Living the transition: inside Rwanda's conflict cycle at the grassroots
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Living the transition: inside Rwanda's conflict cycle at the grassroots

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Political transitions are predominantly analysed from the top down and focus on a narrow range of political institutions and processes. Critical rethinking of the "transition paradigm" now incorporates structural factors, such as historical legacies and ethnic composition(s) when analysing their trajectory(s). In this paper, we intend to complement top-down approaches by offering a bottom up perspective; revealing what it means for an "ordinary" person to live through a transition. We use the Rwandan transition as a case-study. An analysis of over 400 life histories of Rwandan peasants, and their subjective ranking exercises over time on a "ladder of life", portrays the path of the Rwandan transition as perceived from below. The ethnicity of the respondents sheds light on the structural factor underlying the Rwandan transition: the Hutu–Tutsi ethnic bi-polarity. Their life stories and the results of the subjective ranking exercise reveal the (perceived) interrelation of power and identity that have structured and continue to structure the Rwandan socio-political landscape and everyday life, despite the fact that ethnicity has been "officially" banned from public life.

Keywords: Rwanda; political transition; conflict; ethnicity; life stories

Introduction: the transition paradigm reconsidered from below

The assumption underlying the main literature on political transitions, the so-called *transition paradigm*, is that a country shifting away from authoritarian rule is moving or evolving towards democracy.[2] Through reform, compromise or overthrow, the modalities of the transition are the choice of the main actors – incumbent and opposition élite forces – driving the transition towards its outcome; a (new) democracy. Reconsideration of this classical paradigm has highlighted some of its major shortcomings based on the observation that several countries that underwent a political transition failed to democratize.[3] Therefore, these emerging regimes – the outcomes of transition – need to be situated somewhere in the *grey zone*[4] between authoritarianism and democracy.

The observation that *structural features* can promote or hamper democratization efforts was important in understanding why some countries failed to democratize. These structural conditions include historical and institutional legacies, the economic situation, social class and/or ethnic make-up. As a consequence Carothers argues:

> Democracy promoters are strongly wedded to their focus on political processes and institutions. They have been concerned that trying to blend that focus with economic or socio-cultural perspectives might lead to the dilution or reduction of democracy assistance. And having set up organizations with an exclusively political perspective, it is hard for democracy promotion groups to include other kinds of expertise or approaches.[5]

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Principally top-down assessments of the Rwandan transition that started in 1990, its different phases and its outcome are provided by several authors.[6] Multiple factors influenced the incumbent regime – a so-called development dictatorship that came into place after the 1973 coup led by Juvenal Habyarimana – to open up and initiate liberal reforms that should eventually have led to democracy. Domestic opposition forces came into play, contesting and competing for power that was, until then, mainly centred in the hands of a Hutu clique from the north of the country. At the same time, a Tutsi-dominated rebel force, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), started a civil war against the Habyarimana regime. In August 1993, the Arusha peace agreement established an official end to the war and sought a compromise between the different parties involved: the élite on the side of the Habyarimana regime, the internal opposition and the armed rebel force (RPF). The agreement was never implemented since the crash of the plane carrying Habyarimana unleashed a genocidal campaign against Tutsi civilians and so-called *moderate Hutu* who were not in favour of the incumbents' politics. The RPF resumed its war and gained a military victory in July 1994 by defeating the government forces and stopping the genocide. They publicly agreed to respect the Arusha peace agreement and to continue the political transition with the *forces* that did not participate in the genocide in order to achieve power-sharing and democratic institutions. This began a second phase in the transitional period, officially completed in 2003.

Structural factors, such as historical legacies and/or ethnic bi-polarity, are highlighted by most of the authors discussing the Rwandan transition. What remains largely unexplored in the literature on political transitions and the studies on the Rwandan transition – even when incorporating the critical rethinking of the *transition paradigm* – is the experience of *transition* by the ordinary population. Analysis is predominantly focused on actions undertaken by members of the political élite, the functioning of institutions and procedural regulations. Local perceptions of socio-political change are not mentioned in the transition literature. It is important that we incorporate the concrete results of governance, that is, the tangible life changes in the (perceived) well-being of the population to understand the nature and assess the outcomes of transitions. Well-being includes objective and subjective elements so an assessment of the indicators of change should include measures of how people feel about their lives and perceive the changing socio-political environment. Narratives of *popular agency* and perceptions of change are, therefore, a necessary *bottom-up* complement to *top-down*, or macro-oriented under-standing of a transition. Our objective in this paper is to complement these *top-down* approaches with a bottom-up perspective that intends to, "bring peasants back into an understanding of the political and social processes of the state".[7]

Processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt to shift away from old socio-political procedures, behaviour, institutions and ideological underpinnings and its attempts to evolve towards a new *order* operate in the context of the broader *societal (opportunity) structure*. A bottom-up perspective on *transition*, therefore, entails the exploration of the dynamic interplay between *agency* and *opportunity structure*.[8] A society's opportunity structure is defined by the broader societal context that is institutional, social and political; it is the formal and informal context in which people operate. We define *agency* as the capacity of an actor to process – perceive and interpret – social experiences and events. These actors subsequently have the capability to express personal preferences, make meaningful choices and undertake action.[9]

We analyse the features of the Rwandan political transition by focusing on perceptions of socio-political change. Our focal point throughout the analysis is the central cleavage structuring (or defining) Rwandan society. The ethnicity of respondents

functions as a pivot. We ask ourselves the question as to whether the perception and experience of the same reality may differ depending on the identity of those perceiving it. Long states, "[...] issues or events are, of course, often perceived, and their implications interpreted, very differently by the various parties/actors involved. Hence, from the outset one faces the dilemma of how to represent situations were there are multiple voices and contested 'realities'."[10] Based on more than 400 life-story interviews with Hutu and Tutsi peasants, and their subjective rankings on a "ladder of life", we shed light on perceived changes over time.

In what follows, we first explain the nature of the methodology used to collect the data to offer this bottom-up perspective. Subsequently, we outline the course of historic events experienced by the ordinary peasant population. This experience illustrates how ethnicity, the underlying structural factor we keep in mind, not only shaped the transition but also shapes current perceptions of the Rwandan transition that started in 1990. We finally turn to the outcome of the transition: that is, the perceptions of living conditions under the regime that emerged following the military overthrow by the RPF. This is done with a specific focus on the governance–justice–development nexus that followed the genocide aftermath in the context of a *new* political regime.

Fieldwork and methodology

Our research seeks to understand (the experience and perceptions of) processes of transition and regime change. Rwanda's political transition started in 1990. We needed, therefore, the ability to capture the dynamics over a longer period. Moreover, we needed to come to an understanding of the *perceived* comparison with subsequent regimes without directly and explicitly asking respondents. Direct questions of this kind posed by foreign researchers are not only *unwanted* by the Rwandan political establishment and administrative authorities, they would also trigger (mainly) *politically correct* answers by respondents.[11] The violence experienced during the 1994 genocide and war has destroyed the Rwandan social fabric, distrust is pervasive. The ensuing and zealous struggle to eradicate *genocide ideology*[12] equally seeks to counter all utterances not in accordance with the official "public transcript",[13] and has installed a high degree of self-censorship among the peasant population.[14] Therefore, we integrated the following principles and research strategies in designing the study and during fieldwork: (1) an inductive *theoretical drive* and an *iterative* research process; (2) making observations on both the community (village/sector) and the individual level; (3) understanding the breadth and the depth of processes; (4) making use of a rigid sampling framework in order to have variance in the sites for in-depth study (multi-sited); (5) combining quantitative and qualitative research strategies (mixed method); and (6) the ability to capture the dynamics of change by adopting a diachronic perspective through the collection of community and life histories and subjective rankings over time.[15]

By adopting these research principles, we approached the topic *sideways* by collecting life histories and subjective rankings.[16] In so doing, respondents were not aware that they were not only telling their own story, but equally the story of (a political) transition and regime change. In 2006, during a pilot for the life story interviews, we conducted 50 full life story interviews with 30 Hutu and 20 Tutsi respondents from several villages. These interviews were conducted during several sessions and through open-ended questions touching on almost every aspect of the interviewee's life. These initial life story interviews lasted in total between 7 and 14 hours (spread over several sessions). Based on an analysis of these narratives we derived a set of questions to be used during shorter interview

sessions. These interviews lasted between 1.5 and 3 hours and enabled us to cover a larger sample of respondents in one session. We further grouped these questions into five themes that corresponded with the different dimensions that matter in life for *ordinary people*: the socio-economic situation; the feeling of security; the level of confidence in others (with a subsection for one's own ethnic group and that of others), and the feeling of political representation and personal prospects for the future.[17] An analysis of these numerous life-story narratives enables us to (partially) understand what it means to live through a political transition, a period of violence and a shift from one regime to another. But apart from this *qualitative* or *ethnographic* research strategy, we added a *quantitative* element to the exercise.

During each life story interview, we used a *visual aid* to assist the respondents in their assessments of the different periods in their lives (see Figure 1).[18] We used this to explore the different themes identified above: the socio-economic situation; the feeling of security; the level of confidence in others; and the feeling of political representation. In the life story interviews, a value of between −5 and +5 was given (by the respondent) by pointing to the appropriate step on the ladder for every year in the adult's life.

We proceeded as follows. First, the structure of the visual aid was explained: on top of the ladder are those people who are the best off (wealth), the most secure (security), etc. in *the community of the respondent*. (Otherwise the problem would exist that people would compare themselves with residents of Kigali, for example, obliging them (in their perceptions) to always choose the bottom steps.) The spatial reference is their own community: in our field sites this is always rural with predominantly peasant inhabitants. With communities, we refer to *sectors*. There exist no villages in Rwanda. People live dispersed on hills in the countryside and are grouped into administrative units. We define the local level, a local community, as the proximity of peoples' everyday lives. This is what
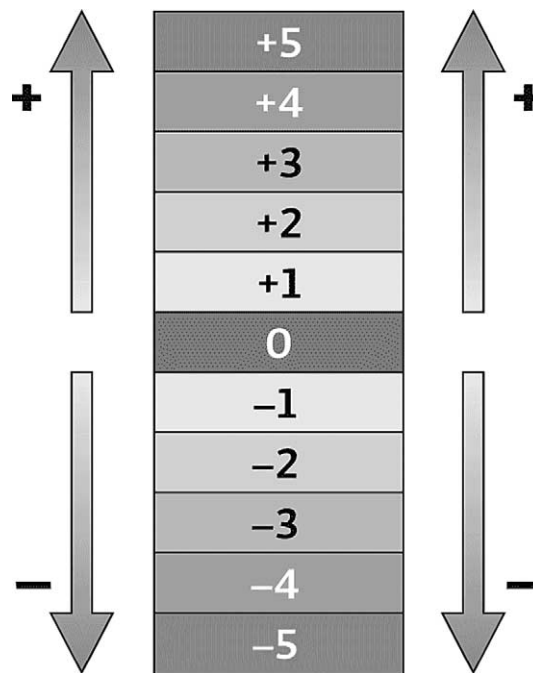

Figure 1.   Ladder of life visual.

happens at the cell and sector level as they existed before the administrative restructuring of January 2006. When the geographical area, for comparison, was defined and the people on the top step characterized (step $+5$), the nature of the bottom step was defined as, "people who are the worst off in economic terms (step -5)," or who "feel the least secure," or who "are the least confident in the other ethnic group" or their "own ethnic group", or who "feel the least politically represented" in *the community*. The enumerators and my translator were "trained" (and supervised) always to use exactly the same phrasings to explain the nature of the ladder and its steps in order to avoid heterogeneous interpretations by the respondents. Equally important is that all respondents have a similar understanding of the situation/feelings/concepts of *economic prosperity*, *security*, *confidence* and *political representation*. First we always asked the respondent to describe in his/her own words how he/she interpreted the notion of *economic situation*, the *feeling of security*, the *degree of confidence* and the *nature of political representation*. Although their responses make clear that these notions comprise multiple characteristics and one respondent might pay more attention to one dimension than to another, their phrasings explaining the themes indicate that all are aware of the range of connotations a notion entails. Gradual continuity prevails in the semantic understanding of the notions under investigation; there is no difference in kind in the interpretations.[19]

Subsequently, the respondents were asked to place themselves with regard to the topic discussed (e.g. economy, security, etc.) on the ladder in their *current* situation. We then moved consistently back in time towards their year of marriage or their first year of adult life (if single). From that point onwards, we moved forward in time, asking a rating for every year or period of years. We used the findings from the life-story narrative to help people recall their situation at a certain moment in time. For example, when someone had told us that his/her firstborn child was born in 1986, we would refer to 1986 as, "the year when your first child was born".

It needs to be noted that the scale (i.e. ladder) itself remains fixed throughout the different periods in time. The fact that the scale remains fixed needs further explanation. For example, different levels of "feeling secure" or "being confident" always exist *as such*. Even when a certain village (at a certain point in time) does not contain people who feel very secure or totally insecure or totally politically represented or not represented at all, then the idea and knowledge of what it means to feel totally secure or insecure, or to be very well represented or to feel not represented at all is still known to the respondent. Similar reasoning is made by the respondent when applying the scale for the socio-economic themes.[20] The scale functions as a mental map and background against which the personal movement up and down the ladder of life – the imaginary but stable situations/levels of the theme explored – is assessed related to *a certain theme* and *point in time* (i.e. in their own life experience) and *in comparison* with the surrounding environment (i.e. the spatial reference point).

It is important to note that these narratives and rankings are not indicators of economic welfare, social cohesion, security and political representation per se, but rather indicators of the *perceptions* of these themes. Equally important when interpreting these findings is realizing that they portray rankings over time; events and periods in the past are reinterpreted through the lens of events occurring later. The functioning of memory, the effects of trauma and current government campaigns to alter the peoples' understanding of the past in nation-building strategies create biases in ranking exercise responses. Therefore, several elements need to be taken into account when interpreting the findings. First, there is no baseline data on these topics; recall is the best way to get at these issues. Second, we want to understand the experience and perceptions of transition. This is how perceptions

work: they are influenced by individual experiences in the past and mediated by discourses produced by the government, media, etc., past and present. It is an element to consider when interpreting and presenting the results of the rankings. And third, biases that might exist due to recall activity go in all directions: all respondents are subject to it.

All sites where life stories were collected are situated in rural Rwanda. The selection of communities (sectors) was guided by the principle of *attaining maximum variance*.[21] Geographic variance in field sites allows for an indicative appreciation of life's experiences incorporating various dynamics of historical events, state and societal practices. Field sites are highlighted on the map (Figure 2). Large dots are places where life stories were collected; small dots are locations where we also resided but did not collect life histories. The limitation to six locations does not allow us to claim a representative sample of the entire Rwandan population. However, the guiding principles applied when choosing research locations and in the selection of respondents allow for indicative findings and a *grounded* understanding.

According to the Rwandan Ministry of Finance, 56.3% of the Rwandan population were considered poor in 2007.[22] Poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon with 92% of the poor living in rural areas. Moreover, 87.2% of the entire rural-based Rwandan population have agriculture as their main economic activity, either as self-employed farmers or as daily wage labourers. This means that the people dispersed over the Rwandan hills are predominantly poor and almost all peasants. Apart from the fact that Rwanda is a peasant society, it is also an ethnic bi-polar society with Hutu and Tutsi as the main ethnic groups. Nevertheless, due to the violence in 1994 *new* groups have emerged. During our fieldwork, we determined five social groups that are clearly identified by local inhabitants.

Figure 2.   Field sites.

Tutsi inhabitants can be divided into *genocide survivors* and *old caseload returnees*. The latter or their parents fled Rwanda after the Hutu revolution in 1959 and returned to Rwanda after the RPF's assumption of power in 1994. The population of Hutu inhabitants in a local setting currently contain *released prisoners*, those *accused in Gacaca* courts and those who are *not accused and have never been imprisoned*. We compiled lists with the names of all the household heads in the selected village and asked several groups of key informants to identify every household according to one of the five group characteristics. Subsequently, using a stratified random sampling scheme, we selected household heads from each group to interview (i.e. approximately 70 respondents in every locality).[23] Selected persons aged below 30 were systematically replaced, as for our purposes survey respondents had to have lived through the transition and regime change in a conscious way. We aggregated the weighted results for each of the five groups across all communities into a trend line according to ethnic group, Hutu or Tutsi (Table 1).[24]

We first resided in one of the survey communities between July and September 2004, and later in all of them between January and July 2006. Between January and June 2005, brief visits were made to some of the communities while working on another research project. Life-story interviews were conducted between January and April 2007 when we resided for shorter periods in the sectors.

Rwanda's political transition lived from below

Figures 3 to 6 present the aggregated results of a subjective ranking exercise according to ethnic group. The perceived changes enable us to discern differences and similarities in perceptions according to ethnic identity. In doing so, we depict the perceived changing nature of the type of regime and its policies through the lens of ethnicity. For each phase of the transition, we also include excerpts from peasant narratives to elucidate the perceived socio-political changes over time. We used the results of the ranking exercise, as presented in the graphs, to explore the extensive body of life story narratives and identify recurring themes and underlying motifs. Focusing on the subjective ranking exercise, we analyse the nature of perceived changes through life trajectories. We juxtapose Hutu and Tutsi narratives to portray diverging and converging experiences. These narrative blocs and threads, in their turn, support and elucidate the nature of the ranking exercise results. We describe the perceived changes while using short quotes from the respondent narratives to support our interpretations of the ladder of life results. We take a chronological stance. According to the findings, 4 periods can be identified: 1980s–94; 1994–2000; 2000–05 and the current situation from 2005 onwards.[25]

Table 1.   Identity respondents life-story interviews.

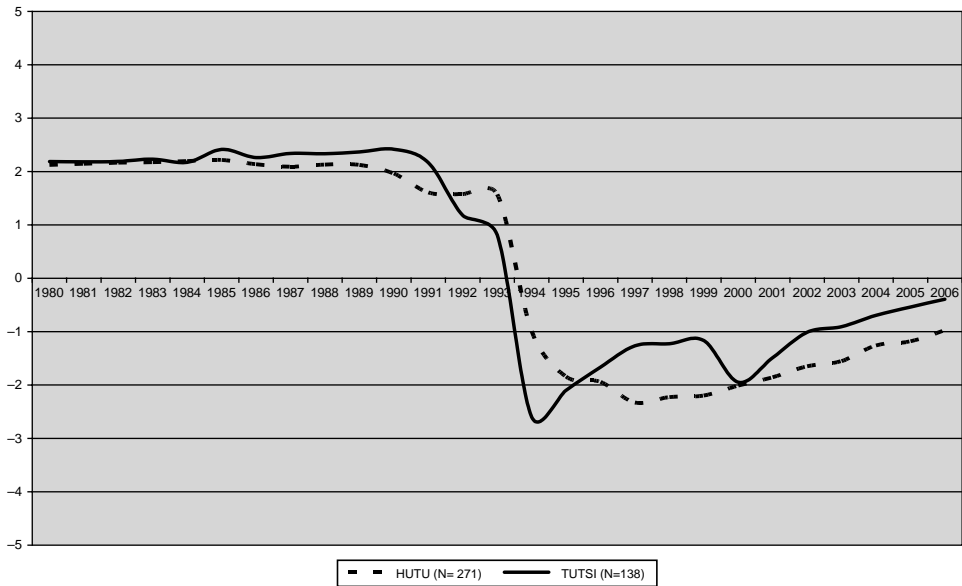|	Male	Female	Total
Hutu not accused in Gacaca /never incarcerated	74	62	**136**
Hutu accused in Gacaca	68	9	**77**
Hutu released prisoner	58	0	**58**
Total Hutu	*200*	*71*	*271*
Tutsi Survivor	36	49	**85**
Tutsi old-caseload returnee	28	25	**53**
Total Tutsi	*64*	*74*	*138*
All respondents	**264**	**145**	**409**

Figure 3.   Subjective ranking economic situation (weighted results).

End of the 1980s–94: the breakdown of an order

Through the rankings, it becomes clear that both Hutu and Tutsi valued the level of well-being during the 1980s at the height of the Habyarimana regime (at least when looking back from their current perceptions). Food, as well as territorial security, were then guaranteed. A Rwandan peasant feels secure when the heart is calm and peaceful. Having peace of heart (*umutuzo w'umutima*)), and thus feeling secure, is only possible when several conditions are met. Security (*umutekano*) has different dimensions. There is the security of the stomach (*umutekano w'inda*) and security of the body and of property or goods (*umutekano w'abantu n'ibintu*); the latter is fulfilled when "one sleeps well" (*ununtu araryama agasinzira*). There is a clear distinction between *territorial* or *physical* security and *psychological* security. Territorial security is guaranteed when there is neither war (*ntambara*) nor conflict (*imidugararo*), when one can move freely (*kujya aho ushaka*), and cultivate plots of land and/or breed cattle in freedom (*uburenganzira*).

The rankings by Tutsi in the 1980s are slightly lower, especially regarding the level of confidence towards the other ethnic group (i.e. the Hutus), and their perception of the nature of political representation; a consequence of the awareness that their group had been targeted in the past (i.e. the events of 1959, 1963–64 and 1973). This was more a latent awareness of not being fully represented due to the rule of the great Hutu majority (*rubanda nyamwinshi*). In that period, Hutu did not make a distinction between their own ethnic group and the Tutsi. Trust without distinction was omnipresent for them. Tutsi living outside Rwanda at that time were less confident in the Hutu. Tutsi genocide survivors recall:

> "During that period, the government equally did its utmost to guarantee the peace of the population, evidently they called us Tutsi, but it didn't hurt us."
> "[In 1974], we were very skeptical about the peace brought by Habyarimana, but [later] we gained confidence in the politics of Habyarimana."
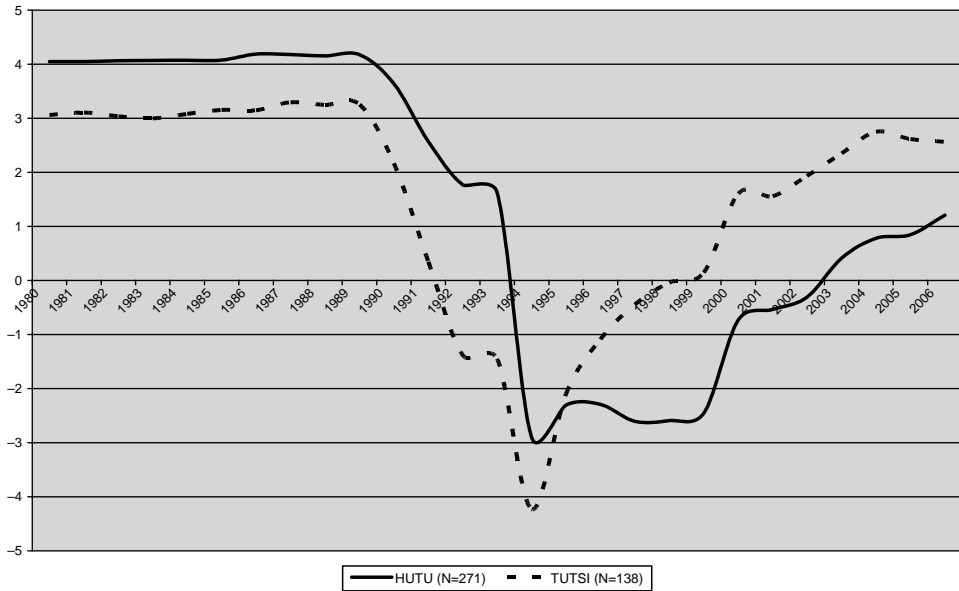
Figure 4.   Subjective ranking feeling of security (weighted results).

"In 1963, a lot of Tutsi were killed and houses burned, but afterwards calm returned. In 1973 as well after the take-over of power by Habyarimana, the feeling of security increased. There was no problem."

"In Rwanda [at that time], there were ethnic divisions. One ethnic group was favoured."

"[. . .] Tutsi were not considered in the same way as Hutu, so they didn't have all the advantages of Hutu."

"They didn't want Tutsi to have secondary and higher education in order to prevent Tutsi from having access to power."

Figure 5.   Subjective ranking feeling of confidence (weighted results).

Figure 6.   Subjective ranking feeling of political representation (weighted results).

"At that time there were people with 'genocidal ideas', but they couldn't put them into practice because the government didn't want it at that time."
"They [Hutu] had chased us from our country." (Old caseload returnee)

An aspect of political representation is related to *how one represents* how one governs. It is about the way power is exercised. It is about governing in an impartial way, preventin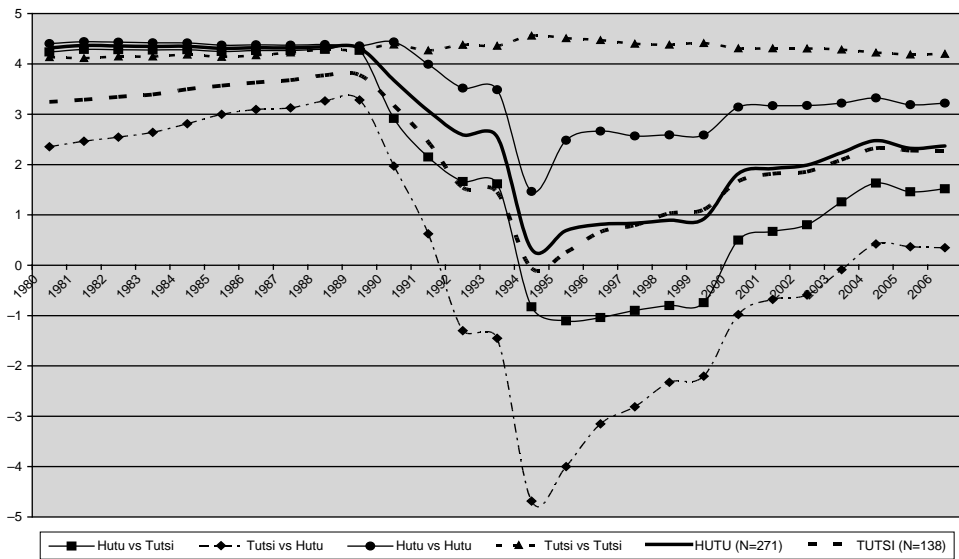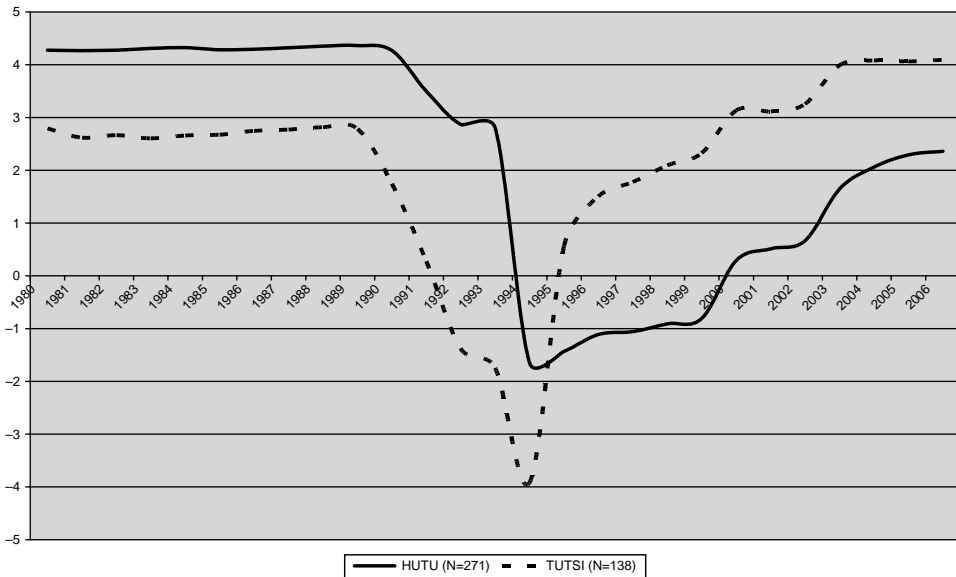g the suffering of any kind of injustice that remains unpunished (*Kugukosereza*); that one is not the object of any form of violent behaviour (*Guhohoterwa*). Even more important is that the governed do not suffer from prejudice and injustice emanating from the administration itself (i.e. those who govern), that no one is impeding you from reaching your goal (*Ukubangamira*). A preliminary condition to feel represented is that one does not feel targeted by those exercising power, that one has not the impression that, "all means are employed to do you bad" (*Kukwirunkankiraho*).

Feelings of security declined starkly from 1990 onwards, after the RPF attacked Rwanda. Tutsi living inside Rwanda in particular, now genocide survivors, gradually lost confidence in their fellow Hutu community members. Some areas were directly affected by the war. The war culture was pervasive and went together with the introduction of a multiparty system throughout the country. The existing framework of clearly defined rules of conduct, social norms and power privileges evaporated. Initially this resulted in the experience of a multi-polar landscape with threats to the socio-political order coming from different sides: the Northerners (*abakiga*) against people from the south (*Nduga*); members of different political parties against each other; the RPF versus the Habyarimana regime. Political parties (*amashyaka*) used violent practices to recruit new members by *liberating* them from their ties with other parties (*kubohoza*). They formed youth wings that were later converted into militia gangs to combat other militias and terrorize local authorities. Existing (MRND) power structures were contested and administrative authorities were sometimes ousted from their communities. All this resulted in the breakdown of the existing authority structure that had guaranteed territorial security.

TUTSI	HUTU
"The authorities couldn't solve my problems anymore, because of the political parties controlling the situation and looking to recruit members. They didn't want Tutsi."	"The authorities couldn't solve the people's problems anymore because of the war."
"The effects of multipartyism were negative in the sense that one was harassed because of being a member of this or that political party."	"The war had started, the political parties were fighting over members and the RPF could profit from this. We were afraid from the Northern Hutu."
"There was tremendous upheaval."	"We couldn't go to Kigali anymore; they called us *Akazu*, people on the side of the government in power."
"There were a lot of parties here. We enrolled in the MRND, the strongest party here [in the village]. But it didn't serve us well later on [in 1994]."	"The youth members of the MDR had prevented me governing the people of my cell (neighbourhood)."
"There was no security because of the political parties and because of them we had the genocide."	"Authorities didn't exist anymore, bandits dictated the law."
"With the arrival of the political parties, the situation was terrible. Before everyone was member of the MRND, but then we had the MDR, CDR, PL, PSD."	"We couldn't sleep anymore, there was no free circulation allowed due to the violence caused by partisans of political parties such as the MRND, the MDR and the CDR."

In an effort to restore its authority, the Habyarimana regime appealed to ethnic sentiments and managed to align multiple cleavages dividing the socio-political landscape with the central cleavage of Rwandan society: the Hutu – Tutsi bi-polarity. Tutsi living inside Rwanda became more and more stigmatized as "enemies from within," "cockroaches" (*Inyenzi*) and "accomplices" (*Ibyitso*) of the RPF, the enemy on the outside of Rwanda perceived as a Tutsi rebel force eager to undo the achievements of the 1959 Hutu revolution. Suspected Tutsi accomplices were incarcerated and massacres were instigated in some areas. The years between 1990 and 1994 were characterized by this mindset of war; diminishing feelings of security and social cohesion. Not only for people of Tutsi identity but also within the Hutu group. Distrust, in particular, was intensifying between the ethnic groups.

TUTSI	HUTU
"Because of the attack of the RPF, there was no security for Tutsi."	"[There was no confidence in Tutsi], because they were of the same ethnicity as those who caused the war."
"I was afraid, because the Hutu said I was a member of the RPF."	"The rumours of war made us lose confidence in them [Tutsi]."
"Those in power were sensitizing the Hutu to kill the Tutsi."	"Tutsi were shedding the blood of Hutu."
"We were harassed ever since the RPF attacked Rwanda. Tutsi were killed in Kibilira, Murambi and Bugesera."	"They [Tutsi] were killing Hutu on the battle-field."
"The authorities started discriminating according to ethnic identity. They were preparing for genocide."	"We pitied Tutsi because they were menaced and killed, but we also heard on the radio the atrocities committed by the soldiers of the RPF."
"I was not represented [by the authorities] because searched after to be killed as an accomplice (Ibyitso) of the RPF."	"People started to dissociate, Hutu said Tutsi had brought them war, Tutsi said Hutu were going to kill them."
"There was no security in the country and especially for Tutsi."	"The war had started in Umutara [Northern region] and people could change and become 'savage beasts' (*Inyamwaswa*)."
"Confidence in Hutu diminished, because they imprisoned my father as an accomplice of the RPF."	"I was afraid at that time, because on the radio they said the *Inkotanyi* [RPF] killed people."

1994–2000: violence as usual

The downing of Habyarimana's plane on 6 April 1994 started the genocide and widespread violence throughout the country. Both Hutu and Tutsi reached the lowest point in their feelings of security according to their current ranking exercise. The regime then in place is considered to have incited Hutu to kill all Tutsi. Throughout this period of political transition, war, genocide and regime change, the degree of confidence Tutsi experienced for members of their own ethnic group remained consistent and high in their current recollections. On the other hand, the nature and/or degree of internal Hutu cohesion starkly declined, especially during the genocide. While the intention of killing all Tutsi clearly stands out as the master narrative of the period between April and July 1994, a closer look at variations on the periphery (e.g. the micro-administration of the genocide) reveals the targeting of people from all groups and for various reasons.[26]

TUTSI	HUTU
"We were not human beings anymore being chased as if we were animals."	"It was the authorities who gave orders to kill the others [Tutsi]."
"The government condemned us to death."	"The state handed them [Tutsi] over (*Leta Yabatanza*)."[27]
"People died like flies."	"There was total anarchy during the genocide."
"Chasing Tutsi was authorized by the government and they asked all Hutu to kill Tutsi."	"We were governed by groups of killers."
"We were at the mercy of all fanatical Hutu."	"I was also afraid of being killed by the Hutu."
"In the fight against death, all Tutsi were united."	"People participated because of *Inda Nini* (greed)."
"People were killed, Hutu and Tutsi, because even wealthy Hutu have been killed."	"Hutu also threatened me because I was hiding Tutsi."
	"It was war (*ntambara*) and I was afraid."[28]
	"I could have died at any moment then, because the war (*ntambara*) was lethal."

In retrospect, Tutsi survivors remember they regained an acceptable level of physical security after the assumption of power by the RPF. This stands in stark contrast to the experience of Hutu in the genocide's immediate aftermath.

The ranking for perceived political representation by Tutsi is remarkably high immediately after the RPF took power, especially in contrast to the ranking of Hutu. This is because the new regime was perceived, by both groups, as being *Tutsi*-dominated. The political order had changed completely due to the military overthrow. The rankings reveal a perceived ethnic reversal of power, at least in the popular experience.

TUTSI	HUTU
"Security was assured. There were always soldiers [of the RPA] nearby."	"It was a manhunt of the soldiers of the *Inkotanyi* [the RPF], killing Hutu."
"Soldiers were everywhere and in our turn we traced the criminals [Hutu]."	"During the genocide, Hutu chased Tutsi and after the take-over of power by the RPF, Tutsi chased Hutu."
"My husband was sought by soldiers of the RPF who wanted to arrest all male Hutu."	"We went to Congo and it was possible to be killed going there and in Congo where people died like flies."

"The government was on our side and we had a feeling of superiority towards the Hutu."
"The Tutsi were satisfied with this new regime."
"The war was over, there were still tensions between Hutu and Tutsi, but the government was on the side of the Tutsi."

"In 1995, there were authorities, but I was not represented."
"They incarcerated several innocent persons and others were killed. So the authorities made a distinction in the way they governed."

This ethnically diverging perception of the nature of political representation continues even now, although Hutu have steadily evolved from a negative appreciation of the nature of political representation into a positive one. This is mostly due to the fact that violent practices such as revenge killings, brutal pacification campaigns and large-scale (often) arbitrary arrests that lasted for several years gradually faded. The year 2000 constitutes a turning point. In the years following the genocide, Hutu who had fled to Congo first experienced the violent dismantling of their camps in Congo, followed by massive arrests, extrajudicial and revenge killings inside Rwanda and a bold Rwandan Patriotic Army counter-insurgency programme intended to repel the infiltrators (*Abacengezi*) that had attacked Rwanda in 1996. The *Abacengezi*, members of the defeated (ex) Rwandan army (i.e. the FAR), and *Interahamwe*-militia infiltrated (especially northern) Rwanda and attacked Tutsi survivors and old caseload returnees, but also Hutu who had taken up positions in the new regime. The infiltrators lived among ordinary Hutu peasants who, consequently, were often targeted as infiltrators by the new regime. Hutu, therefore, felt insecure for several years without signs of a steady recovery. In the same period, approximately 130,000 Hutu were incarcerated. Waves of prisoners were released from 2003 onwards. Until then, they had lived in harsh overcrowded prisons with, in their recollections, the lowest level of security possible.

Although the new regime was perceived as being *on the Tutsi side* and guaranteed physical security for genocide survivors, their perceived recovery in the following years was slow. The loss of family members, homes, belongings, trauma and the destruction of the social fabric of communities impeded recovery for many years. The genocide, war and its violent aftermath left communities not only devastated economically, but also deeply divided along ethnic lines. Accordingly, the degree of confidence in the other ethnic group dropped dramatically, especially in the recollections of Tutsi respondents. Further, old caseload returnees coming back to Rwanda in the wake of the Tutsi take-over resettled in what was, in their eyes, a threatening environment.

TUTSI	HUTU
"Those who were not killed due to the war have been seriously harmed by it (*uwo itishe yaramukomerekeje*)."	"I was in the middle as the tongue (*Narindi hagati nk'ururimi*).[29] When you were for Kagame, the infiltrators would kill you, when you were for the infiltrators, the RPA would kill you."
"It was as if we were dead (*gupfa uhagaze.*)"	
"[In the years following the genocide], I regarded every Hutu as a killer."	"During the war of the infiltrators, we could become the target of the soldiers of the RPF or of the infiltrators."
"I was afraid from the Hutu, they glanced at me with an evil eye (*kureba umuntu n'ijisho ribi*)."	
"*Interahamwe* were still hiding in the forests."	"In the years between 1994 and 2000 a lot of inhabitants had been killed by soldiers considering us to be *Abacengezi* (infiltrators)."
"Hutu were throwing stones on our houses at night."	
"Trust in Hutu completely disappeared when I saw what they had done during the genocide." (Old caseload returnee)	"I was imprisoned and we were not sure at all of being alive the next morning, soldiers carried off people and went to kill them."

2000–05: the normalization of daily life

At the end of the 1990s, a normalization of social life takes place, but along the lines that were established following the initial seizure of power in 1994. The feeling of security increases for both Hutu and Tutsi, at least security of body and belongings (*umutekano w'umubir n'uw'ibintu*). Feelings of food security and security of the stomach (*umutekano muke w'inda*) are not widespread.

Ordinary life recommences, especially because overt hostilities on Rwandan soil ceased. The consequences of the 1994 carnage and the threat of persecution by Hutu infiltrators diminished for Tutsi, while the terror and violent practices of the new regime targeting Hutu also decreased. Further, the situations in prisons also improved. Only minor progress was, however, made concerning the livelihood situations in the countryside, as the ranking exercise makes clear. This caused *insecurity of the stomach* for many. The already dire economic situation worsens during periods of drought and food shortage, for example in 2000. Though suffered by both groups, it is often more pronounced for genocide survivors since they lost both family and assets: elements to rely on during periods of hardship.

TUTSI	HUTU
"Operations to kill people diminished."	"We started to forget the difficult moments we had in 1997–1999."
"Time went by and the sentiment to stay alive intensified."	"Years went by and we were not afraid anymore for vengeance from the Tutsi."
"War is not only bullets, even bad living conditions can be worse than war."	"Certain errors were corrected, like for example, the arbitrary arrests."
"The war was over, but the war that stayed was the war against hunger."	"We started cultivating our plots of land and were sure we would not be violently mistreated (*guhoho-terwa*) by anyone."
"In the year 2000, there was scarcity and we suffered from an empty stomach."	

The government made reconciliation a policy objective only after 2000. This was reflected in numerous "sensitization campaigns" (*Ibikorwa byo gukangurira*) staged continuously in rural areas. The ethnic groups, who had initially shared the Rwandan hills, now lived together again; not reconciled (*abiyunze*) but in a mode of non-violent co-existence (*kubana*).

TUTSI	HUTU
"The administrators convinced us to live together, even with the Hutu."	"There were a lot of sensitization meetings and gradually we became convinced."
"Hutu didn't look at us anymore with an evil eye."	"The ethnic tensions diminished and the survivors soothed their tempers."

Although the degree of trust in the other ethnic group increased during this period, the difference between the nature of confidence in one's own group and the other remained high, as can be seen from the results the ladder of life ranking. This ethnic distrust is subtly reflected in daily life on the linguistic level in statements such as *hagati yacu/turi twenyine* (between us – our ethnic group), or *hagati yabo/ari bonyine* (between them – their ethnic group). Hutu and Tutsi live together as neighbours in their respective communities, but Tutsi survivors mostly live together in settlements (*imidugudu*) erected after the genocide in the vicinity of their hills of origin. Those who returned from foreign countries – the

so-called *old caseload returnees* – generally settled in cities or otherwise took housing in settlements with Tutsi genocide survivors. This has an effect on the flux of those social interactions most sought-after and qualitatively intense with people sharing the same living environment and frequenting nearby bars, shops and houses. But the predominant and most intense interactions with members of their own ethnic group, and its consequences on the linguistic level, are secondary to the spatial restructuring of hillside life after the genocide. The massive decrease in trust towards members of the other ethnic group is the primary cause of the inequality in social interactions between ethnic groups. Both groups state that by the end of the 1990s, in contrast with the preceding years, the government started discouraging widespread ethnic distrust that could erupt into overt violence.

TUTSI	HUTU
"They are afraid to attack us because of the government keeping a watchful eye on us."	"When we see our victims [genocide survivors], we think they might seek revenge, but thanks to the authorities they don't."
"I am never going to visit Hutu and they never come to me, I can't even ask them for drinking water."	"[The] Authority is good, because the victims of the genocide and their 'bullies' (*abishi*) live together, they are not chasing each other anymore."
"We need to distance ourselves from the Hutu, because they can use poison to hurt us. Among the survivors on the other hand, we share everything, even our grief."	"The *Tutsi* government has done a lot to unite Rwandans."

In popular perceptions, power and identity remain intertwined as they always have been in Rwandan history. Strained ethnic relations and a Tutsi hold on (the access to) power are salient in recollections of the 2003 presidential elections. Tutsi often refer to the fact that they were free to choose their representatives, while this narrative thread is almost completely lacking for Hutu. Although a significant number of Hutu will have freely chosen their representative, in general Hutu were clearly guided in the making of their choice, sometimes through subtle means and sometimes through overt coercion.

TUTSI	HUTU
"We elected the authorities of our choice."	"People thought the war would restart."
"During the elections, you could remark sort of ruptures based on ethnic factions."	"[In the year of the elections] there was the fear of a possible war: if Kagame was not elected there could be reprisals, if he was elected there could be troubles caused by the Hutu."
"A great number of people here didn't want the president [Kagame], so a lot of security forces came for '*that*'."	
"I saw Hutu didn't really like us, they said they didn't want a Tutsi as president. But we '*arranged*' ourselves and got our candidate [Kagame] elected."	"We were afraid the elections would not go as the government had planned and that we would have problems."
	"Soldiers were everywhere and a Tutsi could lie to them about your voting intentions so you would end up in prison and tortured."
"We voted for our president because it is thanks to him that we are still alive."	"They made us vote by force and we were afraid for reprisals if the elections didn't go as they had planned."
"Since President Kagame took power, we are very well represented. But it will be necessary to be very attentive during the next elections [to keep it that way]."	"In the voting booth, we were accompanied by someone else indicating where to place the thumb, no refusal possible, otherwise …"

The outcome of the elections was a guarantee of physical security for Tutsi: their expectations for political representation in the future are conditional on a continuation of the status-quo. Hutu were also relieved and moved up in their ranking of political representation, but more because the simmering tensions in the run-up to the elections did not erupt into violence. Others phrase their experiences in more neutral terms but also appreciate the stability brought by the "new" elected government in contrast to the upheavals of the past. The practices of the administration, in general, were appraised in the years following the elections. The gradual release of prisoners contributed to a more positive appraisal of the government on the part of the Hutu population, although the policy created frustration and fear for genocide survivors.

TUTSI	HUTU
"The Hutu didn't cause problems after the election of President Kagame, they only said the votes were stolen."	"Calm returned and we regained confidence [in Tutsi]."
"I am very well represented, because if the Hutu are afraid of me it is because of the government."	"I was happy to have a president."
"Without the authorities we would still be massacred by the Hutu."	"With the reign of Kagame, it's better with our representation."
"[I will feel represented] if President Kagame stays in power."	"The king does not kill; it's the people that kill (*Umwami ntiyica, hica rubanda*).[30]
"[I will feel represented] on the condition that 'power' doesn't change."	"The authorities started addressing the problems of the population."
"Since the end of the genocide we have good representatives listening to the problems of the population."	"The elected administrators governed us well [in that period]."
"Currently there are Tutsi in power. It was not them that killed us and can restart."	"President Kagame had liberated some persons."
	"The head of state calms the survivors, otherwise all of us would be inside the prisons."
	"Since 2000, I started cultivating, I could go to the market and local authorities could solve my problems.

2005 onwards: justice–governance–development in a new key

Stability and physical security – being able to cultivate the fields, to sleep and eat – is highly appreciated, and stands in stark contrast to the turmoil of the 1990s. Progress is made through policies to improve the well-being of the population. But there is a general perception that policies are often not based on the needs and will of the population and even run counter to possible improvements, especially those related to the economy. The nature and functioning of the local governance structure, institutionally consolidated during the administrative restructuring in the beginning of 2006, contributes to these grievances.

The fact that the local government has a certain vision and dedication to the "development" of an area is appreciated. They also have the ideas (because of their education) and the technical capacity to do so.[31] Local authorities show great *zeal* in the implementation of these objectives in the locality they *govern*, often surpassing the capacities of the *governed*. They have great autonomy in achieving these goals and in the overall interpretation of national government policies. Moreover, the chain of accountability goes upwards towards higher authorities and not downwards towards the population: they are appointed, not elected.[32] Subsequently, an ambitious and internally coherent national ideology and vision is translated to the local level where measures are

taken by coercion irrespective of *real-world* considerations, and with local authorities often demanding much from the population. These authorities must respect and adhere to so-called performance contracts agreed with other authorities occupying positions in higher administrative levels. These contracts (*Imihigo*) refer to the capability to show observers and others that one is capable and competent in the execution of a task.[33] *Social engineering* has become the *modus operandi* in state–society relations, and underlies a wide range of policy initiatives and practices. Those narratives which reflect a sense of voicelessness and powerlessness imply that these state interventions are not rooted in local realities. This is also the case for Tutsi genocide survivors, but to a lesser extent since, in general, the presence of a political order that guarantees physical safety prevails for them over the shortcomings of actual policy initiatives.

TUTSI	HUTU
"We thought the state was going to help the survivors, but until now, I haven't seen any help." "I wish the authorities would listen to the interests of the population. The state should do all that is possible to save the people that risk dying from poverty." "Since the liberation of prisoners, the authorities don't want to listen and follow up on my anxiety caused by these liberated prisoners."	"They [political dignitaries] seek a solution for the problems of the population, but they don't want to know what our real problems are. If the state is not engaging in listening to the problems of the population, poverty will kill people in the shortest delay." "They [national authorities] are there [in Kigali], but they don't want to come into the countryside although it is there where there are a lot of problems." "They come to make us have reunions, but they ignore completely our well-being." "I can't say we feel represented, people are dying from hunger and nobody is taking stock."

The identity of power holders in these key positions at the local level and the (perceived) nature of the exercise of power tend to give an ethnic dimension to grievances. These statements shed light on the perceived order of things and explain the gap between subjective rankings over time according to the identity of the respondent: Hutu or Tutsi. Although state institutions and stated policies are intended to overcome (ethnic) divisions, in ordinary perceptions, at least, they also perpetuate the cleavages.

HUTU

"They [Tutsi] have all of power and power is on their side. Even when a Tutsi does wrong, one cannot punish because authorities don't want to 'touch themselves in the stomach' (*Kwikora mu nda*)".[34]

"Currently, we have no liberty of expression, what is said is controlled, there are things we do not dare to say out of fear of being thrown in prison."

"Representation is only for some people, the Tutsi, not for the Hutu, we have no right to speak."

"There are Hutu in the administration, but the problem is that when a Tutsi makes an error, he or she is not punished as a Hutu who made the same mistake."

"We Hutu are obliged to keep our cows fenced inside, while Tutsi are free to let them circulate outside."

"[The representatives] take much trouble to help the survivors, but do nothing for the Hutu. It accentuates the differences between people. The Hutu do not dare to say this in public, but they envy the privileges allocated to the Tutsi."

"They [authorities] install divisions between people; I mean, the Hutu have nothing to say."

"The state needs to stop making distinctions between people so that problems will vanish and confidence will return."

"We are not afraid of the genocide survivors, but we are afraid of the harm we inflicted upon them [during the genocide]. Today they are strong, they have the power."

Within this framework of (perceived) state functioning, the Gacaca courts were installed to mitigate distrust between Hutu and Tutsi and reconcile Rwanda and Rwandans. From 2000 onwards, an upward trend is visible on the ranking exercise charts. The levelling of this trend is equally visible from 2005 onwards, the time when the Gacaca courts come to dominate rural life.[35] The Gacaca process should bring reconciliation. Instead, or at least in its initial or operational phase, the findings on social cohesion presented in the graph indicate that the degree of trust in the other ethnic group is not improving. The feeling of security starkly diminishes for genocide survivors and for Hutu who were never imprisoned but stand accused in their communities. Tutsi and especially genocide survivors feel less secure since the start of Gacaca, while feelings of security level out for Hutu.

In the aftermath of war and genocide, co-habitation was a necessity as mentioned above. Life in the countryside is highly pragmatic. Peasants depend on each other in their daily struggle for survival in mutual impoverishment. Secrets are kept hidden and personal thoughts are not aired in order not to make enemies in the community. But distrust was pervasive, lingering under the surface of daily life. Feelings of confidence and security are often expressed by referring to the heart, as explained above. The heart is the force unifying the human being. Hearts have changed because of the crimes committed, the violence experienced and the inhuman acts observed. Reconciliation, therefore, is a matter of the heart (*umutima*). Hutu and Tutsi would again share the same living area and partake in ordinary village activities in a mode of peaceful co-existence. The heart was only tacitly explored in the years before the installation of the Gacaca courts and without much discursive content.

TUTSI	HUTU
"Before [1994] people shared everything. Today, that's finished. Before, a daughter was given for marriage without verifying the origins of the husband, while this has become a major concern currently."	"The heart of man is far (*kumutima w'umuntu ni kure*)."
	"One is confident in others when you can 'read' the heart of the other, but since that is impossible; it is equally difficult to be confident in people."
"The genocide has killed a lot of Tutsi in Rwanda and later, the Rwandan army has equally killed a lot of Hutu. So there is a problem of hatred in the heart of people from all categories [ethnicity]."	"The face one shows is different from that which is in the heart."
	"It is difficult to know what is in the heart of the other, so I have to be careful."

Exploring "the heart of the other" would only come into play after 2005, when Gacaca courts started to operate in every local community, nation-wide. Participation in the Gacaca sessions has become the basic element to probe the "heart of the other." State-sanctioned speaking and/or listening to "the truth" has become an important means to increase the level of confidence between parties that earlier distrusted each other. Truth is not only an important prerequisite in the restructuring of social relationships, but is equally the cornerstone of the entire transitional justice framework in Rwanda. The fact that "truth" in the popular experience, both from the side of Hutu and Tutsi, is perceived as not surfacing in the Gacaca process explains the levelling out of the confidence ranking.[36] Not only does factual knowledge remain largely absent, but the

re-humanization and re-socialization of the other—the healing dimension of truth-telling—is not easily forthcoming.

TUTSI	HUTU
"Gacaca made relationships between people worse."	"To have confidence, you need to be sure people tell the truth, but they don't."
"They [Hutu] confess only partially, they are not telling the entire truth."	"The victims also need to tell the truth in their testimonies without lying because it 'kills' confidence."
"The Gacaca judges are not veracious; they are accomplices of the criminals."	"I have no problem with the genocide survivors, but the fact that I denounced my neighbours as accomplices [in crimes during the genocide] has created conflicts."
"People are not telling the truth [here]. Survivors have become liars in front of their perpetrators and those who confess don't do it from the depths of their heart."	"A lot of Hutu started fleeing the country since the start of Gacaca. They are afraid of being accused."
"Our former neighbours don't want to tell us how our family members were killed and who came to pillage our belongings."	"The inhabitants [of the community] do not trust each other. They are not united, they are not telling the truth. It's the result of the war. Before the war, people were united and veracious."
"For the Hutu, we greet each other in passing, but there is no real confidence. They think I will accuse them in Gacaca for what the other Hutu have done [in 1994]."	

Despite Gacaca (or partially because of it), Tutsi survivors continue to situate the nature of their confidence in Hutu on the lower side of the ladder of life. Tutsi old caseload returnees are less open in their disapproval of Hutu. They never uniformly experienced the physical threats and psychological hardships that the genocide survivors experienced firsthand during the 1994 extermination campaign, but they have not forgotten the course of history. Hutu suffer more from an overall climate of distrust, especially due to the denunciation principle through which the Gacaca courts operate. They express a higher degree of confidence in Tutsi than Tutsi in Hutu, but this is still significantly less than the in-group cohesion they manifest. Hutu distrust towards Tutsi is more often a result of government policies that ought to facilitate the reconciliation process, but which obstruct their own objectives. Hutu situate themselves, on average, on the positive side of ranking for political representation, feelings of security and confidence in Tutsi. The fact that they are situated lower than Tutsi respondents should be interpreted in that way.

TUTSI	HUTU
"Me, I can't trust Hutu, they are angry [because accused in Gacaca], they are like animals."	"How can I be confident when I see that I am going to die in prison?"
"There are those who still cultivate hatred and others harbour the genocide ideology."	"Until now they call us *Interahamwe*, because we are Hutu."
"There is no confidence between people due to ethnicity."	"The state needs to stop favouring some and punishing others. As long as some feel superior compared to others, there will be no confidence."
"The government obliges us to live together with them but we know it, they are very malicious people, they can still kill us."	"The obstacles for Rwandans are those trials that are unjust. One ought to leave the ordinary peasant who didn't know what was going on [in 1994]. But they do it anyway because they are
"They can't exterminate us massively, but they can kill us one by one."	

"The Hutu dispelled us from Rwanda in 1959; they burned our homes, ate our cows and did it again in 1973, while in 1994 they have killed almost every single Tutsi. How can I trust people who behave like animals?" (Old caseload returnee)

"Nothing is possible to restore confidence in the population, even when you 'boil an elephant in a jug' (*niyo wateka inzovu mu rwabya*),[37] it's over."

judging the Hutu (ethnic) group. Is there a Tutsi put on trial? They also killed, but you can't accuse them. *If someone stands upright in his state, you can't do anything against him (Iyo umunu ahagaze muri Leta ye, nta kindi wakora).*[38]

"They [Tutsi power holders] can use [make] us [Hutu] as their servile instrument(s) (*Bashaka kutugira ibikoresho*)."[39]

"The cry is not combating the drum (*Induru ntirwana n'ingoma*)."[40]

These statements reflect the dominant perceptions depicted in the ethnically divergent rankings on the ladder of life. But the overall picture also reflects that both Hutu and Tutsi place themselves on the positive side of the ladder once again (excluding their economic situation).

TUTSI	HUTU
"I noticed there are some Hutu who have very human sentiments, more than some Tutsi."	"The genocide survivors said [during Gacaca] that I did not play any role during the genocide. So, in a certain way, I regained confidence in them."
"Gacaca has done something for me. It is a sort of connecting-piece between the victims and perpetrators. There are people of all sorts. Those who tell the truth, others lie and even more just say nothing. But somehow people are together to talk."	"I started having good relationships with everyone, the year that my husband was liberated from prison."
"I am confident in people. I pardoned them, but I am most confident in those who pray together with me. I (re)gained confidence in Hutu. I am often together with them in their ceremonies where I play an important role."	"After my liberation, not one genocide survivor has treated me badly although it was my expectation when still in prison. The programme of unity and reconciliation will continue and be fruitful."

Most see this positive trend continuing, subject to the absence of political interference. For example, that the (perceived) ethnic power balance does not change in the future for Tutsi (as already mentioned above), or, paradoxically, on the condition that Gacaca is either over or has reached its goal.

TUTSI	HUTU
"Maybe the children will live in harmony because the teaching of hatred that divided Rwandans is over, but the adults will die with their divisions."	"[After 2010] Gacaca will be finished and this will bring calm in the population. Tensions between people will diminish."
"In order for people to be totally unified, Gacaca should continue because it will restore confidence."	"If Gacaca finishes and I am not put in prison again, confidence towards Tutsi will increase again."
"If Gacaca is finished, I think Hutu will hate us less."	"[In the future] Gacaca will be over and we will see that it is not good to have conflicts and bad relationships."
"When Gacaca will be over, the situation will be good."	

In the future, I think security will be good, but there are people on the outside [Hutu refugees] that might want to return and disturb our security."

"I don't think they will stop their 'bad' operations of killing and incarcerating people in the future." "If the imprisonments continue, this will cause insecurity, because a lot of people are not satisfied. It can provoke another war."

The conditionality of expectations towards the future reveals a high level of uncertainty. It signals that life is still very fragile. This fragility is not only the result from violence experienced (past and present – overt and covert), it is equally a consequence of the popular understanding of the course of Rwandan history. The findings presented here reveal a glimpse of the "underneath of the things",[41] the undercurrents of ethnicity linked to power, at least in the perception of the ordinary peasant.

Conclusion: a cartography of power and identity

We didn't explicitly ask respondents to make a comparison between pre- and post-genocide Rwanda. But the findings from the subjective ranking exercise and the accompanying narratives give us an opportunity to glimpse at what it means to live through a *political transition*, from one regime into another, from *peace* into violence into *peace*. In this paper, we restricted ourselves to exploring a *structural feature* underlying the Rwandan transition: ethnicity. The graphs with rankings illustrate the (perceived) trajectory of this transition. The most striking element in the ranking exercise is this reversal of perceived ethnic dominance. While Hutu had the upper hand before 1994, Tutsi are on top in the post-genocide rankings. Hutu are more confident than Tutsi, but feel less represented politically. Tutsi, on the other hand, score high for political representation after 1994, though in their minds they live in a hostile social environment consisting of the untrustworthy Hutu in their communities or outside Rwanda. The reversal of dominance is most visible in the scores on the feeling of *political representation* and *security*, the latter hinging on the former, since feelings of security emanate from the perceived nature of power. It is here that ethnicity comes into the equation.

By looking at power in Rwanda, in its overt manifestations and in its disguises, we can interpret this change. An insight in the nature of governance on the periphery of society is needed. Although state institutions and state policies are intended to overcome ethnic divisions, they also perpetuate – at least in many ordinary people's perceptions- the very cleavages they are supposed to eradicate.[42] The results of the ranking exercise reveal the perceived interrelation of power and identity that structured and continues to structure the Rwandan socio-political landscape and everyday life. Previously, several authors have explored this theme; often in attempts to understand the causes of the genocide. The ideological underpinnings of the Rwandan Republics (1963–73 and 1973–94) "constituted both a reversal and a continuation of [these] long-standing psycho-cultural images"[43] of the foreign, racially superior Tutsi pastoralist and native, inferior Hutu cultivator that had been reinforced under colonial rule. Hutu and Tutsi remained distinct categories after the social revolution, but Tutsi now became inferior creatures in a newly regained natural order of Hutu homogeneity.

Apparently, the current rankings reveal a similar process at work in post-genocide Rwanda despite the fact that ethnicity has been officially "abolished": the reversal and continuation of long-standing psycho-cultural images. It is a result of the micro-politics of power, how power has been institutionalized and practised and how it was/is exercised in its ideological or hegemonic mode.[44] It is also about how power is culturally constructed,

and has been historically transferred. Although history and culture should not function as a deterministic explanatory framework, they render actions and events meaningful for those involved but often overlooked: the ordinary peasants of the Rwandan hills who perceive and experience the nature and exercise of power from the periphery of society.[45]

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Previous versions of this paper were presented at AEGIS European Conference on African Studies, July 11–14 2007, Leiden, the Netherlands and at the conference: "Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented Society," 19–21 September 2007, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa and during a master class with Michael Woolcock (The World Bank), Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Antwerp, September 26, 2007.
2. Huntington, *The Third Wave*.
3. Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm."
4. Ibid., 10.
5. Ibid., 16.
6. On the Rwandan transition between 1990–94, see: F. Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise*; Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis*; Guichaoua, *Les Crises Politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda*; and Lemarchand, *Managing Transition Anarchies*. On (mainly) the second phase of the transition, see Reyntjens, "La Transition Politique Au Rwanda," Reyntjens, "Rwanda," Nifosi, "A New Conceptual Framework on Political Transitions," and Rafti, *A Perilous Path to Democracy*.
7. Newbury and Newbury, "Bringing Peasants Back In," 874.
8. Our discussion of "structure" and "agency" is based primarily on Narayan, *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction*, xvii–xxiii; Narayan, "Conceptual Framework and Methodological Challenges," 3–38; and Long, *Development Sociology*.
9. Long states, "The notion of agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experiences and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion. Within the limits of information, uncertainty and other constraints (e.g. physical, normative or politico-economic) that exist, social actors are 'knowledge-able' and 'capable'. They attempt to solve problems, learn how to intervene in the flow of social events around them, and monitor continuously their own actions, observing how others react to their behaviour and taking note of various contingent circumstances." Long, *Development Sociology*, 16.
10. Long, "Agency and Constraint, Perceptions and Practice," 3–4.
11. For an overview of the difficulties understanding Rwanda, see Ingelaere, *Do We Understand Life After Genocide?* The theme of knowledge construction in Rwanda was extensively explored in Pottier, *Re-Imagining Rwanda*.
12. Republic of Rwanda, *Genocide Ideology*. Footnote 5 to 7 in the report (p. 17) give concrete examples of "genocide ideology" and reveal its wide-ranging scope.
13. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.
14. The Kinyarwandan word *"Kwibwizira"* entails this idea of auto-censorship. It expresses the image that "common" people, without coercion, do what authorities want them to do without the latter asking them to do so.
15. More detailed information on research design and methodology is explained in Ingelaere, *Living the Transition*, 7–20.
16. Apart from the life story interviews and subjective rankings we present in this paper, we also employed several other research strategies: survey interviews; semi-structured interviews; focus group discussions on a number of themes; archival research; and observations of daily life,

political organization and Gacaca activities. In total, we spoke with over 1400 ordinary Rwandan peasants and resided for more than 20 months in 10 selected Rwandan villages.

17. The above-mentioned elements can be considered as the dimensions of life that matter for ordinary people. They are also reflected in the findings from large-scale research that aimed to establish the different dimensions of "well-being" and the "good life." Those identified included: material, physical and social well-being; security; and freedom of choice and action (see the World Bank study by Narayan, *Voices of the Poor*). They refer equally to the different dimensions of the concept of "human security" that shifted the attention from the territorial security of nation-states towards the security of people. The main characteristics of "human security" were summarized in the 1994 World Development Report as economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. UNDP, *World Development Report*, 22–46.

18. Inspired by Cantril, *The Pattern of Human Concerns*.

19. See Ingelaere, *Living the Transition*, 17–19.

20. Ibid., 10–13.

21. Ibid., 19–21. A procedure modelled on the works of, for example, Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life* and Gibson and Woolcock, *Empowerment*.

22. Republic of Rwanda, *Preliminary Poverty Update Report*.

23. Some communities did not have old caseload returnees, others did not have released prisoners.

24. Exploring ethnic identities is a sensitive issue in post-genocide Rwanda. However, identifying people according to identity markers such as *rescapé*, *non-rescapé*, *liberated prisoner*, *returned refugee* or *accused* in the gacaca courts is possible. These identity markers correspond with ethnic identities. During the actual life story interviews it was possible to verify the actual ethnic identity of the respondent. If the respondent did not belong to the ethnic group expected based on initial identification, he or she was re-categorized. Mutual trust between the respondents, the researcher and the Rwandan research collaborators increased over time because: (1) interviews took place in the respondent's house (a familiar environment), and (2) since 2004 we had spent long periods in their communities before the collection of life stories began in 2007.

25. The graphs and the "ethnic" quotes are the master devices used to portray the experience and perception of "transition." Even though Rwanda is a bi-polar society with ethnicity as the master cleavage structuring historical events, the danger of reification exists when reducing the complexity of identity to binary ethnic markers and subsuming a variety of experiences under two ethnic categories. Therefore, the master narrative needs to be anchored in other dimensions: (1) rankings across ethnic subgroups; (2) extended life stories; (3) local community (village) histories; and (4) overarching structural features (i.e. the regime's attributes at different moments in time). These interlocking realities are explored further in Ingelaere's *Living the Transition* (26–57).

26. This theme is further explored in Ingelaere, "Changing Lenses," 389–414.

27. The expression refers to pre-colonial Rwanda. When someone had been condemned by the king and he had to be handed over to the executioner(s), the expression "*Umwami Yamutanze*" was used. In the context of the 1994 genocide, it signifies that the State handed over Tutsi to the Hutu to be executed.

28. Hutu often use the word *ntambara* (war) when referring to the genocide, as they see it as part of a larger/longer period of war.

29. The expression refers to the fact that danger came from two sides. The tongue is caught in the middle between two rows of teeth.

30. Expression referring to pre-colonial Rwanda and indicating that Rwandans are, in general, of the opinion that bad things and practices are not due to the ruling(s) of the highest "chefs" (king or president), but rather the lower "chefs" and people in the entourage of the ruler.

31. Personal capacity or power [*ububasha*] to achieve something in life is often phrased in terms of having "ideas." Lack of ideas and intellectual capacity implies the incapacity to move up in life.

32. In several locations local authorities have been replaced by the central administration as the former failed to implement government policies.

33. Apparently, the concept of "Imihigo" refers to the "heroism" of the soldier in Rwandan culture and history. The soldier attempts, through his actions in combat, to show his competence and capability as a "hero." Recently, performance contracts are also being signed with individual peasants. See *The New Times*, "Performance Contracts to be Signed at Household Level," November 19, 2007.

34. This expression means that one doesn't want to sanction someone from one's own family or group. The word *stomach* means coming from the same womb.
35. For an analysis of the conception, nature and functioning of the Gacaca court system, see Ingelaere, "The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda"; Waldorf, "Mass Justice for Mass Atrocity"; and Clark, "Hybridity, Holism, and 'Traditional' justice."
36. For a more comprehensive insight into the problematic quest for the truth in the Gacaca process, see Ingelaere, "Does the Truth Pass Across the Fire without Burning?"
37. Signifying that even when you do the impossible one will never restore confidence in the population. An expression with an identical signification is, "*niyo wateka ibuye rigashya*" – *when you cook a stone until it becomes eatable.*
38. Signifying that one cannot do anything against a person who feels strong because they are very well represented by the government. It gives the person who feels represented in this way the right to do whatever he or she wants and those who undergo his injustice can't do anything about it.
39. Expression referring to the feudal period when the Hutu worked as servants for Tutsi.
40. The drum refers to the idea of power. Power is symbolized by the drum in Rwandan custom. The expression signifies that no matter how many people try to shout, make noise and do other things to circumvent the will of power, power will always prevail. The one who has power – who has the drum in his hands – will always reach his goal, despite the popular will.
41. Ferme, *The Underneath of Things.*
42. Gledhill, *Power and its Disguises.*
43. Uvin, *Aiding Violence*, 33.
44. An in-depth discussion of the nature of the power structure(s) established through the consolidation of the political transition in Ingelaere, "Peasants, Power and Ethnicity." The crystallization and the (changing) nature of ethnic identities in Rwanda are of central importance in the work of Catharine Newbury and David Newbury. See: Newbury, *The Cohesion*; Newbury "Ethnicity in Rwanda"; Newbury and Newbury, "A Catholic Mass in Kigali"; Newbury, "Understanding Genocide." Both Catharine and David Newbury's writings on ethnicity and the importance of the factor of power were instructive in the understanding of the rankings presented in this paper. See Newbury and Newbury, "A Catholic Mass," 313: "The paradox is that ethnicity was simultaneously the product of politics and yet, at times, a powerful determinant of the shape of political culture."
45. Chabal and Daloz, *Culture Troubles*; and Gledhill, *Power and its Disguises*. For the Rwandan context, de Lame notes, "Rwandan mentalities are still imbued with a spiraling conception of time, as shown by the pervading ideological recourse to (considerably falsified) history to justify the present (Des Forges 1995). Any important new event harks back to a similar, earlier period, especially when it touches on historical identity. [...] being unique, the source of power remains incompatible with shared authority, be it cohabitation with a rival or the republican separation of powers." de Lame, *A Hill Among a Thousand*, 482.

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