Resistance to Reform: Agricultural Transformation in Post Genocide Rwanda. An embedded case study design with Gako-Masaka unit of analysis

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ABSTRACT
The aim of this paper is to light up the phenomenon of resistance to agricultural transformation in post-genocide Rwanda. The phenomenon of resistance is, as a number of scholars reveal, linked to that of power as much as the study of one phenomenon requires a thorough analysis of the other¹. Scholars have so far agreed that resistance can be analyzed through reactions of individuals (a group) embedded in power relations where they defy changes introduced by other individuals (leading group). The paper explores how farmers experience the phenomenon of resistance to agricultural reform. It answers to questions of how they perceive and experience the phenomenon of everyday resistance. Multi-methods approach involving the long qualitative interviews method, participant observation and group discussions, and with a purposive sampling technique are used. Through these methods and techniques, participants describe their perceptions, experiences, and re-actions vis-à-vis agricultural reforms. Findings reveal that land consolidation and use of improved seeds and chemical fertilizers for agricultural transformation is failing in the hillsides. Farmers are not motivated and there is a sort of mistrust between them and the agents of reforms. The paper highlights the role of reforms agents’ flexibility in the process of transforming rural area and illustrates various types of farmers’ everyday resistance/re-actions.

Key words: resistance, power, agriculture, reform/change/transformation, genocide, Rwanda.

Introduction

This paper is about resistance to reform focusing particularly on [everyday] resistance to agricultural transformation in post genocide Rwanda. Everyday resistance can be observed through everyday life, in different scientific fields and perspectives such as ideological, cultural, political, economic, etc.; also, it can occasionally cover more than one type i.e. ideological resistance can be found everywhere as much as everyday resistance is first and foremost formed intentionally and can emerge in any circumstance so long as the end pursued is attained.

As Webster put it, for instance,

"Ideological resistance to change is firmly rooted in people’s beliefs. It can be difficult to win these people over unless you demonstrate that the change – or project – you are implementing is compatible with their beliefs."^3

In this short quotation the author emphasizes that human beings like status quo, especially when it’s about cultural matter, yet on the other hand, many scholars prove that in resistance studies subordinates seek to disrupt ‘status quo' or ‘undermine power'6. In the context of this paper, we could say that the author assumes that as long as the initiated reform diverges with recipients’ values, it is rare that it is accepted at once.

Indeed, farmers’ perceptions to the reform depend on many factors, including individual nature, cultural values and historical background; individual level of understanding, the motives and potential worthiness of reform to be initiated comparing to the existing individual or community values; the way reform is introduced; the approaches the agents of reform use to implement them; the way agents of reform manage recipients’ re-actions, etc8.

Farmers’ re-actions, when reform is incompatible to their values, is actually a sort of everyday resistance, and in so far as their re-actions vary, the types of resistance [appearance] varies too. As the types of everyday resistance are always determined according to the recipients’ re-

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8 Author’s experience from the fieldwork 2010
9 Ibid., 758
actions against the power whose reform idea emanates\(^9\), this paper will illustrates different types of everyday resistance the author discovered in *Gako* cell.

The paper, as I mentioned early, concentrates on how Rwandans perceive and experience resistance to agricultural reform in a specific setting. Even though some scholars contend that soft resistance cannot pretend to make significant change, generally any kind of resistance, always has an impact, be it peaceful or brutal, and as long as resistance is analysed through the lens of power, reform agents’ attitude towards recipients’ re-actions, in the context of this paper, has as well had to be explored and assessed through empirical inquiry.

Agricultural transformation among many other reforms was, and still is, in many parts of the country a crucial challenge to the agents of reforms. The subsequent parts of this section provide a brief historical background of this particular reform and encountered challenges during its implementation.

*Background of the study*

Rwanda is among the most densely populated countries in Africa\(^{10}\). The recent statistics\(^{11}\) data tell us that it has attained a population of approximately 10.4 million with 395 per km\(^2\). Although the population has been increasing dramatically, land surface remains static and resources production becomes unbalanced. The population density extremely high and more than 90%\(^{12}\) is rural surviving on precarious farming. Land scarcity is therefore a crucial challenge in Rwanda.

The issue of villagisation and land consolidation came up as one of the alternative solutions to land scarcity and agriculture transformation. Indeed, Vision 2020 and EDPRS strategies stipulate that “land will be reorganised and consolidated so as to create adequate space for modern and viable farming”\(^{13}\).

As I specified in the title, this paper will present only the results collected from *Gako* cells – *Masaka* sector, one of the four main areas from where the interviews were carried out. There, land fragmentation emanates from not only the effects of war and genocide, as it appears in

\(^{9}\) Ibid.


many parts of the country, but also factors linked to incessant increase in births and polygamy.14

As the aim of this study was about to explore respondents’ perceptions, experience of agricultural transformation and re-actions to them, and ultimately assess the impact of resistance, the subsequent sections illustrate the actual context.

**Perceptions and Experience**

Farmers exploiting Rugende marsh in Gako cell are increasingly getting better-off; they actually improve due to the support acquired from RADA (Rwanda Agriculture Development Authority). Their harvest of soya beans or maize is actually bought by RADA and keeps it as seeds to be redistributed to all farmers growing the same crop for the next agricultural season. Yet, there are still, others who possess a piece of land in the marsh but failed to continue to exploit it and decided either to sell or lease it due to lack of means to afford the required inputs. One of the farmers said:

I had a piece of land in this marsh [of Rugende] and I could make money at the harvest; it happened that I even get more than one hundred thousand Rwandan francs, but after refund of loans and cooperative membership, I could only keep less than sixty hundred thousand Rwandan francs. With the remaining amount I could not afford all expenses including food, children school fees and pay fertilizers and seeds in cash for the next cultural season. Finally I decided to give up and sold my plot to the vice president of the cooperative (LI/26).

As I mentioned earlier, there are farmers who thrive increasingly, and buy continuously others’ land in Rugende marsh; one of them said:

…my point of view regarding agricultural reform is that the government has achieved, among many other priorities, a very good step towards poverty reduction and economic development. This marshland (Rugende) was mainly used by businessmen from Kigali city and Kabuga centre (now part of Masaka sector) to make bricks and growing herbs for their cattle. Only space alongside of the marsh was used for agriculture by peasants who live in its neighbourhood.

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The soil was very fruitful, and we could grow any crop, but mainly vegetables and this has really contributed to improve our living conditions. District agronomist assisted by other local government officers has decided to distribute the entire marshland to farmers from different sectors with priority to those who reside close to it. Every beneficiary was therefore required to follow local government instructions. The new agricultural program of growing maize and using chemical fertilizers was initiated. We hesitated to use chemical fertilizers a little bit because, first of all, the marsh was still fertile and therefore, we thought it was unnecessary to spend additional money for chemical fertilizers.

Our hesitation was however motivated by rumours that were circulating that chemical fertilizers burn seeds and poison soil. Secondary, we had learned that farmers of the eastern province [Gahara\textsuperscript{15} sector] failed to sell their yield because the price was very low, and by storing their harvest, insects attacked and ruined tonnes of maize. So this has discouraged us, but local authorities and the agronomists explained that those kinds of mistakes would never happen again and assured us that we will be seeds breeders with many advantages including buying our harvest at a good price. Most of us today, are happy with this program (LI/25).

Although the beginning is always full of thorns, as it happened to eastern Province, farmers of Rugende marsh feel a promising future, mainly because of the support from MINAGRI (Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources). Nowadays, they are among the best producers of maize and soya beans in Rwanda with a big number of memberships and have been able to generate more than fifty million Rwandan francs of profit in seasons A & B 2010 (LI/69). As I mentioned however the beginning is always challenging, resistance was generalised, even though it progressively decreased. In the hillsides however, resistance against these reforms (agriculture associated with villagisation) persists. The next sections will illustrates some of the types of everyday resistance encountered.

\textsuperscript{15} Gahara sector is one of Kirehe district sectors in the Eastern Province and it is among the pilot areas from where all reforms start. Because Rwanda is a small country, the information circulates easily and it’s very common that everyone get information from everywhere through formal channels or rumours.
Types of Resistances

Different types of everyday resistance as we will see are generally about to limit the success of agricultural reform; we will occasionally see where it contributed to tremendous achievements; in such conditions however, as we saw just above, it is no longer considered as resistance but as conformity.\(^\text{16}\)

In the above quote, rumours about what happened in other districts have intensified farmers’ resistance, and thus contributed to the delay of the implementation of agricultural transformation. This phenomenon was noticed everywhere I carried out my fieldwork. In addition to rumour, we will also see other types of everyday re-actions/resistance to agricultural reform, but before we discuss them let’s focus on the motivation to re-actions.

Motivations

Traditions

Traditions can be a basis of farmers’ re-action against reforms. Indeed, in traditionally, Rwandans were overconfident regarding agricultural practices in the region of great lakes. They assumed to have an excellent approach of maintain their fields and were proud of the then existing crops and plants; the most important were sorghum, finger millet, yam, banana, squash, eggplant … associated with animal husbandry, cattle and sheep in particular.\(^\text{17}\)

In meantime, things have changed and other crops were introduced, including: maize, cassava, beans, peas, sweet potato …, and later on Irish potato, and cash crops such as: coffee, tea and pyrethrum. Some of these new crops were resisted; coffee in particular was detested due to lots of work to grow it, and meaningless value at the end. The most irritating to Rwandan farmers, was that the colonial power gave great importance to coffee to the extent that all fertile arable lands were compulsory used to grow coffee at the expense of food crops, and this caused a huge number of emigrants to Uganda.\(^\text{19}\)

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\(^\text{16}\) Ibid., 284

\(^\text{17}\) Kanyamacumbi, P. Mgr. (2001) Société, culture, et pouvoir politique en Afrique interlacustre: Hutu et Tutsi de l’ancien Rwanda. 2\textsuperscript{ème} édition, revue et augmentée 2\textsuperscript{ème} Partie, Kinshasa.


\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., 30
With the post genocide agricultural reform, some crops such as maize, rice... are given more importance than others and then considered as cash crops rather than food crops\(^{20}\). Land consolidation and the use of chemical fertilizers are compulsory everywhere in the rural area\(^{21}\). The implementation of these strategies was however challenged many factors among which traditional beliefs. Farmers believed that organic manure was better than chemical fertilizers and this created a kind of reluctance to the use of chemical fertilizers (LI/52; 78; 63). One of the participants explains how manure is better than chemical fertilizers:

I have tried both manure and chemical fertilizers separately in maize field, and the result was a little bit different. The harvest for chemical fertilizers was higher than that of the manure, but when I calculated the value of each minus all expenses, the harvest from the field where I used organic manure was far profitable than the other especially because the input was minimal. Also, in the field where farmers use only organic manure, there is no worries about the attack of damaging insects like it often happens for harvest from where chemical fertilizers are used (ID/10).

When I asked the agronomists if what the farmer experimented was relevant, they provided a different view, but recognizing that traditional crops are more resistant to insects attack like ‘wireworms’ and ‘maize weevil’ than the improved crops. The agronomists explained that there is no connection between type of fertilizers and crops’ resistance to bacteria; it’s rather an issue of types of seeds and the improved ones are more vulnerable (LI/75).

Concerning the quantity of harvest the agronomist explained how both organic manure and chemical fertilizers depend on one another especially when the soil is naturally poor. He said that farmers should preferably mix both types of fertilizers, starting with manure and then use chemical while sowing and when the plant attain a certain level of growth (Ibid.) confirmed by (LI/80).

Other explanations were that poor small-scale landholders could not understand the importance of using chemical fertilizers, because their yield was really not enough to feed their family until the following season, or to allow them to undertake other risks that can

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generate additional income; this is really discouraging for a poor family which was expecting to increase its livelihood from these reforms. This situation was one of the main causes of failing to consolidate lands and transform agriculture in hillsides in many areas including the area of this research. In the next paragraph we will see how scholars explain the motive of people’s re-action vis-à-vis a new situation.

Although contested by a number of scholars, psychologists and psycho-biologists believe that, the motivation of people ‘to do what they do’ depend on psychobiological drives or human needs. My question is therefore about to understand how farmers re-act to the reform and what is the motive or intention behind their re-actions rather than wondering ‘why they do what they do’ as a number of scholars do. The ‘why’ is indeed somehow known, as far as agricultural reform is concerned; the success or failure to meet farmers’ needs/goal motivates them to feel satisfied or frustrated and act accordingly. Satisfaction would lead to conformity and consequently to the success of the reform implementation, while frustration would lead to resistance and thus to either forced implementation (which sometimes also leads to conformity or failure) or delay the process depending on the position farmers take. In this regard, Scott shows how conflict of value predominates in Malaysians peasants’ resistance illustrating that their ‘goal was not of seeking profits but rather retain their subsistence capacity and restore moral relationship’.

Likewise, the ambition of small-scale landholders is not about to saturate the market in maize factories but to satisfy their needs and later on plan for next step as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory clarifies. Therefore, when they fulfil the requirements, their priority is not about contributing to countries economic development, it is rather their everyday way meeting their basic needs including household food security, adequate shelter, children education...

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25 Ibid., 24


27 Ibid., 958

28 Ibid., 957
Participants/respondents revealed that once satisfy their basic needs, they would also like to make profits so as to afford the costs of other needs (LI/60). Contrary to Malaysian example, some respondents stated that if barriers to poverty alleviation are moved so as poor farmers become able to fill the existing gaps in their everyday life, barriers to reform implementation such as traditional believes would be easily removed (LI/21).

Professional farmers and investors with large-scale landholdings on the contrary, produce huge quantities of maize and sell the harvest once for all to factories; this is an advantage as far as the price is not imposed but negotiable. Another advantage they have comparing to the small landholders is that the risks of disasters due to unpredictable weather conditions are minimal since they have the capacity to irrigate their fields.

Similar to the above rich farmers, through cooperative, small-scale landholders manage to make miracles by producing huge quantities and sell at a good price, but still some members do not visibly improve their livelihood because of lack of other sources of income to feed their family (LI/62; 67).

Fear for uncertainties

Uncertainty doesn’t relies only on the economic distribution of gains versus losses from reform as R. Fernandez and D. Rodrik\(^29\) argue, but also on unpredictable weather conditions when it relates to agricultural reform in tropical regions, in sub-Saharan region in particular where this study was carried out.

Fear for uncertainties is not particular to farmers only, the agents of reforms, including agronomists and local leaders, also fear uncertainties of unpredictable weather conditions and other factors caused by lack of efficiency such as distribution of mould seeds and or inadequate fertilizers. Indeed, it happened that when the agent of reform recognizes such mistakes, often due to inattention of distributors, shift to the side of farmers and supports them; which therefore increases farmers’ everyday resistance.

As we have seen earlier, farmers’ worry was particularly increased due to the failures of other farmers, experienced during previous years. Indeed, there are many examples of losses noticed here and there due to combined factors, namely rains scarcity, misuse of or using expired fertilizers, use of damaged seeds, inadequate approach of persuasion, etc., and agents

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of reforms we are conscious of all those problems. When such situation persists, agents of reform lose their reputation and therefore feel ashamed. The consequence is that the following agricultural season, they simply cease to show up in the field as they used to do in the initial stages. This situation has discouraged the process of transforming different parts of the countryside, and hillsides in particular (LI/9; 52; 34).

This situation, among a number of others, has increased mistrust between agents of reform and farmers and therefore strengthened resistance to the subsequent efforts. At the very beginning of my fieldwork, for instance, I met a professional farmer in one of the sectors in the eastern province who revealed that he cannot follow the advices from the agronomist appointed by the government at the sector, because according to him, they are not well skilled, they just ‘apply their theoretical knowledge where they are not needed and do not consider variations of weather, soil and so forth’. He also added that instead of teaching peasant farmers, agronomists learn from them; and they are sometimes embarrassed, especially when they fail to solve persistent problems (Focus G. 5).

In matters of mindset change, as we have seen in the literature, Skidmore\(^{30}\) argues that leaders’ ability to influence followers is a prerequisite. Likewise, Matt Andrew et al\(^{31}\), argue that the precondition for change is first and foremost a talented leader who has ‘ability to foster acceptance for change and, able to enhance ability and empower his followers’. Indeed, absence of these preconditions among others is a determinant factor to fuel resistance to reform and therefore lead to delay or simply failure of reform implementation.

Traditions and leadership approach alone cannot justify farmers’ motivation to re-act in favour of or against agricultural reform. There are other factors, such as political\(^{32}\) or psychological\(^{33}\) evidences, but since respondents/participants didn’t provide any additional information relating to them, I simply preferred bringing up what they revealed. And, since the purpose of this research is not to find the source of farmers’ resistance, but to explore how they understand and perform its different forms in their everyday life and the actual way they re-act to it; the subsequent section may draw the reader’s attention.

\(^{30}\) Skidmore (1990:120)
\(^{32}\) In reference to websites forbidden in Rwanda but which disseminate socio-economic and political criticize Rwandan government, I suspect that there are some Rwandans who consult those websites in neighbouring countries and propagate the information inside Rwanda.
\(^{33}\) The effects of genocide can also affect the psychology of Rwandans creating a king of permanent fear and trauma and therefore create a strange behaviour. This behaviour is learned and discovered through psychometric methods but results are sometimes mistaken.
Evidences of everyday re-actions/resistance

Rumour

As we just noticed, one of the types of resistance to agricultural reform in the areas of my research was the rumour. The concept of rumour can however be understood through different contexts. Scholars of different background, (Psychologists, sociologist and communication scientists) explain it differently according to its nature and the intention behind its dissemination\textsuperscript{34}.

Even though its definitions seem to be elusive\textsuperscript{35}, there are lots of common features found in one and the other; ‘rumour’ is for example synonymous of ‘hearsay’ or ‘mouth-to-ear’; ‘the source and truth are difficult to determine’; it is ‘spontaneous’, ‘intentional’, ‘politically strategic...’\textsuperscript{36}. The literature also informs us that ‘negative rumours’ seem to be easier to spread than positive rumours\textsuperscript{37}. Resistance to the use of fertilizers and to replace some plants and/or crops with others is justified by many factors including rumours spread throughout the countryside that fertilizers have bad effects on naturally fertile soil...\textsuperscript{38}

As Dentith Matthew argues, since rumour is verified and recognized as a truth, it ‘ceased to be called a rumour’\textsuperscript{39}. Indeed, in Gako, when local leaders and agents of reforms sensitize farmers to conform to the new government policies such as agricultural reform, they recognize the failure that happened in the initial stages and implore farmers to become more careful so that they avoid the mistakes that happened elsewhere. After recognizing the truth of the disseminated information and its impact on the process of agricultural reform implementation, the agents of reform changed their strategies of approaching farmers. Respondents revealed that they actually became more flexible than they were during the initial stage, especially before farmers’ re-action.


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 4
Other factors have also contributed to everyday resistance to the agricultural reform. These include the shortage of agronomists so as to provide trainings and experimentations; and farmers’ pride of traditional practices or simply human nature of resisting changing their beliefs, etc.

Regarding the shortage of skilled staff in agricultural innovation, the agronomists revealed that farmers are fully right when they say that they fail because of lack of support in the field. The support is really limited in the process of agricultural transformation and this is justified by the limited number of agronomists per sector. An agronomist emphasizes this situation as follows:

…it is illogical that a single agronomist oversees all farmers of a sector where thousands of households have no other occupation than farming. It happens therefore that farmers use fertilizers and or sow seeds wrongly and certainly the results become disastrous. It also happens that they use expired fertilizers, which also contribute to bad results and therefore increase resistance among them (LI/74).

In addition to the effects of rumour and the shortage of agronomists, there are many other factors that may justify farmers’ re-actions, including political strategy, traditional beliefs, etc. Political strategy is however excluded in this research as I mentioned earlier, since the source of the mentioned rumours and intentions of the spreaders were unknown, and there is no evidence that any political organization was involved or was behind the dissemination of that information with a hidden political interest⁴⁰.

**Cooking seeds/ sell fertilizers secretly**

One of the respondents revealed that they failed to harvest maize in 2010 season-A because of unexpected draught and lack of skills of using chemical fertilizers⁴¹. Next distribution, she then decided to split into two sets of what she obtained and cooked part of it and thereafter sows the remaining part. She decided to do so because generally authorities imposed them to take another loan even though they had failed to harvest. And do not have other source of income to pay the loan back. According to her it was difficult to believe that things would

⁴⁰ Ibid.
⁴¹ She revealed that they used chemical fertilizers in hillsides and along Nyabarongo marsh but they couldn’t harvest; in hillside because of unexpected draught and probably along the wetland of Nyabarungo due to lack of skills in using industrial fertilizers. She emphasized that they learned how to use them oral in the meeting and most of couldn’t use them properly.
improve, because the climate was always unpredictable in their area and they had sooner or later to pay the loan back (ID/6). Her option was actually to cook part of the seeds just to avoid losing the whole quantity as it happened in the previous season.

The same principle was used for fertilizers. Sell part of fertilizers and use the remaining, or use part of it and store the other while awaiting a buyer (ID/6; 18). Despite warning of severe punishment once caught selling fertilizers, this practice was common in many areas. Local authorities were very strict in such situation, especially because the government put subsidies so as to make the price affordable to every poor farmer.

One of the agents of reform explains how the government supports farmers through subsidies so as to encourage them to implement its policy.

Normally, RADA brings fertilizers basing on the cooperative or sector’s demand. The price per kg of fertilizers is determined by MINAGRI-RADA basing on the costs of importation. But as the government policy is to support the agricultural reform so that the yield increases, it has established a fund for subsidy which allows farmers to afford the cost of the fertilizers. Farmers pay only 50% of the cost; here for example farmers pay only 250 Rwandan francs per kg of ‘NPK’, meaning that the government covers the remaining amount; they pay the same amount for ‘DAP’, and both types of fertilizers are used while sowing. ‘Urea’ is another type used when crops reach a certain growth and it serves to complement the first ones, and minus subsidy, it costs 175 Rwandan francs. At that stage the roots need lots of balanced ratio. If it is not balanced, the growth is either premature and ends without grains or becomes dwarf in case of shortage (LI/80).

One of the cooperative executive committee members added that when a farmer delays to pay back the loan, they add 20 Francs per kilogram as a fine of delay (LI/79). When there is no follow up farmers sell part of the fertilizers to private dealers so as to be able to pay back the acquired loan (LI/76).

**Refusal to cut down banana plantation**

Respondents/Participants stated that they always refused to cut down their banana plantation when they were asked to do so. Some however revealed that they did it during umuganda or community work because everybody was supposed to participate otherwise s/he would
penalized for disobedience. They however revealed the secret of leaving the stems underground so as it sprouts again. With this tactic, they were sure that after a certain period the banana plantation would grow again and use it at least to feed their cows during the dry season (ID/8; 17). Indeed, traditionally, banana plants served farmers in many ways\textsuperscript{42}, except feeding domestic animals, but with the shortage of grazing land, it is also serving as cow’s food especially during dry season.

\textit{ Mixing crops}

Mixing crops with other plants or two different types of crops in the same field is forbidden. Traditionally however, Rwandans used to mix crops and plants. Some respondents justified this as a way of maximizing land use, for others it was because arable land was limited because the most important area was for pasture. Justifications were many, but the purpose in this context was not to know the reason of mixing but to understand how they deal with new rule of forbidding crops mixture.

All of them said that in the hillsides agronomists have never tried to uproot their crops as their colleagues did it in the Eastern Province. In marshland however, farmers were obliged to obey otherwise they could lose their plots since the marsh belongs to the state. Indeed, marshlands belong to the state, farmers have only the rights to use them but in the line the state guidance otherwise local authorities distribute them to other farmers who can comply with the requirements of the state (LI/62; 18).

The agricultural reform in marshlands progresses in the government line, while in the hillsides farmers are still reluctant to follow. Only Eastern and part of the Northern Provinces thrive economically through reform implementation comparing to other parts of the country. As some opinion leaders revealed, war and genocide consequences have contributed to this situation (L/67, 69), and obviously, in other parts where the context differs, reforms implementation in the hillsides is still behindhand due to resistance.

\textit{Public argument} \textsuperscript{43}


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 241
During meetings or community work, there are rare audacious individuals who say publically that reforms are deepening poverty among poor farmers instead of alleviating it. A Catechumen has publically said how, in addition to reforms’ requirements, poor farmers are required to contribute to lots of other activities while their financial capacity is very limited. He asked the umudugudu/village leader who was harassing residents who had not yet paid their monthly security contribution in the following words:

…how could you explain this! From where do you think poor farmers could find the amount you are asking them every month? I was following with attention activities that they have to contribute to; I couldn’t believe! We started to raise the question of medical insurance, and then security, streets rehabilitation, construction of new rooms for nine and twelve basic education, etc., imagine when you ask such amount to a poor farmer with only a small plot which also needs fertilizers and improved seeds. Tell me, how many are able to afford all these expenses, even among civil servants, who can afford with ridiculous monthly salary? Before you ask people to contribute to all these activities, you should first think twice! (LI/67).

After his statement (considered behind the scenes as aggressive re-action) a number of participants in the meeting, who probably were afraid to express their opinions before the catechumen spoke, also raised their hands as if they wanted to support him. But the leader of the meeting opted to postpone it so that he and his committee deliberate on the raised issue.

A similar scenario, but a little bit different, is about a critical statement of a priest in a parish close to the continuation of Rugende marsh, and towards the subsequent hillsides of one of my research area, but situated in eastern province. Actually, the priest criticized the way reforms were being implemented but insisted on habitat reform. The priest point of view, according to my respondents – who again see it as hearsay – was a kind of alert to local leaders who were brutalizing poor people at a point of demolishing their houses because they failed to build a modern one covered by iron sheets. Indeed, it was not a rumour as my respondents believed because I finally read in a news paper that there was a priest who was arrested because he was mobilizing peasants against government policies.
Report to Njyanama, Umuvunyi or Abunzi

Njyanama is the local legislative council in the Rwandan governance system. The role of its members is to control if government priorities are performed in the interests of local population. Farmers who are abused by local authorities often use these organs of the state to require a fair justice. There were disputes between poor farmers and some members of cooperative committee and or local authorities who have finally realized that having a piece of land in the marsh was an asset to improve their revenues. Farmers who were not able to use their plots in Rugende marshes would like to lease them to those who have the capacity to exploit them, but rather some cooperative committee members confiscated them unjustly ‘stereotyping them as lazy’; those who did so however have been pursued by either their hierarchical superiors through traditional courts (Abunzi), warned by legislative council or by an agent of Ombudsman (Umuvunyi) office. Ultimately, poor farmers’ resistance has led to good results because, as some of participants revealed, after repeated accusations no one can unjustly take others’ plots; rather, they negotiate with the owners either for leasing or for sale (LI/23; 52).

Sell or lease plot

As we just saw, poor farmers have in certain circumstances opted to lease their plots instead of selling them to the less poor farmers. This was actually a way of keeping their parcel expecting that in the close future they would again be able to exploit it themselves. In addition to the act of leasing however, those who were still physically strong could use other strategies so as to survive. That is to plough for the plots tenants and gain twice: for leasing and for ploughing.

\[^{44}\text{Abunzi means meditation committee members; they are according to the ministry of justice volunteers and the service they provide is free. In order to create an incentive MINJUST now pays the cost of Abunzi’s families’ health insurance (‘Mutuelle’), worth Frw 5,000 per family per year. MINJUST also supplies one bicycle per Cell to help Abunzi access all parts of their jurisdiction (Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 4th June, 2003 revised in 8th 12, 2005. See J.O of 8th 12, 2005 Available Online: }\text{http://www.amategeko.net}\).\]

\[^{45}\text{See also Scott (1985:236)}\]

\[^{46}\text{A study carried out by Lerman and Cimpoies shows that both productivity of land and the productivity of labour decrease as fragmentation increase; while land consolidation always leads to better economic performance; and that land leasing is one of the mechanisms for land consolidation where the lessees and lessors gain respectively through increased farm incomes and income from lease payments for their land (Zvi Lerman and Dragos Cimpoies, 2006: 2-4)}\]
Grazing cattle at night

A little bit similar to what Scott (1985:152) described above but different phenomenon. As we have seen early, there is a policy forbidding cattle or any other domestic animal to wander grazing in the fallow, bushes, or elsewhere out of fenced ranch or barn. It usually happens that farmers take their cattle out of the barn to feed them in fallows, natural reserves, unoccupied land or bushes at night. This type of cheating, as Scott calls it, happens in many areas during dry season in particular. Cheaters are mainly among poor cattle farmers without space to fence or field to grow grass. One of the farmers revealed that after harvest of season-A (June/July) they used to negotiate with neighbours, sorghum or maize growers to pasture their cattle in the fallows, but this is today forbidden, as he said. They therefore do it at night from 3:00 am up to 4:30 or 5:00 am before people wake up in the morning (LI/57).

Steal other farmers’ herbs/grass

It also happens that poor farmers steal herbs from other farmers’ fields and this again is done at night. Because of land scarcity farmers generally grow herbs/grass along and on the edge of terraces. The same shepherds who graze animals at night also steal grasses or herbs in terraces belonging to others. Fields’ owners said that they know them but it is not possible to catch them because they are extremely violent, even local defence force fears them, unless they have gunfire but even with it, shepherds don’t fear (Focus7). This situation can also be simulated to Scott description of poor land less who steal paddy from other poor at night because of poverty47

Boycott

Some participants/respondents I met at their home when others were about to attend a meeting or community work told me that they were sick. But it was difficult for them to describe what they were suffering from. And later on, when we were discussing about the usual discourses in the meetings some showed lack of interest from them. They even declared useless meetings. It was therefore easy to conclude if really that person was sick or it was just an imaginary disease. Similar statements were given about non attendance to community work where some of them declared that going there is wasting time (LI/8; 33; ID/9).

47 Ibid: 302
Humour

The humour, jokes and fun are used by both parties; farmers use it as a way of preventing retaliation of the authority, whereas the authority used it to create harmony. And Zijderveld\textsuperscript{48} refers joking to a way of providing subordinates with a feeling of belonging to the family. Basoux\textsuperscript{49} shows how fun is effective in generating a sense of belonging and identity… these scholars also suggests that humour can make an organization more participative and responsive, it can generate energy and dispel nervousness in subordinates, make managers more approachable thereby enhancing team spirit and involvement; in short it can humanize the hierarchy.

These forms of counter-resistance are not observed in workplace organizations only, they are also observed in the community too. When for example during the community work some people/farmers say by joking that their offspring will find the places, where the umuganda (community work) is being undertaken becoming New York City. According to some participants it was a kind of ironic joke expressed as a humour. My interpretation would be that, the intention was not necessarily of challenging the power who initiated the policy but a way of criticizing the expected output from such disingenuous and ill organized activity\textsuperscript{50}. In some parts of the country however, umuganda is well done and also serve as a place of debating local issues so as to find agreed upon solutions.

Silence/Indifference

In the context of this study, silence was considered as resistance in a scenario where reform implementation delays and the agent of reform insists so that it gets faster, while farmers justify the reasons behind the delay and when leaders don’t react to their request, farmers opt to keep silence rather than quarrelling with the agent of reform for fear to be prosecuted.

As M. Lilja\textsuperscript{51} argues, silence ‘expresses something; it is a voice, a response … to silence hegemonic discourse…’ Indeed, when farmers prefer to keep silence during a meeting and complain discreetly and individually or in group, silence becomes a kind of resistance.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 290
Farmers’ behaviour in this context, relates to what Scott call the ‘hidden transcripts’ with the intention of ‘…mitigating the process of change’\(^{52}\).

_Irony_

Farmer sing slogans recalling the population to implement government policies, emphasizing what they have already achieved but sometimes with lies, and sometimes they also mention resisted activities. In the slogan they emphasize that the crop of maize has contributed to increase their income, but during interviews they recount the opposite. Also, if the content of their songs is compared to their behaviour in local meetings, and their secret complaints once out the meetings, it is diametrically opposite. Actually, this kind of ceremony happens only when a leader from the central government visits them, they actually get briefings of how to behave before the arrival of the guest of honour and most of them conform.

Lilja argues that irony (and ironic jokes) can be used to negotiate power relations. The following quote explains that irony and ironic jokes in particular can serve subordinates to negotiate power relations:

> “… (1) Subalterns use irony to distance themselves from the power relation that they are involved in and thus manage to live with subordination and objectification” “… (2) Irony is also a linguistic weapon of the underdog, consisting of hidden but still explicit protests against the prevailing hierarchies and stereotypes”\(^{53}\).

In the context of this research however, farmers are not singing slogans to negotiate power relations as it is in Lilja’s context; they just hide their actual beliefs for fear to be marginalized or be pursued otherwise. The second part of this quote could be relevant for this context if there were some ironic jokes; but basing on my personal observation there was no joke.

After observing this phenomenon I approached my respondents and ask them to explain the meaning of their contradictions, one of them explained in the following words:

> What you saw there is normal; we have to praise our leaders even if we don’t do what they expect from us. In fact, what people do when they are in such


\(^{53}\)Ibid., 189-91
meetings is different to what they have in their hearts. You may however know that those who sing loudly are the intore (cadres) and we just accompany them repeating their refrains, but this doesn’t mean that we are happy (LI/48).

When I asked him the reason of their unhappiness, he added:

There are many things that local leaders ask us to do, while we don’t have the capacity of doing so. It could, for example, be easy to pay medical insurance, pay children education and contribute to different other activities if they had allowed us to continue growing sorghum; we could may be afford all those expenses, but from maize we almost earn nothing. I therefore don’t see how people should be happy. We just praise them, nothing else…! (Ibid)

Similar complaints could be heard everywhere in the countryside, in particular where growing maize is compulsory. One of the respondents said however that those who grow other crops such as rice, praise leaders honestly (Focus 3). Indeed, farmers I met in other areas where rice is cultivated seem to be happy. Only one of the marshes I visited is still playing the game of trial and error, while others are really progressing very well.

**Conclusion**

Everyday resistance in the context of this paper aims at not undermining power as it is often for many cases, but struggling for surviving; even those who use shocking arguments against brutal practices or coercion during the implementation of government policies were not necessarily struggling for political interest but advocating for subordinates – who in fact don’t enjoy certain rights – by the dominant power imposing them to implement certain programs without taking into account their real needs but for national economic interest.

Hidden transcripts could be observed through certain farmers’ behaviours but they were generally economic and not necessarily political. There was however a kind of mistrust between subordinates farmers and the dominant leaders and the agents of reforms who embody power, not necessarily for negotiating conformity but, for seeking it through intimidation.

The most interesting aspect however was about the act of shifting of some agents from the side of power representation to the side of the subordinates and then play the role of advocacy for and negotiate certain corrections in the process of reform implementation on behalf of the
subalterns. This happened to some agronomists and other agents of reform who finally became like ‘Saul on Christians’\(^ {54}\).

Even though traditions is among the main barriers to rapid change, farmers have shown their willingness to conform if certain requirements are taken into consideration; those are for instance, their involvement in the process of decision making; acquire appropriate training concerning reforms to be initiated; and acknowledge their low affordability at the market.

A number of types of everyday resistance were discovered, including: using rumours as a justification to boycott; refuse to cut down certain plants or uproot certain crops so as to replace them with the new ones imposed by the government; mixing crops while it is prohibited; public arguments against exploitation of poor people; report or complain to other institutions such as Ombudsman and local mediators; lease plot instead of selling it while forced to; refuse to sell harvest at ridiculous proposed price; grazing cattle at night while it is prohibited to let animals to graze or wander outside their barn; steal herbs/grass to feed cow; boycott meetings and community works; humour and jokes while performing everyday activities; silence or indifference during meetings, etc.

Various types of everyday resistance and their motivations facilitate the researcher and readers to understand the everyday life of participants/respondent while experiencing agricultural reform implementation and allow them to notice their re-actions while negotiating violated rights.