcome such obstacles.

What emerged from the ground, once the so called "public transcript" (Scott 1990), was put aside, were much more nuanced accounts, impressions and insights into rural everyday life. These accounts offered alternative understandings and even questioned the government's success story as outlined just a few pages previously. While my informants would still initially confirm the government's development efforts they would also express their sentiment that progress was becoming more and more difficult. While they would generally appreciate free education, they would further explain that good schools were expensive, and that it was hard to find a well-paid job. They would basically support the government's plans for rural transformation, but later on note that it was not easy to meet the government's expectations. Many of these accounts also harboured sadness and frustration about not seeing their lives follow the promised and promoted pathway of development. And while the government still draws on a very clear and seemingly smooth all-round vision of what development means for Rwanda, the voices I have presented in this work are far less straightforward about what development really means to them: a better life? National growth? Freedom? Peace? We therefore may ask: what has been achieved, and have these achievements truly brought about a better life for all Rwandans?

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Rwanda is known as the country of the thousand hills. But it could just as well have been called the country of the thousand valleys. These valleys – or, more precisely, the marshlands situated in the valley bottoms – have been the starting point of this research. Being one of the country's last remaining land resources, the Rwandan marshlands have increasingly come into the political focus of the post-genocide government. Over the past decade, this has had as a consequence a growing regularisation and juridification of these lands, which in turn has heavily impacted on the way rural smallholders can access and make use of these lands. One of the aims of this work was to trace this change and to analyse the political as well as local and social significance of these marshlands from

Rwanda's past into the present time. This dissertation thus involved a diachronic perspective. Apart from this historical approach, the main focus was placed on the people, and on the questions of how rural Rwandans, and female smallholders in particular, deal with these many new regulations, and how the introduced laws and policy measures have affected their lives on the ground. Let us recall that I focussed on three central themes:

1. The government's new land laws and agrarian policy in the marshlands.
2. The primarily structural reform that puts the use of marshlands under the control of so-called "marshland cooperatives".
3. The gender equality regulations and measures that were taken in the marshlands aiming at women's financial and political empowerment.

To do justice to the complex matter of research, I combined historical analysis with oral history and the empirical findings from 12 months of in-depth fieldwork between 2014 and 2016. Theoretically this work was inspired and guided by current discussions and debates in the fields of critical agrarian studies, feminist theory and the anthropology of governance.

The growing political interest in **marshlands** is not a Rwandan peculiarity. Vast areas of African marshlands are currently projected as prosperous sites, not only for agrarian exploitation or for other forms of financial investments, but also as potential wetland nature reserves that must be protected from human exploitation (Woodhouse 2000; Haller 2010; Wood, Dixon, and McCartney 2013b; van Soest 2020). As different and partly contradictory as these perspectives may be, they are based on the same argument, namely that these supposedly empty or unused land resources will be of great value for the future of the continent. In Rwanda's agrarian policy too the marshlands are described as un(der)developed land resources and, in consequence, as representing great potential for the nation's agrarian future (GoR and MINAGRI 2004, 17, 41). However, as outlined in the historical chapters 3 and 4 on the socio-political history of Rwanda's marshlands and on the transformation of Kajevuba marshland, marshlands look back on a long history of multiple forms of local use. They served not only as spaces of food production, but were valued for their rich flora and fauna and the materials that could be extracted from those grounds, like reed, clay and of course water. Furthermore, the marshlands also were central spaces of power interest. Over the course of time, the various political regimes in Rwanda have tried to shape access to and use of the marshlands according to their own interests. Later on they were used as production territories for colonial trade, and during the time of independence they provided fertile soil for prestigious development projects. The narrative that marshlands are "empty" lands hence does not hold true in the Rwandan case. Instead, such arguments serve to legitimate top-down processes of marshland enclosure.

Rather than understanding the Rwandan marshlands as "virgin" lands that were neither socially, economically nor politically of great significance, this work proposed to understand the marshlands as an integrative part of Rwandan history, life and politics. Employing a historical narrative on marshlands as social spaces has furthermore shown that already in the past there existed rules and regulations as to how these lands could be accessed and used, but – and this marks the major difference from the current situation in Rwanda's marshlands – never before have these lands been so severely regulated, so carefully controlled and so meticulously orchestrated as they are today. This, together with the above noted historical clarification about the meaning and local importance of Rwanda's marshlands, is one important finding of this work.

A second equally important finding that relates to the growing tendency of marshland regulation concerns the **marshland cooperatives,** which have become the primary setup in Rwanda's marshlands. As outlined in chapter 5, Rwanda's new cooperative policy declares the cooperative movement to be a strong and autonomous political force in post-genocide Rwanda. However, my insights from four Rwandan marshland cooperatives severely challenge this view. The four cases show that, in fact, the state is very much involved in the cooperatives' affairs. The marshland cooperatives are liable to many state-imposed regulations and orders. They underlie the CIP cropping obligations and thus are not entirely free in their decisions of what to crop and how to organise the production in the marshlands. They have to follow predefined roles of good cooperative management and they are pressured to cooperate with external, state-approved investors and donors. The marshland cooperatives I have studied adhere to the government's vision, at least officially, while at the same time they bend and adapt the new regulations in such a way that they better suit their own realities. This balancing act, "to bend without breaking" (de Lame 2005, 399) is a big challenge to many of the cooperative members, especially the more vulnerable ones.

The underlying problem here is that many of the government's regulations and policies are very generalising. They impose their policies very much in a top-down and "one approach fits all" manner and hardly consider the differences between the cooperative members' quite diverse economic and family backgrounds. The high pressure to perform and to meet the government's expectations in terms of modern agriculture, monocropping, market-oriented production, high yields, and so on make it difficult for the cooperative members to really address their own needs. Furthermore, the marshland cooperatives experience a high degree of tenure insecurity in the state-owned marshlands, which weakens their already fragile autonomy and bargaining hand vis-à-vis the state and its authorities. Open criticism is avoided, because the cooperatives fear losing the land if they challenge the government's vision. With reference to Scott (1998) I therefore concluded that rather than constituting a true and effective bottom-up movement, the cooperatives in Rwanda's marshlands

first and foremost serve as a convenient interface through which the state expands its control over the marshlands to better govern these valuable assets and its working subjects.

Aside from such agrarian regulations, the cooperatives are also used to push ahead the governments goals in terms of **gender equality.** Gender equality is a theme of great importance in Rwanda and, as illustrated in chapter 6, "gender" has become something like a common currency in the country's political discourse. In order to advance gender equality, the government has introduced gender quotas which also apply to marshland cooperatives. Aside from such legal regulations, state programs promote women's access to and active participation in the cooperatives to help them benefit from commercial agrarian production. This has opened up opportunities for some women to defy "traditional" gender norms and improve their situation. At the same time, the government's vision conveys new norms of emancipated gender identities. The stories presented in this work have shown that not all women can or want to comply with these norms.

Chapter 6, furthermore embarked on a critical discussion of the government's understanding of gender equality in the marshland context basically as a means to integrate women into the neoliberal market. However, in an environment that can be described as characterised by "competitive empowerment", women do not equally benefit from this approach. Women whose personal freedoms are constricted, who have limited economic and labour capacities and therefore struggle to adhere to the cooperatives' cropping plans or to sell their harvest at profitable yet more distant markets face serious challenges and are left behind in the government's vision of empowerment. We can conclude that gender is one important factor, but not the only one that matters here. It will be necessary for future research on women's empowerment in Rwanda to consider gender as an intersectional category. More studies are needed to analyse the interplay or "intersections" between different compounding categories such as marital status, education, class/economic capacity, household composition, and of course gender in Rwanda. It would be even more interesting if further studies could critically investigate the impact of ethnicity[140], notwithstanding the fact that this will be a very sensitive issue given the country's genocide past.

That some women apparently do not to partake in the government's vision of empowerment also has a lot to do with the way the gendered labour division is embedded and reproduced in the wider context of rural life. As argued in chapter 7, while, at least on first impression, the marshlands themselves appear as rather egalitarian spaces, spatial and temporal understandings of gender-related labour patterns pertain. The division of labour is ultimately linked to gender norms and responsibilities based on cultural conceptions of gendered bodies and interests, which are currently challenged

140 Such a study should not fall into the trap of defining ethnicity by reproducing the classical distinction between racist biased categories such as Twa, Hutu and Tutsi. A more nuanced and more accurate approach for modern-day Rwanda is needed that could consider regionality, war experiences, lineage traits and so on.

at the same time as they are perpetuated locally and globally. This creates a very ambiguous understanding of gender equality in Rwanda, which came to expression during the group discussions with cooperative members as well as during individual interviews. Often these ambiguities were resolved by providing clear dissociations: the "cultural side" from the "political sphere", the government's "law" from people's "mindset", the "theoretical prospects of equality" from the "individual expectations" of rural smallholders. However, the stories and explanations provided by widows and mothers, husbands and fathers, girls and boys, policy-makers and implementers show that these juxtapositions are way too simple.

From this specific marshland context, we thus can confirm what has been found also by other scholars on Rwanda (Burnet 2011), that while on the one hand, women today are granted new rights and have many new opportunities, they are not relieved from their various other responsibilities. As a result, women may experience their new position as an additional burden or – to use Guyer's (1988) expression – as a "multiplication of labour". Even in the political debates on gender equality, women strongly remain within the frame of the traditional proverb stating that a woman is the heart of the home. This makes it difficult for women to reconcile their primary responsibility for their families with the growing pressure to perform according to the government's understanding of emancipation: to take leading positions inside the cooperative, to engage in cash-crop production and to ultimately resonate with the vision of the modern and New Rwanda. Women who manage to comply with this image mostly do so by employing cheap female labour or delegating tasks to their daughters or other female family members and thereby reinforce the gendered division of labour.

The gendered division of labour also plays a role in chapter 8, when discussing the case of a foreign investment project in one of the cooperatives' marshlands. Initially, the project started as a joint venture between the investor and the cooperative. When the joint venture failed, the cooperative temporarily lost the uses rights to about half of their land, which was given to the investor to continue his own "solo production" by employing wage workers. Even though there were more women employed under the investor's solo production than there were female members in the cooperative, the accounts put forward by a number of female farmers indicate that the investment project hampered rather than fostered women's empowerment. This partially had to do with the way the production was organised, and, especially during the investor's solo production, became increasingly competitive and exploitative. It would be interesting, for further studies, to enhance this analysis by looking at such cases of agrarian investment projects from the viewpoint of agro-industrial labour as specified by Kuiper (2019).

Aside from such gendered aspects, the case study of this foreign investment project illustrates the potential pitfalls that may easily turn an initially promising-sounding agrarian investment project

into losses. While from the side of the government and the investor, the failure of the project was primarily attributed to farmers' "ignorance", their "lack of understanding", and to some degree to environmental "calamities", the multiple perspectives presented in chapter 8 rather point to a several compounding factors such as the cooperative's fragile tenure situation that had forced the cooperative members into this joint venture in the first place, the labour-intensive production setup that stood in conflict with farmers' other responsibilities, contractual issues, disadvantageous import regulations for chemical treatments, lack of transparency, and finally the marshland's difficult environmental conditions, which all accumulated into financial losses and frustration for all project parties involved.

At last, with regard to the critical debates on land grabbing in the Global South, the investigated case of farmland investment furthermore highlights the central role of state agents in such kinds of projects. Not only did the government authorities introduce the investor to the cooperative, and provide a model contract for the joint venture, they were also actively involved, if not "leading", in the decision to transfer half of the cooperative's marshland to the foreign investor for his solo production. The state thus crucially shaped the project's goals and regulatory frameworks. This supports an important argument raised by scholars such as Lavers (2012) or Peters (2013), who have called for a more critical assessment of the involvement of national (government) elites in the context of farmland investments. While highlighting the role of the government, the Kajevuba investment project equally shows that the Rwandan state was not the only actor involved in this scenario, and that the project soon deployed its own regulatory frameworks – what legal anthropology has come to call the "law of the project". Thus, as a complement to the central finding presented in chapter 5 about the Rwandan government using the marshland cooperatives to expand state control over its resources and subjects, the investment case urges us to further specify, with Li (2005), that in order to understand modern-day processes of agrarian development in a neoliberal and globalised context, we need to go beyond the simplistic dichotomy of "the state" versus "its subjects".

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Looking at these different findings from a more general perspective, we see that many of the ambiguities described in this work result from the way the Rwandan state tries to create sovereignty in front of its subjects. For instance: while women in Rwanda today are definitely better represented in the cooperatives, the scope of action and the freedom of decision inside the cooperatives are becoming more and more restricted. Similar tendencies can be observed in many other political domains, not least in Rwanda's top-down agrarian politics. The underlying question here is one of power – of how power expands between the Rwandan state and its subjects, but also, as argued in chapter 8, of

how power is negotiated between national sovereignty and state-building on the one hand and global processes and dependencies on the other.

There exist, by now, several works that have tackled these questions and have analysed state governance in Rwanda (Scott Straus and Waldorf 2011; Burnet 2008; Thomson 2013; Reyntjens 2013; Ingelaere 2014; Huggins 2017; Purdeková 2015; Nyenyezi Bisoka and Ansoms 2020). The difficulty there emerges in this very polarised debate, is to escape the simplistic and rather homogeneous understanding of “the Rwandan state”, which is often used interchangeably with terms such as “the government”, “state authorities”, “national elites” or even “the president”. As a more general outlook, it would be necessary to break with this schematic view and to explore in more detail how the different levels and institutions inside the state apparatus relate to but also, as this work indicates at some points, contradict each other. It would be rewarding to further explore how rural Rwandans understand, perceive and differentiate between state institutions and government authorities at various levels and contexts.

The New Rwanda, it seems, is founded on two major characteristics: its success story and its regulatory strength. Currently the former is becoming less and less coherent, whereas the latter is becoming more and more coercive. The question is whether the country will succeed in turning the tide of governance by creating true and inclusive spaces for bottom-up policy processes. Spaces, not only for those who already largely conform to the government's understanding, but also the many others who currently lose out. We will have to wait and see whether Rwanda’s fame for being an exceptional country works out in this regard too.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Methods and Reference Codes

Interview (I_) – was typically arranged and prepared beforehand, had a specific intention. Not all interviews were necessarily recorded.

Meeting (M_) – was equally arranged yet less structured and may have involved more people.

Personal conversation (C_) – was often unplanned and unstructured and more casual than an interview or a meeting.

Focus Group (FG_) – was an arranged meeting that had a specific intention and was prepared and guided by me and my assistants.

Fieldnotes (FN_) – are not listed here because they are so many. They provide a more general description and reflection of situations observed and experienced in the field. They may include also statements from different actors that occurred in such situations.

Note that there does not always exist a clear line between these different forms of data collection.

* real name withheld ● recorded

Date (y-m-d)	**What**	**Reference code** **(Method_name/function_Date)**	**Rec.**
2015-02-16	Meeting with an *umudugudu* chief	M_UC_2015-02-16	
2015-03-04	Introductory meeting Bright Future* Cooperative	M_BF_2015-03-04	●
2015-03-05	Meeting with the *abunzis*	M_AB_2015-03-05	●
2015-03-10	Meeting with the Bright Future* Cooperative	M_BF_2015-03-10	
2015-03-13	Meeting with a local Cell Chief	M_CC_2015-03-13	
2015-04-03	Introductory meeting Vegetable for Peace* Cooperative	M_VP_2015-04-03	●
2015-04-03	Introductory meeting Sweet Salvation* Cooperative	M_SS_2015-04-03	●
2015-04-06	Meeting with another *umudugudu* chief	M_UC_2015-04-06	
2015-04-14	Interview with the Rutunga Sector Agronomist	I_RSA_2015-04-14	●
2015-04-15	Personal conversation with the Abakumburwa President	C_AP_2015-04-15	
2015-04-21	Personal conversation with a Rwandan scholar	C_RS_2015-04-21	
2015-04-28	Meeting with the District Agronomist	M_DA_2015-04-28	

2015-05-02	Interview with the Director General at MINAGRI	I_DG_2015-05-02	●
2015-05-04	Interview with an officer at RAB responsible for the QWMDP	I_RABO_2015-05-04	●
2015-05-07	Interview with the Monitoring and Evaluation officer at RSSP	I_RSSPME_2015-05-07	
2015-05-11	Interview with the Rutunga Registry Officer	I_RRO_2015-05-11	
2015-05-12	1st Focus Group Sweet Salvation* women	FG_SSW_2015-05-12	●
2015-05-13	Meeting with the Abakumburwa Cooperative	M_AC_2015-05-13	●
2015-05-14	1st Focus Group Vegetable for Peace* women	FG_VPW_2015-05-14	●
2015-05-15	Personal conversation with Robert*	C_R_2015-05-15	
2015-05-19	1st Focus Group Vegetable for Peace* men	FG_VPM_2015-05-19	●
2015-05-20	Meeting with the Sub-Project Leader of Abakumburwa	M_SLA_2015-05-20	
2015-05-21	2nd Focus Group Vegetable for Peace* women	FG_VPW_2015-05-21	●
2015-05-24	2nd Focus Group Sweet Salvation* women	FG_SSW_2015-05-24	●
2015-05-25	1st Focus Group Bright Future* women	FG_BFW_2015-05-25	●
2015-05-27	1st Focus Group Sweet Salvation* men	FG_SSM_2015-05-27	●
2015-06-03	2nd Focus Group Bright Future* women	FG_BFW_2015-06-03	●
2015-06-04	Interview with the Abakumburwa President	I_AP_2015-06-04	●
2015-06-04	Interview with Kabera	I_K_2015-06-04	●
2015-06-09	Interview with Xavier*	I_X_2015-06-09	●
2015-06-10	2nd Focus Group Sweet Salvation* men	FG_SSM_2015-06-10	●
2015-06-11	Personal conversation with an FAO officer	C_FAOO_2015-06-11	
2015-06-11	Personal conversation with the CICA librarian	C_CICAL_2015-06-11	
2015-06-12	1st Focus Group Bright Future* men	FG_BFM_2015-06-12	●
2015-06-16	2nd Focus Group Vegetable for Peace* men	FG_VPM_2015-06-16	●
2015-06-17	Meeting with the Rutunga Land Notary	M_RLN_2015-06-17	
2015-06-18	Interview with the MINAGRI Gender Coordinator	I_GC_2015-06-18	●
2015-06-19	2nd Focus Group Bright Future* men	FG_BFM_2015-06-19	●
2015-06-22	Meeting with Edouard	M_E_2015-06-22	

2015-06-23	Interview with Xavier*	I_X_2015-06-23	●
2015-06-24	Personal conversation with a government official	C_GO_2015-06-24	
2015-06-25	Interview with Marcel*	I_M_2015-06-25	●
2015-06-28	Interview with Uwineza*	I_U_2015-06-28	●
2015-06-29	Interview with Marcel*	I_M_2015-06-29	●
2015-07-01	Interview with Beatrice*	I_B_2015-07-01	●
2015-07-06	Interview with Uwineza*	I_U_2015-07-06	●
2015-07-07	Meeting with Kabera	M_K_2015-07-07	
2015-07-09	Interview with Beatrice*	I_B_2015-07-09	●
2015-07-10	Interview with Jeannette*	I_J_2015-07-10	●
2015-07-10	Meeting with the Bright Future* Cooperative	M_BF_2015-07-10	
2015-07-15	Interview with Jeannette*	I_J_2015-07-15	●
2016-01-13	Interview with Hitimana*	I_H_2016-01-13	
2016-01-15	Interview with Johnny*	I_JO_2016-01-15	●
2016-01-16	Personal conversation with the Lady in the Blue Dress	C_BD_2016-01-16	
2016-01-18	Meeting with the Bright Future* Cooperative	M_BF_2016-01-18	
2016-01-19	Interview with the Abakumburwa Ex-President	I_APEX_2016-01-19	●
2016-01-21	Interview with Arnaud de Rambures	I_AR_2016-01-21	●
2016-01-24	Meeting with Bright Future Committee members	M_BFC_2016-01-24	
2016-01-26	Meeting with Marie* and Laurence*	M_ML_2016-01-26	
2016-02-04	Interview with Xavier*	I_X_2016-02-04	●
2016-02-04	Meeting with Rutunga Sector Agronomist	M_RSA_2016-02-04	
2016-02-05	Interview with Head of Horticulture NAEB	I_HH_2016-02-05	●
2016-02-09	Interview with a Rural Sociologist at RSSP	I_RS_2016-02-09	●
2016-02-12	Meeting with the Sweet Salvation* Cooperative	M_SS_2016-02-12	
2016-02-13	Meeting with Hitimana's* family	M_HF_2016-02-13	●
2016-02-15	Interview with a Community Developer at RSSP	I_CD_2016-02-15	●

2016-02-16	Interview with Kabahire*	I_K_2016-02-16	●
2016-02-22	Interview with Seraphine*	I_S_2016-02-22	●
2016-02-24	Speech of the Rutunga Sector Agronomist	S_RSA_2016-02-24	●
2016-02-24	Interview with Claire*	I_C_2016-02-24	●
2016-02-24	Personal conversation with Mutuyimana*	C_M_2016-02-24	
2016-02-26	Interview with Sophie*	I_S_2016-02-26	●
2016-02-26	Meeting with Ancilla* and Bosco*	M_AB_2016-02-26	
2016-02-27	Interview with Veneranda*	I_V_2016-02-27	●
2016-02-27	Interview with Diane*	I_D_2016-02-27	●

Appendix 2: Two Exemplary Interviews Guides

Agricultural Experts

INTRODUCTION

Hello, first of all I want to thank you for taking your time. As you know, this interview is part of my PhD-research on agriculture and gender relations with a focus on wetlands. My research belongs to big project about Wetlands in four East African countries: Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda.

To make a few things clear from the very beginning:

- If you have any question or you feel unclear about something, please don't hesitate to ask.
- Of course the interviews will be used only with your agreement and exclusively for the purpose of my research.
- **Do you mind me recording this interview?**
- If there are things you don't want me to record just give me a short note. We can always switch the record off.
- **Authorisation:** Are you fine with me using this interview for my research?
- How do you want me to refer to you in my research? Or would you prefer to remain **anonymous?**

1) First of all I would ask you to introduce yourself, who you are, your name, your **professional background**, since when are you working in ___?
2) Can you tell me about your daily work, and responsibilities as ___?
3) What has your work to do with issues such as wetlands, marshlands or food security?

MAIN PART

4) What importance have wetlands in Rwandan agriculture?
5) For what kind of things do people use the wetlands in Rwanda? Other purposes of wetlands or works done in wetlands apart from agriculture?
6) How is hillside agriculture related to wetland agriculture?
7) How did wetlands look like 30 years ago?
   - techniques
   - crops
   - labour organization (family structure to cooperatives?)
   - subsistence production to market production
   - small scale to large scale
   - How have land tenure systems shifted?
8) Where can I find out more about the history of Wetlands, especially the Wetlands in Gasabo (Rutunga Wetlands, Kajevuba and Nyabugogo?
9) Can you give me material and data on Agriculture in Gasabo? Numbers of what has been cropped, **size of wetlands**, what has been cropped, numbers about the output, the wetland modernization policies? Access to Reports?
10) What about the government's modernization policies? How did they transform wetlands? See cards (I had prepared as set of cards with different terms/concepts such as: Land Consolidation, Crop Specialisation, Mono cropping, Biodiversity, Cooperatives, Green

Revolution, Resettlement Programme, Large-Scale Farming, Subsistence Agriculture, Sustainability). ►►► ***SEE CONCEPTS PART FOR OPTIONAL QUESTIONS***

11) From your point of view, what are the most pressing challenges and debates for the agricultural sector in Rwanda at the moment.

12) As a consequence of these changes: How has the relationship between people and the wetlands changed?

I told you that my research is focussing on **gender aspects.**

13) Can you tell me a bit more about the role of women in Rwandan agriculture?

14) How do women contribute to food security in Rwanda?

Several laws have been implemented (inheritance law, organic land law) to strengthen the legal position of women in Rwanda.

15) How have these laws affected agriculture? How did women before manage to get access to land?

16) Let's focus on the rural areas. Has the new position of women also had an effect on how labour is organized among women and men (eg. in the household or in the fields)?
    - And if yes, can you specify what exactly has changed?

17) What are the challenges that remain for women in rural Rwanda?

18) How do men redefine the understanding of traditional gender-roles? Especially their cultural concept of what a man should be like?

END: I am coming to a few last questions:

Especially in the agriculture sector there are a lot of **foreign donors and development programmes** from Western counties involved. I heard that also in Rutunga in the past and at the moment there were some large international organisations involved in wetland agriculture.

19) What do you think of Western donors and their development programmes in Rwandan agriculture?

20) Do you have any recent statistics/figures etc. about donor money and funds that could be helpful for my research?

21) How can people get access to such funds? Can you characterise the people, who apply for such funds?

22) What needs to be done that more people profit from donor money/funds?

Thank you !!! for this very interesting conversation. May I contact you in case I have some more questions coming up? How can I contact you?

Do you know anyone else who could be interesting for my research?

Is there anything else you think to be important for my work? Something you would like to add? Or do you have any questions about me and my work?

CONCEPTS

23) In general, what do you think about this whole debate on **small scale farming and large scale farming**?
- Green Revolution for Rwanda, biodiversity, technical issues, mono cropping
- Who do you think are the winners and looser of large scale agriculture?
- How can small scale farmers contribute to the future of Rwanda?
- What do you consider as the optimal farm size for a farmer peasant? And how do you come to this conclusion?
- How does your institution make sure that wetlands are used sustainably?
- How is the biodiversity of the wetland protected?

24) Market production vs. *inganduraru*go
- What do you think has changed for women since now, food is more and more produced for the market than for the households?
- How has the shift of wetlands from collective use to cooperatives under gov. control changed the position of women?
- *With the governments recent regulations concerning gender equality: What impact does that have inside cooperatives?*

25) Cooperatives
- How does it work to form a wetland cooperative? What other ways are there to get access to wetlands?
- What do local people think about those cooperatives? How do cooperatives change the community?

26) How does **transfer of agricultural knowledge** between generations work in Rwanda?

27) Do you think there is a future in agriculture for **young people**?

28) As we are talking about **rural and urban areas**, do you think Rutunga is a rural area or an urban area? Where would you say, urban Kigali ends and the rural area starts?

29) You have been using the word **“community”** several times. -What exactly do you mean by that? What is a community?

30) We have been talking a lot about **farmers.** Can you specify what you exactly mean by a farmer?
- What different categories of peasants/farmers exist in Rwanda?
- Often these people/families engage in all kind of different works to earn their living. How would you draw a line between a „real“ peasant and someone who is just doing some agriculture besides other jobs.
- When do you consider a peasant as commercial?

Gender Experts

INRODUCTION

Hello, first of all I want to thank you for taking your time. As you know, this interview is part of my PhD-research on gender and food security in the context of wetland agriculture, which belongs to a big project about Wetlands in four East African countries: Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda.

To make a few things clear from the very beginning:

- If you have any question or you feel unclear about something, please don't hesitate to ask.
- Of course the interviews will be used only with your agreement and exclusively for the purpose of my research.
- **Do you mind me recording this interview?**
- If there are things you don't want me to record just give me a short note. We can always switch the record off.
- And finally I would like to add that your responses will be kept confidential and you can stay anonymous if you want to.

1) First of all I would ask you to introduce yourself, who you are, what is your professional background, since when are you working for ___ and what is your work at ___ about?

2) As I told you I am doing research on gender and food security in the context of wetland areas. How are these issues related to your work?

MAIN PART

I told you that my research is focussing on **gender aspects.**

3) If you think of the Rwandan tradition. What does the Rwandan tradition say about gender roles? How is femininity and masculinity defined in the Rwandan tradition?

4) What did the labour division among genders look like in former times?

5) How is agriculture influenced by this understanding of gender?
   - Are/Were there special crops exclusively or mainly grown by women/men?
   - Is the field and techniques used for agriculture symbolic for gender relations?
   - What about wetlands? Were/are there certain gender rules in wetlands?

6) Can you tell me a bit more about the role/position of women in Rwandan agriculture?
   - What kind of expertise and special knowledge on agriculture do women have?
   - How do women contribute to food security in Rwanda?

Several laws have been implemented (inheritance law, organic land law) to strengthen the legal position of women in Rwanda.

7) When and Why did the Rwandan Government start to consider gender as an important issue for Rwanda?

8) How have these laws changed the role of women in Rwandan society in general? Can you give some examples?
   - Are there differences in how rural woman or urban woman experience this change?

9) This is very interesting, how did women traditionally manage to get access to land?

10) Let's focus on the rural areas. What were the consequences of this laws in the rural area?

11) Has the new position of women also had an effect on how labour is organized among women and men (eg. In the household or on the field)?
    - And if yes, can you specify what has changed?

12) Who is responsible to push this law and control its implementation in local areas?

13) What hinders the „transformative potential“ of gender rights in Rwanda?

14) What challenges still remain for women in rural Rwanda?

In the past decades Rwandan **agriculture** has been largely modernised and transformed.

15) How have these agricultural transformations affected traditional gender role patterns? (Access to land, participation in cooperatives, organization of labour, market oriented production)

16) Have there been incidences of women loosing access to land? Where?

17) What about access to land in the Wetlands? Can you tell me more about this?
    - How do women use the wetlands?

18) What has changed for women since now, food is more and more produced for the market than for the households.

Regarding the governments recent regulations concerning gender equality inside **cooperatives**...

19) What impact does that have inside cooperatives?

20) How is labour organized in the cooperative?

21) How are responsibilities distributed?

22) What are the challenges of cooperatives to implement gender equality?

23) What position has the gender monitoring office when it comes to the cooperatives.

24) How is the gender monitoring office working? What criteria are they looking at?

CONCEPTS

Gender: In the past decades there were laws implemented to strengthen women's position in Rwanda. At some point the policies did shift from addressing “women” to addressing “gender”.

25) How did the shift from women policies to gender policies occur in Rwanda?

26) How does the law define concepts such as gender?

27) What do you think of western gender norms? Do you think they can work for Rwanda? (Western imperialism?)

Gender and Masculinity: Since the role of women in the society has changed in certain aspects this must also have an effect on men and their understanding of **what a (modern) man** is like.

28) How have perceptions of masculinity changed in Rwanda?

29) What are the most important reasons that have lead to this redefinition of masculinity?

30) What about the rural areas? Is there any difference from the urban areas? How do they redefine the understanding of traditional gender-roles?

END: I am coming to my last questions:

31) I have heard of the *itorero* tradition. What do you know about it?

32) How should an *itorero* man/woman be?

33) What do you think still needs to be done for gender equality in Rwanda especially in the rural areas?

34) Do you have interesting contacts or material that could be useful for me and my work?

Thank you !!! for this very interesting conversation. May I contact you in case I have some more questions coming up? How can I contact you?

Authorisation: Are you fine with me using this interview for my research?

How do you want me to refer to you in my research? As ___ from ___? Or would you prefer to remain **anonymous?**

Is there anything else you think to be important for my work? Something you would like to add? Or do you have any questions about me and my work?

Appendix 3: German and French Original Quotes

i On admet aujourd'hui comme une évidence que l'aménagement des marais constitue une preuve de l'influence positive exercée par les fortes densités humaines sur le développement agricole [Boserup 1970], oubliant que ces terres n'ont jamais été exclues de l'espace utile. La mise en perspective historique peut seule éviter ce genre de méprise (Meschy 1989, 129–30).

ii Auf den Weiden bemerken wir heute zahlreiche Rinderheerden (Sanga-Rinder mit riesigen Hörnern). Unten am See wimmelt es von Enten, Gänsen, Reihern und Ibissen. Stachelschweine müssen, den vielen umherliegenden Stacheln nach zu urtheilen, hier sehr häufig sein. (…) Die Bevölkerungsdichtigkeit ist hier ausserordentlich gross. Für das Vieh wird hier sehr gut gesort, denn verschiedentlich sahen wir schöne Tröge zum Tränken der Rinder in den Lehmboden heinengearbeitet oil (Götzen 1895, 163–64).

iii Durch wundervoll bebautes Land, über Berghänge, deren Erklimmen nur selten mit Schwierigkeiten verbunden gewesen, durch endlos erscheinende, tief dunkle Bananenhaine und dann wieder über saftige Wiesen waren wir bisher vorgedrungen. Die Dichtigkeit der Bevölkerung, die wohlbestellten Bohnenfelder mit grossen Reisern, welche die Stelle der Bohnenstangen vertraten, dann wieder Sorghumpflanzungen, in denen Vogelscheuchen – Nachbildungen bogenschiessender Männer – aufgestellt waren, all dies hatte unsere Bewunderung hervorgerufen. Jetzt standen wir auf einmal vor mächtigen Bergketten, deren Kuppen dicht in Wolken gehüllt waren und deren Hänge ein tiefes Schwarz als Färbung zeigten (Götzen 1895, 168–71).

iv (…) armen Neger, dem derartige Eindrücke völlig fremd sind, dem jeglicher Sinn für Naturschönheit abgeht (Götzen 1895, 171).

v Am zweiten Tage (…) wurde bei unfreundlichem Wetter der Kibaya-Bach erreicht, der jetzt ein 50 m breites Papysrusdickicht unter Wasser gesetzt hatte. Zu den Sptrapazen des Emporklimmens auf steilen und schlüpfrigen Bergpfaden gesellte sich die Schweireigkeiten einer Sumpfpassage, so dass Mensch und Vieh oftmals stecken blieben (Götzen 1895, 157).

vi Dann folgten für uns genussreiche Jagdtage, da sich Wasserwild jeglicher Art im Sumpfgebiet des Nyavarongo tummelte (Götzen 1895, 168).

vii Qui se souvient qu'au XIXe siècle, déjà, les habitants de ces deux pays utilisaient les bas-fonds comme champs d'appoint et qu'ils connaissaient un système d'irrigation des pentes? (Meschy 1989, 129).

viii Les terres ainsi libérées de la présence animale n'ayant pas été converties en champs, les chefs politiques profitèrent du relâchement de l'emprise lignagère sur le bas-fond pour intégrer celui-ci dans leur domaine pastoral propre – igikingi. Le cheptel fut partiellement reconstitué mais l'accès aux pâturages ne s'obtint plus désormais que contre un don annuel en vaches ou en génisses que les éleveurs tutsi et hutu devaient offrir au chef politique. Les versants et les bas-fonds étaient fermés – gukomaubwatsi – à toute utilisation pendant les derniers mois pluvieux (avril-mai) afin d'assurer une couverture herbacée optimale en prévision de la saison sèche. Cette nouvelle gestion des pâturages, où la priorité était donnée aux troupeaux des administrateurs tutsi et des riches éleveurs, imposait un calendrier spécifique à la culture dans le bas-fond. Les labours et les semis ne pouvaient avoir lieu qu'en janvier afin que la récolte soit terminée en juillet, avant l'ouverture aux troupeaux. Le sorgho, les haricots et les patates douces étaient alors plantés sur des billons hauts d'un mètre et groupés dans les endroits les moins inondés. En saison sèche, si le chef autorisait une culture, il fallait la protéger des troupeaux, car en cas de dégâts il n'y avait aucun recours pour se faire dédommager: la vache avait alors la priorité dans toute la vallée (Meschy 1989, 141).

ix Infolge seines durch die grosse Höhenlage bedingten herrlichen, gemässigten Klimas ist Ruanda für eine Besiedelung durch Europäer wie geschaffen und zwar um so mehr, als zur Zeit der Landarbeiten von Oktober bis Mitte Mai die Bewölkung eine sehr grosse ist. Zur Besiedelung eignen sich nach Kandt besonders die quellenreichen, fruchtbaren und grössere Baumbestände enthaltenden Distrikte zu beiden Seiten des Grabenrandes. Eine intensive Viehzucht lassen sicher die ausgedehnten Weideplätze auf der eigentlichen Hochfläche zu. Dazu kommt, dass wir in den Wahutu eine intelligente, leicht zu leitende Bevölkerung besitzen, die sich einer auf Sprach- und Landeskenntnis gestützten Kolonisation gerne fügt und zahlreiche, sehr billige Arbeitskräfte abgibt (Vetter 1906, 99).

x Nyamuburwa, notre informateur, né vers 1890, est le descendant un lignage de défricheurs. Selon ses dires, son père connut une certaine aisance: il obtenait de belles récoltes et eut même deux vaches. Lorsque vint s'installer le premier seigneur de la colline Nyaruhengeri où il vivait, il eut maille à partir avec lui, car il refusa de devenir corvéable. On lui prit alors presque tout son patrimoine et sans doute, comme il était dangereux d'être mal vu des autorités, ses parents et ses amis ne firent rien pour l'aider. Aussi, pour vivre, dut-il devenir journalier. Vers 1910, Nyamuburwa et sa femme le relayèrent, car il était devenu infirme. Pour tout héritage, Nyamuburwa disposait d'un petit champ où il pouvait produire une centaine de kilos de haricots, d'une minuscule bananeraie et de quelques parcelles de patates douées dans les marais. Tous ses frères moururent adolescents. Lui et sa femme cultivaient leurs propres champs, par fois réussissaient en louer un ou deux (kwatisha) contre de la bière, mais travaillaient toute l'année chez les autres (Vidal 1974, 63).

xi Ces derniers s'efforcèrent alors de substituer au régime des terres communes un droit de contrôle fondé sur le principe d'accès exclusif au pâturage. Ce droit dépendait de leur seule autorité, et ils l'accordaient selon leurs intérêts et ceux du roi. Ces agissements suscitèrent une forte résistance chez les descendants des défricheurs – de puissants lignages Hutu et Tutsi – qui étaient tous possesseurs de troupeaux (Meschy 1989, 140).

xii [N]ous avons affaire à une population d'agriculteurs à la houe, qui peuvent exploiter aussi bien des champs très inclinés que des champs plats, ce n'est que très récemment que cette population a découvert les grandes vertus des sols de fond de vallée, des sols de « marais » ; ce sont aujourd'hui les champs les plus fertiles ; mais ils étaient ignorés voici 30 ans ; ou, tout au moins, ils servaient seulement de pâturages en saison sèche (Gourou 1953, 76).

xiii Pour tout héritage, Nyamuburwa disposait d'un petit champ où il pouvait produire une centaine de kilos de haricots, d'une minuscule bananeraie et de quelques parcelles de patates douées dans les marais. Tous ses frères moururent adolescents. Lui et sa femme cultivaient leurs propres champs, par fois réussissaient en louer un ou deux (kwatisha) contre de la bière, mais travaillaient toute l'année chez les autres. Ils donnaient au seigneur une corbeille équivalant six kilos de haricots et un peu de sorgho Nyamuburwa cultivait presque tous les jours à l'extérieur, car sa femme devait également assurer les soins du ménage et la culture familiale. Ainsi obtenait-il de quoi se nourrir réserver la semence se procurer deux houes une pour lui une pour sa femme (Vidal 1974, 63).

xiv Une rigole – umugende – sépare les billons de deux familles. (...) Lorsqu'un billon est prêt, la femme et les enfants procèdent immédiatement au bouturage des patates douces. Les tiges, longues de 20 à 40 centimètres, sont prélevées sur les champs de colline et immédiatement plantées (Meschy 1989, 135–37).

xv (…) une production (…) de légumes et de fruits hors mesure et de deuxième choix sera mise sur le marché locale à des prix très réduits. Ceci permettra à la population d'acheter des légumes et d'améliorer ainsi la nourriture au point de vue quantité, mais surtout au point de vue qualité (MINAGRI 1972, 11).

xvi Durant l'année 1974, pres de 500 tonnes de légumes (499.687 Kg), ont été exportés vers l'Europe (86% vers la Belgique, 14% vers la France), produits par la Cooperative de la KAJEVUBA" (GoR 1975, 14).

xvii Les légumes frais tels les poivrons et les piments sont produits sur deux saisons séparées (janvier à mai et décembre), tandis que le Pili-Pili (Capsicum frutescens L) est exporté durant toute l'année. (…) Par rapport à l'année 1975, on constate une augmentation de 31,57 % pour le tonnage exporté. Le projet horticole a exporté égalemant [sic!] une importante quantité de plantes ornementales et médicinales, telles: 168.486 Kg de Draczena, 12.518 Kg d'Euphorbes et 1.424 Kg de Vinca Minor ou de Catharanthus (GoR 1977, 14).

xviii Actuellement, tous les marais du Rwanda appartiennent à l'Etat auquel les paysans installés dans les marais aménagés sont liés par un contrat d'usufruit qui définit tout une série de conditions à suivre sous peine d'exclusion. Certains termes de ces contrat peuvent-être contraignants pour les paysans, comme la quasi interdiction de semer ses propres semences ainsi que la confection de gros billons traditionnels. L'obligation de semer en linge, le respect des dates de semis et autres opérations culturales, toutes choses que les paysans ont du mal à respecter (Nkaye, GoR, and MINAGRI 1998, 23).

Curriculum Vitae

Personal Information

First Name/Surname:	Johanna Treidl
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Nationality:	Austrian

Education

January 2014 to present	Doctoral Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Cologne, Germany ***Title of Dissertation:*** "Marshland Development in Rwanda – Agrarian Change, Gender Disparities and State Power" *(PhD Scholarship granted by the BMBF-funded Project "GlobE – Wetlands in East Africa")*
October 2004 to October 2012	Diploma Studies in Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Vienna, Austria ***Research Interests***: Gender Studies, Political Anthropology, Postcolonial Studies, Migration, qualitative Methods ***Regional Focus:*** Sub-Saharan Africa ***Diploma Thesis***: "Dangerous Desires – An Analysis of Argumentations against Same-Sexual Desires in South Africa" *(Sponsored by the Austrian National Union of Students at the University of Vienna)*
October 2004 to April 2012	Diploma Studies in Sociology at the University of Vienna, Austria ***Research Interests***: Political Sociology, Sociology of Deviance, Sociology of Migration, Quantitative Methods ***Diploma Thesis***: "Intimität – Überlegungen zur soziologischen 'Potenz' des Begriffes aus feministischer Perspektive"
September 2007 to September 2008	Erasmus Student, Université Lille 1, France
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Publications:

Treidl, Johanna (2018): Sowing Gender Policies, Cultivating Agrarian Change, Reaping Inequality? Intersections of Gender and Class in the Context of Marshland Transformations in Rwanda. *Antropologia* 5 (1 N.S): 77–95.

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