Views from Below on the Pro-poor Growth Challenge: The Case of Rural Rwanda

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Abstract: This article focuses on the Rwandan peasantry to confirm how "views from below" can contribute to a better understanding of the "pro-poor" growth challenge. Based on micro-level evidence gathered in 2007, it examines local peasants' perceptions of the characteristics and degree of poverty for different socioeconomic categories (i.e., peasant groups). It looks at the various opportunities and constraints that influence the potential of these categories or groups for social mobility and their capacity to participate in growth strategies. Further, it considers how local peasants perceive specific policy measures in the Rwandan government's "pro-poor" rural strategies. Their insights could inspire Rwandan policymakers and supporting donors to redirect their efforts toward distribution-oriented growth strategies.

Résumé: Cet article se concentre sur la situation des fermiers ruandais pour soutenir le fait que les perceptions venant "du bas" de l' échelle sociale peuvent contribuer à une meilleure compréhension des obstacles du progrès "pour les pauvres." En me basant sur les observations d'une étude locale conduite en 2007, j'examine les perceptions que les paysans locaux ont des caractéristiques et niveaux de pauvreté pour différentes catégories socioéconomiques (groupes paysans). J'examine les différentes opportunités et contraintes qui influencent la mobilité sociale de ces groupes ou catégories et leur capacité à participer aux stratégies de croissance. De plus, cet article montre comment les paysans locaux perçoivent certaines mesures stratégiques mises en place "pour les pauvres" par le gouvernement. Ces aperçus pourraient inspirer les responsables politiques et les financeurs à rediriger leurs efforts vers des stratégies de croissance basées sur des principes de distribution.

At the dawn of the new millennium, the international community placed the fight against poverty as the top priority on the development agenda. The emergence of this new development paradigm did not erase

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African Studies Review, Volume 53, Number 2 (September 2010), pp. 97–123

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the international community's belief in the necessity of economic growth as a trigger for development; as Bhalla states, "Growth is the core of economics. Inequality may be its heart, but growth is its soul. . . . Every country, irrespective of ideological persuasion, has worshiped at the altar of growth . . . . Without growth, concerns about poverty and inequality will only become greater concerns (2002:13)." But the general understanding of growth as the essential element shifted, such that it is now seen as a necessary but insufficient condition for achieving poverty reduction. This shift was evident in the replacement of Structural Adjustment Programs by Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Rwanda implemented its first PRSP policy from 2002 to 2005 (see GoR 2002), and a second Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) will be implemented over the 2008–2012 period (see GoR 2007).

Based on micro-level field data, this article examines the characteristics and degree of poverty among different socioeconomic groups in rural Rwanda and aims to show how "views from below"—that is, peasants' perceptions of developmental processes in their local setting—may contribute to a better understanding of the overall "pro-poor" growth challenge.[1] It looks at the opportunities and constraints that define the potential for social mobility among peasants, and it considers how peasants perceive specific policy measures included in the Rwandan government's "pro-poor" rural strategies. The concluding section presents policy recommendations for enhancing the translation of pro-poor rhetoric into reality.

Concepts of Pro-poor Growth

The development literature presents essentially two interpretations of "pro-poor" growth. One approach regards economic growth as "pro-poor" when poverty decreases in absolute terms; in other words, "growth is good for the poor," as the title of the renowned and oft-cited paper by Dollar and Kraay (2002) says (see also Kraay 2006; Ravallion & Chen 2003). Another approach to pro-poor economic growth stresses the importance of equity, as it requires that growth disproportionately benefit the poor (e.g., Klasen 2003; Kakwani & Pernia 2000). The analysis in this article is aligned with the second approach.

The growth–poverty relationship can be quantified by the growth elasticity of poverty—that is, the link between economic growth and poverty reduction. In line with cross-country evidence, growth of 1 percent should be linked to a 2–3 percent decrease in the number of people living below the poverty line (see World Bank 2000; Ravallion 2001; Adams 2004). Applying this method to Rwanda yields interesting results. On the positive side, between 2001 and 2006 Rwanda had annual economic growth of 4.6 percent (i.e., 2.7% per capita) (World Bank 2006). At the same time, poverty (based on a national poverty line of 250 Rwandan francs [RWF]) decreased from 60.3 percent to 56.8 percent of the population. On the negative side, those in poverty increased from 4.8 to 5.4 million persons. Overall, for the 2001–2006 period there was a –0.4 growth elasticity of poverty for Rwanda (see Ansoms 2007). In line with the second approach cited above, this means that the pro-poor character of Rwandan economic growth during this period was very low, despite the implementation of PRSP policies.[2]

Another way to quantify the growth-poverty relationship is through the elasticity of the connection between the income of the poorest quintile and the mean per capita income. Cross-country evidence has found that the average elasticity of connection is close to +1 (Roemer & Gugerty 1997; Gallup et al. 1998; Dollar & Kraay 2002), meaning that the income of the poorest 20 percent of the population grows at the same rate as average income. The second interpretation of "pro-poor" growth would conclude that since Rwanda's Gini coefficient increased from 0.37 to 0.44 between 2001 and 2006 (GoR 2006a), growth has definitely not been pro-poor.

Besides the literature dealing with the growth–poverty–inequality connection on an aggregate scale, a significant body of work focuses on the structure of growth as a crucial element in the growth–poverty link (e.g., Thurlow & Wobst 2006). Christiaensen and Demery (2006) concluded that in general, agricultural growth is more pro-poor than growth in other sectors, and in line with this finding there is a renewed appreciation of the agricultural sector's importance in overall growth strategies. For example, a recent World Development Report, the first in twenty-five years to be devoted to agriculture, was titled "Agriculture for Development" (2008). However, focusing on rural-centered strategies in the creation of growth provides no guarantee of a pro-poor effect. The link between agricultural growth and poverty reduction relies upon the extent to which the poor participate in growth strategies. And this depends, in turn, upon local institutional arrangements (e.g., access to markets and technology, risk-reduction mechanisms, etc.; see World Bank 2005) and the distribution of crucial assets, particularly land (Ravallion & Datt 2002; de Janvry & Sadoulet 2000; Deininger & Squire 1998). In Rwanda, the hypothesized pro-poor impact of agricultural growth is limited by the low participation of poorer rural categories or groups in the growth process. Indeed, the growth elasticity of poverty for the agricultural sector does not compare positively with that of the industrial and service sectors, indicating that smallholders (who make up the large majority of Rwandan farmers) are institutionally constrained from participating in primary growth strategies (see Ansoms 2008).

In the above-mentioned literature, the concept of "pro-poor" growth is based on aggregate macro-level indicators defined exclusively in quantitative terms. Similarly, the institutional processes that relate to the pro-poorness of growth are analyzed with countrywide or cross-country data. Such analyses can signal encouraging or worrying trends, but they do not provide profound insights into the fundamental reasons why particular groups of poor do or do not participate in overall economic growth. This article aims to complement current understandings of pro-poor growth by considering the views from below.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Categories Defined on the Basis of PPA Methodology

	CATEGORY	CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Umutindi nyakujya (Abatindi nyakujya) Most vulnerable	Destitute, beg for their livelihood, no land, no animals, live from working on other people's lands, but not very capable in terms of labor, ignorant, not respected, discriminated against, look like "fools"
2.	Umutindi (Abatindi) Vulnerable	Very poor, live from working on other people's lands, very little land with low harvests, no animals, no access to health care or schooling
3.	Umukene (Abakene) Poor	Poor, land to produce food for their family but no surplus for the market, often work for others, no savings
4.	Umukene wifashije (Abakene bifashije) Non-poor	Poor with a bit more land, few animals, besides subsistence production they have a small income to satisfy a few other needs (e.g., school fees for children)
5.	Umukungu (Abakungu) Wealthy	Rich in terms of food security, large farms (often with banana or coffee groves and/or forest), rich soils, some animals, enough food, employ others on own their farms, at times get access to paid employment (higher-skilled jobs), have savings
6.	Umukire (Abakire) Very wealthy	Rich in terms of revenue, land, animals, monetary revenue (coming from paid employment as civil servants or in trades), savings at official banks, prosperity often pushes them to live in urban centers

Source: Government of Rwanda, 2001, 2004a.

Views from Below: Methodological Issues

From May until July 2007, I conducted field research in six *imidugudu* (Kinyarwanda: sing. *umudugudu*, an administrative division) in the Southern province of rural Rwanda.[3] These particular imidugudu were selected for their divergent characteristics, both in terms of "average wealth" (i.e., very poor to quite well off) and location (i.e., very remote to very central). For the design of umudugudu focus groups, I first identified four particular groups of local power holders and influential people: the umudugudu committee, the *ubudehe* committee (formerly responsible for a social mapping exercise and a local development project), a selection of men and women heads of a variety of local associations, and a selection of local *inyangamugayo* (traditional leaders).[4] From the remainder of the umudugudu population, a stratified sample was drawn to compose seven to ten focus groups of four to eight household heads each.

Table 2: Number of Households in PPA Category for Each Umudugudu (as of 2001)

	Imidugudu						Countrywide
PPA category	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	
Unknown		2	8	2	4	24	
Umutindi nyakujya			3		6	2	2.3%
Umutindi	12	4	3	57		8	20.4%
Umukene	131	7	211	49	151	134	53.6%
Umukene wifashije	52	109		13		28	20.9%
Umukungu	6	7	32		18		1.8%
Umukire	7						0.9%
Total	208	129	257	121	179	196	100.0%

Source: Author's research; Government of Rwanda (2006c)

Within each focus group I aimed for homogeneity in terms of socioeconomic characteristics and the power relations existing among group members. Diversity among the groups, however, had to be maximized to allow for the assessment of specific differences among the categories relevant to my research (principles in line with Morgan 1998). Segmentation was based mainly on locally defined socioeconomic categories identified in the framework of the Ubudehe Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) (2001–2003), although I later added some additional categories, distinguishing, for example, between male- and female-led households. The PPA report (GoR 2001) identified six socioeconomic categories (see table 1) based on the customary social categorization used by the Rwandan peasant population to refer to differences in livelihoods and overall socioeconomic living conditions (see Ingelaere 2007). Table 2 shows the frequency of each category in the six imidugudu.

In designing my interview guide, I opted for questions both with more and less structure, depending upon the subject discussed. Questions related to the socioeconomic characteristics of diverse categories were more structured, as I wanted comparable information for each focus group. For the remainder of the interviews I adopted an approach with less structure, since the local cultural context did not always allow me to approach people with direct questions. Interviews were conducted in the presence of the researcher, a translator (Kinyarwanda–French), and a transcriber.

Socioeconomic Dynamics at the Local Level

In each of the focus groups, I asked participants to define their socioeconomic category in great detail. In addition, I asked whether it would be possible for them to move up from their present category to a better position on the social scale (as defined by economic well-being).[5] Answers to this question had to be interpreted with some caution to distinguish wishful thinking from a realistic assessment of the chances for social mobility. Considering the full picture, I found that all imidugudu are in one way or another confronted with structural constraints imposed by land scarcity, overpopulation, and a limited potential to diversify the local economy beyond subsistence agriculture. Indeed, the problems of all Rwandan peasants relate to constraints in access to land, labor, and capital markets, and to markets for agricultural and nonagricultural goods and services.

Umudugudu A is very close to Kigali city and is the location of a large market that provides Kigali with food and meat. Here the government's ban on off-farm activities—specifically a general prohibition on traditional brickmaking as an overly polluting and poorly regulated enterprise—has imposed a heavy burden on small-scale off-farm investment, employment, and income-generating opportunities.[6] It has also broken the symbiotic relationship between the *abakene bifashije* (sing. *umukene wifashije;* the nonpoor) as entrepreneurs and investors in traditional brickmaking and the *abakene* (sing. *umukene;* the poor) as a nonagricultural labor force. With the economy falling back on the agricultural sector, competition for access to land and livestock has intensified, especially with *abakire* outsiders (sing. *umukire;* wealthy farmers living in Kigali with income supplemented by professional employment) entering the land arena. In addition, competition on the agricultural labor market is high, as the demand for labor has decreased and the supply of labor has increased. Indeed, with the disappearance of traditional brickmaking, the wealthier categories have more time to work on their own plots themselves. On the supply side, many more local laborers as well as unemployed migrant laborers who have been deprived of employment in the brick sector are now looking for work.

Of all the settings surveyed, Umudugudu B, a fertile region with its own market, has the least pressing problem with land availability. Most farmers are still self-sufficient and also produce some surplus for the market, as reflected in the large number of abakene bifashije (nonpoor) households.[7] Many engage in cash crop production concentrating on cassava, although recently a cassava disease forced the local population to confront the risks of depending on a single crop. The local agricultural economy is slowly recovering from this setback, although it is mostly the better-off categories, particularly the abakungu (sing. *umukungu;* the wealthy) and *abakire* (sing. *umukire;* the very wealthy), who are able to invest in improved cassava seed varieties.[8] Some of the traders live outside of the umudugudu, having moved to trade centers after ascending to the higher-level socioeconomic categories. These traders return to the umudugudu to purchase large quantities of crops (mostly cassava) to sell elsewhere. Prices offered by these traders are equal or close to the market price, certainly for large quantities. Local farmers involved in this trade as suppliers come from the umukungu category or the umukene wifashije group; they buy crops for a below-market price from peasants of poorer categories, accumulate stocks, and sell them to the larger traders or else on the market themselves.

Like Umudugudu A, Umudugudu C, a somewhat less fertile region close to Gitarama city, is challenged by bans on informal nonagricultural activities such as brickmaking. When brickmaking was banned, the local population did not obey immediately, but their resistance was smothered forcefully by the authorities. The impact of the ban on local living conditions was profound. The once vibrant local economy, based previously upon interdependencies among various socioeconomic categories, collapsed. Widespread unemployment resulted, with supply towering above demand on the wage labor market. Various focus group participants referred to the banditry and despondency of younger generations that resulted.

Umudugudu D, a remote area with poor soil, is the poorest in the sample. Here the problems of land scarcity and overpopulation are the most pressing, and most households have fallen into the near landless umutindi (vulnerable) category. Nearly all are dependent upon their wages from agricultural labor, and the extreme scarcity of arable land results in very limited local demand for their manpower. Agricultural laborers therefore adopt strategies of temporary migration in their search for employment. They also rely for their survival on good social relationships within the local setting, which permit access to mutual-help associations and to livestock exchange arrangements between better-off and poorer categories.

Umudugudu E, though less remote and possessed of quite fertile soil, is the most socioeconomically troubled setting of the five. This region was severely affected by widespread violence during the civil war and 1994 genocide, and even now local relations are far from harmonious. Wealth accumulated by the better-off categories derives from food price speculation and the exploitation of poorer peasants, who react with frustration and anger. The total lack of any financial buffer for poorer groups weakens their bargaining position in trade transactions and renders them entirely dependent upon an exploitative system. Obliged to sell user rights to their land and their harvests, they are denied the economic potential of their property and production, regardless of how needy they are.

Finally, Umudugudu F, a remote, fertile region with a small business center, is confronted, like the others, with increasing land scarcity and a local labor supply that exceeds demand, forcing younger people to search for temporary employment elsewhere. Here the limited local demand for hired agricultural labor may also be attributed to an *ikibara* system, whereby poorer peasants may get access to land (rather than payment in money) in return for their labors. They get user rights on half of the surface that they prepare for cultivation, with the harvest from the other half going to the owner. Along with agriculture, some local residents are involved in small-scale trade (mostly of banana beer) in the boutiques and cabarets on the main road through the umudugudu.

One obvious characteristic of all of the case study settings is the existence of numerous interconnections among rural actors, both within and between socioeconomic categories, and within and between different physical settings. The extensive "horizontal" interconnections among local peasants of the same socioeconomic category are most visible in the various local initiatives undertaken collectively. Mutual-help groups are typically small informal groups of farmers who "trade" labor by working or "rotating" on each other's fields. Along with these small solidarity webs there are a multitude of more organized associations (e.g., rotating savings and credit societies, mutual production of cash crops, rotating livestock, joint organization of off-farm activities, etc.), most of which focus on a particular developmental goal within a specific arena. These groups, which often depend wholly on member contributions and thus typically exclude the poorer peasants, have no ambition to stimulate broader cohesion and trust; indeed, they generally have extremely rigid rules and procedures to avoid "free-rider" behavior, thus limiting their ability to support a member encountering serious problems.

There are other mechanisms that show a more "vertical" organization and connect peasants with different socioeconomic statuses within a specific setting. A livestock "guardianage" system, for example, gives poorer categories access to large or small livestock. Social interconnections are even more apparent on the local labor market, where small-scale peasants with insufficient land sell their labor to gain additional income. This is most obvious in Umudugudu D, where the problem of land scarcity is most pressing and the majority of local peasants earn their main (and sometimes entire) income from wage labor. In Imidugudu A, B, C, and E, most inhabitants are only partly dependent upon their wages from agricultural labor. Poorer farmers supplement their farm income by working for their better-off neighbors. However, in all settings competition for jobs is fierce. This has resulted in situations in which the evolution in wage rates has not kept pace with food price rises on local markets. As a result, the purchasing power of net food buyers has decreased significantly (at least in the five years preceding my research).

On the nonagricultural labor market, employment opportunities are volatile and scarce altogether. Nonagricultural jobs are typically seen as sidelines, a way to spread risk and diversify income. In the recent past these were more available in Imidugudu A and C, where informal brickmaking enterprises provided the better-off categories with a profitable opportunity to invest locally, and provided poorer categories with remunerative jobs. However, the decision of Rwandan authorities to abolish these activities (at least temporarily) cut off this source of income. Nonagricultural work is still pursued by individuals trained as plumbers, masons, or carpenters, who mostly still invest their occasional incomes in agriculture. Participation in merchant trades is also seen as a side activity, although some better-off boutique and shop owners do generate the main part of their incomes from such trade. Even within a local setting, the forms and scales of trade can be very diverse, as in Umudugudu B, where in the same locations I found large-scale next to small-scale trade, and trade of cash crops and crop surpluses next to distress sales of food crops.

Interconnections between better-off and poorer peasants are also manifest on the land market, where diverse forms of land transactions are enacted. In some cases, land is rented out by richer categories to poorer peasants. I regularly came across abatindi families living in a house and on a plot of land that someone had given them out of compassion. Sometimes older peasants from better-off categories who are incapable of cultivating their land rent out plots to poorer peasants who have been able to acquire some money (or, in the case of Umudugudu F, who have the opportunity to participate in the ikibara system). These arrangements, which often last for several years, are seen as a form of vertical solidarity by both better-off and poorer categories.

Sometimes, and increasingly, the arrangements are less benevolent, however. In exceptional cases poorer peasants have been known to rent out land to better-off farmers. The most exploitative system I came across, known as the *kotsa imyaka* system, was in Umudugudu D (and somewhat less in Umudugudu B), where poorer farmers with an urgent need for cash have had to resort to selling their harvest prematurely for a price much lower than they would have received at harvest time.[9] This practice, of course, reinforces community power imbalances and represents a frank exploitation of the most vulnerable.

Aside from interconnections among different categories of peasants within the local environment, there are also interconnections among peasants of different settings. Though all farmers aim for self-sufficiency, they depend on trade to sell occasional surpluses or to cover for occasional deficits. Market and food price mechanisms thus have a profound impact on living conditions. Yet in all the settings I studied the market power of small-scale farmers was obviously limited, and the reasons for their attachment to the principle of self-sufficiency were clear: they are wary of depending upon volatile and unpredictable markets in which they have no power. When queried about whether cooperatives could act as a buffer to mitigate or prevent exploitation, most felt that such a cooperative could itself become a mechanism of exploitation. Poorer socioeconomic categories in Umudugudu B, with their negative experiences of a marshland cooperative, rejected the idea entirely.

Another illustration of interconnections among different settings is to be found in the movements of labor. In settings D and F younger people with insufficient landholdings are obliged to leave their imidugudu in search of income-generating opportunities, and settings A and B to an important degree depend on migrant laborers from distant regions. These laborers naturally increase competition for jobs on the local labor market, sometimes causing animosity and strife between local and external laborers.

The variety of issues arising in the analyses of the study settings illustrates their complementarity. They also underline the diversity of problems that rural Rwandans must confront. The rural setting is often presented as a homogeneous environment. In reality, the opportunities and constraints that peasants face may differ within and between settings. This diversity, accordingly, requires nuanced and diverse policy approaches. In the next sections I will consider the (potential) impact of national policies on these settings, and offer a tentative answer as to why poorer categories of peasants participate so little in "pro-poor" growth strategies.

The Impact of National Policies: Why Do Small-Scale Peasants Participate So Little in Growth Strategies?

In general, the Rwandan government's mission to reengineer rural society has three main objectives (see Ansoms 2008, 2009a). First, policymakers aim to transform the agricultural sector into a professionalized motor for economic growth. Unfortunately, the strategic elements of rural policies (i.e., professionalization and modernization) favor competitive and commercial farmers while enfeebling small-scale peasants. Second, policymakers have a vision of upgrading rural life by introducing "modern" tools and concepts into local practices. But this part of the mission also seems to involve some intention to mask the true extent of poverty and inequality in the rural areas. Finally, policymakers hope to transform Rwanda, from the highest to the lowest level, into a goal-oriented society. Overall, these processes have resulted within the agricultural sector in a "survival of the fittest"—or more accurately, a "survival of the largest"—scenario, while those disregarded by these new rural policies have had to face uncertain employment prospects (Ansoms 2008:30; see also Des Forges 2006).

The sections that follow examine the Rwandan government's mission to reengineer and modernize rural life in terms of a number of policy interventions in local settings. Specifically, I focus on (1) the introduction of monocropping and regional crop specialization, (2) the official registration of land titles and the consolidation of land parcels, (3) the reorganization of swamplands, and (4) the enclosure of livestock. As I will argue, the implementation of these policies has had, or is likely to have, an adverse effect on the ability of poorer peasants to participate in agricultural growth.

Monocropping and Regional Specialization

One of the objectives of the Rwandan government is to encourage the adoption of monocropping, that is, the cultivation of one particular crop per plot. In addition, each region, according to government plans, should specialize in particular crops based on its agro-bio-climatic conditions and in accordance with market needs. Article 63 of the Land Law specifies that productive land use "shall be based on the area's master plan and the general structure on land allocation, organization, [and the adoption] and use of specific plants certified by relevant authorities" (GoR 2005). Both policies are intended to allow Rwandan farmers to realize economy-of-scale effects and expand market exchanges. To achieve these objectives, the policy plans follow a rather top-down approach. The local authorities decide which crops have a comparative advantage, and peasants are then guided toward the adoption and cultivation of these crops (see Ansoms 2009a).

Policy-imposed crop cultivation is not a recent idea. Both Belgian colonial administrators and the pre-1994 Habyarimana government practiced "forced cultivation" with little success. Pottier and Nkundabashaka (1992) explain how in 1986 agronomists and "vulgarisateurs" promoted monocropping (next to combinations of beans and maize or soya and maize) as the only sound cultivation technique, and they point to the disastrous results of this "top-down" approach in agricultural extension. Newbury and Newbury (2000), referring to the same period, point to the dangers of state-induced practices, which often favor technical insights on climatic conditions and the suitability of land over the knowledge and abilities of the peasants themselves. They also highlight the danger of elites redirecting policies to their own benefit. Indeed, the issue of monocropping is controversial for several reasons, and in other contexts researchers have long pointed to the advantages of mixed cropping as a strategy to minimize risk and maximize profit (e.g., Ruthenberg 1971; Webster & Wilson 1966).

Nonetheless, when I asked peasants their opinions on mono- versus multicropping, the first reaction was often in favor of monocropping. I have clear indications that these answers were deliberately in line with the public transcript.[10] In fact, at the state's request, district and sector agronomists have provided education and training to local peasants on the desirability of monocropping. As a result, participants produced socially desirable answers in fixed phrases that I heard over and over about how monocropping "prevents crops from standing in each other's way" and testifies to, "an openness of spirit."

When questioned further, however, participants often revealed the many advantages of multicropping as a practice that diversifies risk and offers insurance against famine and one-sided food patterns, especially for poorer peasants. As one umukene participant in Umudugudu D said, "multicropping is a way to be cautious; you may loose on one side and win on the other." In addition, poorer farmers choose to multicrop by combining crop types that are complementary (e.g., beans and bananas in Umudugudu B; beans and maize or sorghum and cassava in Umudugudu D, soya and maize in Umudugudu F). Indeed, multicropping is considered a more flexible system when there is a shortage of manure, which is a prerequisite for monocropping. On the subject of whether monocropping is more or less productive than multicropping, opinions differed. Most participants acknowledged the potential of monocropping to be more productive. However, with monocropping productivity levels are more volatile, dependent upon both controllable factors beyond the reach of many peasants (e.g., access to manure, the right seed and sufficient land) and uncontrollable factors (e.g., climatic conditions and crop diseases). In Umudugudu C, a participant of the ubudehe focus group pointed to successful experiments with monocropping conducted in the area by the Rwanda Agricultural Research Institute (ISAR), a government agency. But later in the interview all participants seemed to suggest that the potential productivity benefits do not outweigh the risks involved, especially for the poorer categories of peasants (i.e., those below the level of abakungu).

The issue of regional specialization (with each region concentrating on a few crops) also evoked mixed feelings in various settings and among both poorer and better-off categories. On this subject focus groups often began the discussion with arguments in favor and against regional specialization, rather than prefacing their remarks with socially desirable answers. Arguments in favor of this policy were most often put forward by members of the more prosperous focus groups. In Umudugudu B, a participant of the ubudehe group stated that their region had long specialized in cassava and that this had produced good results and healthy profits. Similarly, in Umudugudu E, better-off peasants immediately mentioned the profit potential of regional specialization, especially the possibility of stocking and selling the product in collaboration with others to yield a good price. Nonetheless, practically all of the better-off peasants in all imidugudu are firmly attached to the principle of self-sufficiency and resist depending on the market for essential foods. It is only after they have reached a state of self-sufficiency with a variety of crops that they are willing to cultivate another productive and profitable crop on the remainder of their land.

Arguments against regional specialization (especially as put forth by participants of several focus groups in Umudugudu F) focused first on the large diversity of soil types that exist, even within a local setting. One participant in Umudugudu D pointed out that cultivating the same crop year after year leaves the soil "tired," and that rotation is necessary to protect the soil's quality. There were also risk-related arguments. Specializing in one crop renders peasants extremely vulnerable to crop loss from diseases and adverse weather conditions that frequently hit the locale. Dividing one's resources between different crop types with different cultivation cycles both acts as financial insurance and mitigates the risk that a disease affecting a particular crop will endanger the entire harvest. Participants pointed out further that different categories of peasants, each with their particular needs, may prefer a different range of crop types; as one participant put it, "one may be neighbors, but not from the same family." For example, poorer peasants who live from day to day cannot invest exclusively in crops with long cultivation cycles. Participants of poorer focus groups in Imidugudu B and D in particular pointed to the importance of cultivating sweet potatoes so that their children have food even when they are waiting for other crops to mature. In Umudugudu E, an umukene participant suggested that when the state "imposes" a particular crop it should offer a subsidy to poorer peasants to buffer the family's food needs before the crop can be harvested.

Most respondents also did not consider the option of crop exchange and trade on local markets as a viable strategy that would sustain regional specialization. In Umudugudu D, such an approach is ruled out by their isolation; indeed, a participant in the umudugudu authorities' focus group remarked that "the conditions for monocropping to work are to have a reliable market and good roads." I received similar reactions in other settings. The reluctance of peasants to depend on the market is further due to the poor integration of local markets and the limited bargaining power of local growers. Prices are set mostly by intermediary brokers, who profit from regional crop surpluses and shortages while individual peasants remain relatively powerless in the trading chain.

Overall, one may conclude that forcefully restricting peasants to the cultivation of a few crops in a monocropping system makes little sense. Indeed, the extreme variety in soil types, even within the same locality, and in climatic conditions makes it very difficult for local administrators to select the "right" crops for each region under their control. Without the availability of risk insurance to protect them, and without mechanisms that increase their bargaining power on markets, small-scale peasants will likely resist monocropping and regional specialization.

Land Registration and Consolidation

Another objective of the Rwandan government is to register all landholdings and regulate all land transactions through formal legal procedures (GoR 2005; see article 26).[11] By securing official land titles, the government aims for increased investment in land conservation and quality improvements (GoR 2004b). The land law is intended to tackle the problem of land fragmentation by prohibiting the division of land into parcels smaller than one hectare in size (GoR 2005, article 20). In 2000, three-quarters of all households did have landholdings smaller than this, with the average household owning 0.71 hectares (Jayne et al., 2003). Meeting the legal requirement can be accomplished either by avoiding the division of land plots or by consolidating plots. For example, people with adjacent plots may cultivate them together, each keeping their own part of the harvest (based upon plot size); or brothers and sisters may manage their land inheritance collectively instead of dividing it up. Another option is for rural investors to accumulate land, which, in line with government intentions, should lead to larger production units and improved productivity.

At the time of my research, most participants were poorly and only partially informed about the details of the new land law. In several imidugudu some people mentioned that a major advantage of land registration is that it can reduce conflicts over land within families and between neighbors. Another advantage would be the clarity it brings to land transactions. Some respondents had reservations about the extent of bureaucracy that would be involved, and others were clear that they did not want to pay for a land title and that a land registration fee would be a burden on poorer socioeconomic categories. Various factors also may forestall successful land registration. Peasants are highly reluctant to reveal the true extent of their property holdings (to the research team, to one another, and most certainly to the authorities), and respondents expressed concern that registered titles could be used as a basis for taxation.

The government's goal of land consolidation was considered even more problematic. In various settings respondents saw land consolidation as "possible in the marshlands" (where it was already taking place) but "impossible in the hills," where land ownership is seen, in principle, as an individual right. "People have their own ways of doing things," said one respondent, and they value their individuality in making agricultural decisions. A participant in Umudugudu D put it very clearly: "You cannot touch upon the land of another. If you do that, he will cut you into pieces." A fellow participant added that campaigning for plot consolidation would be equivalent to an act of aggression toward others.

Focus group participants raised several practical objections to consolidation in combination with joint cultivation. They noted that adjacent plots do not necessarily have the same fertility and productivity for a certain crop type. In addition, people have different capacities in terms of "physical and moral force"; specifically, individuals from different socioeconomic categories might find it nearly impossible to agree on a joint project. Better-off peasants in particular did not seem inclined to link their land and production decisions to poorer categories. Poorer peasants, for their part, expressed concern that land consolidation could lead to an erosion of their land rights. A participant in the umukene wifashije focus group in Umudugudu D explained that people with different-sized land holdings "play a different game." One participant in the umutindi group added that the rich, for example, harvest cassava after five years, whereas the abakene harvest parts after some months in order to feed themselves. Similar statements were made in other focus groups in the various settings.

Even within families, the idea of keeping inherited land consolidated by cultivating it collectively is problematic. Responding to my question as to whether it would be possible to manage a farm collectively (i.e., "without subdivision") among brothers and sisters, one member of the umukene wifashije focus group in Umudugudu D said that the family member with the most power would take the largest part of the harvest. Another person agreed that communal management of an inheritance is simply impossible, to which someone else added that they all could end up by killing one another.

Overall, peasants are reluctant to register their landholdings. The government's registration law is based upon a vision of the state as the single granter of property rights, but in reality formal land law is only one of a number of normative frameworks that include customary systems. Rwandan peasants operate in a context of legal pluralism in which various institutional rules interact, reinforce, and compete with one another (see Meinzen-Dick & Pradhan 2002; Griffith 1986). They see formal law as only one device to determine or secure land rights, and this results in a partial adoption, partial reinterpretation, and partial ignorance of formal narratives when they are translated into the local setting. It is also not always clear to them how an official registration of landholdings could help them: relatively land-rich peasants fear a situation in which the authorities would know their true holdings; and poorer peasants do not see the utility of registration and fear official interference in production decisions. In addition, all fear that the Rwandan authorities may use registration information for taxation. Land consolidation is even more controversial. Peasants seem attached to their individual right to make decisions concerning their landholdings and point out that differing needs make communal land use problematic.

The Reorganization of Swamplands

The government's current swampland policy is inspired by the same objectives as the land policy: to maximize agricultural output while using land more efficiently and productively.[12] However, the approach adopted for the swamplands is different from the one applied in the hills. Instead of assigning individual property titles to local peasants, Article 29 of the land law says that "swampland belongs to the state. It shall not definitively be allocated to individuals and no person can use the reason that he or she has spent a long time with it to justify the definitive takeover of the land" (GoR 2005). As no private property rights on swamp plots can be allocated to individuals, the government assumes the role of principal swampland developer. This approach may take two forms. In some locations the government makes swampland available, as a concession, to private investors. In others, the national government mandates local authorities to allocate marshland plots to farmer groups that use collective cultivation systems.

All of the settings in this study are located near a swampland. In Imidugudu C, D, E and F (and partly in Umudugudu B), the swampland reorganization policy took the form of promoting collective production systems, either coordinated by an external NGO or left entirely to the initiative of local authorities and influential social actors within the umudugudu.[13] In these settings, marshland associations have progressively claimed user rights that previously were in the hands of individual peasants. Although swampland reforms affect peasants in very different ways, some general patterns are evident.

First of all, in nearly all cases, financial considerations effectively preclude participation from the poorer groups in swampland associations. In Imidugudu B, C, D and E, this was explicitly mentioned as an important constraint. The swampland association entry cost, though differing widely in different settings (i.e., from hundreds up to thousands of RWF), has an immediate impact upon access. Besides an initial membership fee, payments are often required for seed and other materials. Some associations combine cultivation activities with cooperative savings accounts, which sometimes are linked to cooperatives operating at a higher administrative level (i.e., district or province). As a result, the de facto entry cost can rise quite dramatically. In settings D and E my sources also mentioned "ignorance" (or a lack of social relations) as a factor preventing farmers from joining a swampland association. Many peasants, I was told, did not anticipate "how associations would take it over" and only became aware of the impact of collectivization when the associations were "full" of better-informed and better-connected farmers, effectively chasing individual users from their swampland plots.

Furthermore, national policymakers impose the uniform technical solution of monocropping upon all local settings and enforce regulations that require the cultivation of specific crop types (e.g., market-oriented "high-value" crops such as rice, sugar cane, maize, etc.) (GoR, 2007:68). In effect, cultivation practices used in the marshlands are a pilot experience with policies that Rwandan authorities want to implement in the hills. In none of the settings have there been government consultations with the local population on whether the proposed (or implemented) technical "solutions" are suitable for the locale's climate and socioeconomic-environmental context. Local authorities, who derive their legitimacy mainly from compliance with national priorities, supervise the implementation of national policies regardless of their appropriateness at the local level (see Ansoms 2009a; Ingelaere 2007). They also tend to advance the welfare of local elites as opposed to the poorer peasants. As a result, the overall trend of the swampland reorganization policy is one of increasing polarization and exclusion of poorer categories from access to swampland plots

Even in terms of overall productivity, the results of swampland reorganization so far seem to be mixed. The peasants working the marshland in Umudugudu C cultivate rice. The result, in terms of productivity, has been disastrous because the wrong seed type was selected and because part of the marshland is too dry for rice cultivation due to an uncompleted dike. Many peasants left the marshland dissatisfied with the participating NGO (the marshland developer), but local authorities would not reconsider their crop choice. In Umudugudu E the marshland is cultivated by associations that have divided their plots into two parts; half of the land is cultivated communally and half is cultivated individually by members. Monocropping is increasingly adopted in the communal part as this is monitored more closely by authorities. However, in their individual plots peasants continue to multicrop since they consider this practice more productive. In Umudugudu F monocropping is often used in the marshland area, although peasants did "admit" that their associations sometimes practice multicropping (e.g., soya and maize). They know it is against official policy, but they find it more profitable.

There are also cases in which swampland concessions have been given by the government to a private investor or to influential individuals who function as gatekeepers between the local and the external worlds. In Umudugudu B, peasants were obliged to cultivate maize that was compulsorily sold to the marshland manager at a below-market price (until 2007, when the manager's concession was repealed). In a case of swampland restoration near Umudugudu A (see Ansoms 2009b), thousands of small-scale peasants were dispossessed without receiving any compensation when the Madhivani group, a private investor buying the Kabuye Sugar Works sugarcane factory in 1996, received a concession of more than 3000 hectares of swampland. At the time of my research, both the investor as well as individual peasants from the wider surroundings of the factory cultivated sugarcane. An analysis of the project led to two important conclusions with regard to the success of the privatization. First, the productivity of individual small-scale farmers was considerably higher than that of the privatized company. The Madhivani group's current allocation of 3000 hectares is thus not optimal in terms of overall output and productivity. In addition, I found that a production system in which individual peasants have free crop choice would be equally productive (in terms of the monetary value per hectare) to that of the individual peasants producing compulsory sugarcane. Further, free crop choice would have improved swampland access for poorer peasant categories who do not have the financial means to invest in sugarcane production.

Overall, one may conclude that swampland reforms have contributed to the replication of structural forms of poverty and inequality within and beyond the swampland arena. In fact, interviewees refer to preexisting socioeconomic categories to differentiate between those who have profited from the marshland policies ("umukungu") and those who have lost out ("umukene"). Because those with the financial means have a clear advantage in acquiring access to swamplands, the reorganization program in fact contributes to the polarization of socioeconomic categories in the wider societal sphere.

Zero-Grazing and the Enclosure of Livestock

Along with land-related policies, Rwandan authorities also concentrate on the ownership and exchange of livestock. An important resource in Rwanda's rural economy, cattle are significant not only as capital stock and a source of manure, but also for their role in various rituals (e.g., marriage ceremonies) and in social relations (see De Lame 2005). The Rwandan civil war and genocide had a profound impact upon livestock holdings, although by 2000 average cattle holdings (0.60 per household) had nearly reached 1990 levels. At that time, however, only 30 percent of Rwandan households owned cattle (Verpoorten 2006).

Regarding small livestock, households on average owned 1.33 goats, 0.43 sheep, and 0.33 pigs in 2000 (Verpoorten 2006:55). Certainly for poorer peasants small livestock may offer a better economic buffer than cattle for a number of reasons. The cost for one animal is much lower; for the price of one cow several heads of small livestock can be purchased, which reduces the risk of losing all in the case of a disease. At the same time, if a peasant is in need of a modest amount of cash, it is possible to sell one small animal without liquidating his entire stock. And small livestock can often be sold more easily locally.

Poorer categories regularly can secure access to livestock by engaging in a "guardianage" contract with a neighbor or friend. The guardianage system serves as an exchange and solidarity mechanism between better-off and poorer peasant categories. The advantage for the owner is that the burden of taking care of the cattle is reduced (certainly an important consideration in times of drought), and the owner limits the risk that his whole herd could be affected by disease. In addition, by showing solidarity, the owner's social embeddedness in the community may improve while risks of provoking envy and jealousy are attenuated. The recipient takes on the duty of caring for and feeding the cow. In practice this means that the guardian brings the cow to grazing areas during the day and shelters it in his or her enclosure at night. In return, the guardian may use its manure and consume part of its milk (traditionally three-sevenths goes to the owner). Even more important, the guardian may eventually become the owner of the cow's second calf. The guardianage system is also used with goats and pigs, and children engage in it on a smaller scale with chickens and rabbits (see Mpakaniye 2005).

About one-fifth of all Rwandan cattle (i.e., almost 160,000 head) were loaned out through the guardianage system in 2001. For goats, this was 23.3 percent (i.e., equal to more than 321,850 head), for sheep 17.4 percent (i.e., 76,972 head), for pigs 25.5 percent (66,242 head), for chickens 7.9 percent (93,464 head), and for rabbits 2.2 percent (9,950 head) (Mpakaniye 2005). Although I do not have similar data for the imidugudu in my survey, the system was frequently identified (or spoken of) as a means for poorer peasants to progress. Also, it is often the only way for the poorest peasants to gain possession of livestock.

To improve access to livestock, the Rwandan government has recently begun a "one household, one cow" policy aimed at providing poor peasant households with a cow of an improved variety. Those eligible for the program are households that do not own a cow and possess less than 0.75 hectares of land (i.e., about 668,763 households). Potential beneficiaries, however, must meet certain preconditions: the household must maintain 0.2 hectares of pasture and have (or build) a stable. Further, they must invest in equipment for water collection and conservation and have two pits near the house for wastewater. Finally, the household must follow the policy of priority crop cultivation ("[it] should be growing and having a reasonable yield of one crop that is suitable for the particular area") and it should be of "exemplary character" (GoR 2006b:17). Alternative government support is foreseen for households with more than 0.75 hectares of land (e.g., to provide financial support for artificial insemination, improved seed, and access to commercial bank loans).

The "one household, one cow" policy has been accompanied by the introduction of a "zero grazing" policy. Traditionally, domestic cattle graze on any nearby available land (not necessarily owned by the household). However, since available grazing land is shrinking, the Rwandan government wants peasants to keep their cattle in stables and feed them with grasses cultivated on their own land. This policy makes sense in environmental terms. Therefore, the policy is imposed not only upon peasants profiting from the "one household, one cow" program, but also upon the rural setting as a whole. In the abakene group in Umudugudu C, a person mentioned that a fine of 11,000 RWF will be charged when one's cows are not kept at home

However, the widespread announcement of this new policy in some imidugudu and its sudden enforcement in others caused great unrest. The requirement to build stables and grow grasses appears unfeasible, in most cases, for the poorer peasant categories who participated in the guardianage system. They are or will be obliged to return "their" cattle to the original owners. A person of the umutindi focus group in Umudugudu C explained, "in the past, people asked us to guard cows for them and we could use the manure on our land. These cows were an important economic aid for us. But now this has stopped because we are not capable of keeping the cow on our own property." In Umudugudu B, a participant explained that those owning cattle who are unable to fulfill the requirements of zero grazing will be obliged to sell them. In Umudugudu D, one respondent said, "there are agricultural policies that make us tired. Where do they expect us to grow herbs [for feeding the livestock], while we even have not enough [land] to cultivate food crops? The State really makes us tired; we will have problems with manure due to this policy measure. The consequences will be that we will be weak, because I don't think about renting a field to cultivate herbs only. This agricultural policy puts sticks in our wheels." He added that it is difficult to cultivate sufficient herbs for two cows, and "only the abakire will be capable of this."

Despite the genuine concern of Rwandan authorities to improve access to livestock while not exceeding the ecological limits of grazing land, I found that the zero-grazing policy imposes serious hardships upon local peasants of various categories. Peasants either have to invest in cultivating herbs or they have to get rid of their livestock. Further, rigid implementation of the livestock enclosure policy will break the link of solidarity between poorer and better-off peasants that existed under the guardianage system.

Conclusions: Different Layers of Pro-poor Growth

During the last five years, the Rwandan government has implemented its first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Nonetheless, the decrease in poverty has been limited, while inequality has increased. The low pro-poor character of the first Rwandan PRSP illustrates the government's inadequate understanding of how poverty works at the local level and how national policies can adversely affect local living conditions. This article has tried to broaden current awareness of rural poverty by studying it from a local perspective.

The rural policies examined in this paper—the adoption of monocropping and regional crop specialization, land registration and plot consolidation, swampland reorganization, and the enclosure of livestock—are guided by a logic of improving efficiency and realizing economic growth with the ultimate goal of reducing poverty. The "views from below," however, reveal that their poverty-reducing effects may well be limited. Potentially, these policies might be counterproductive by increasing divisions between the rural rich and poor and by deepening the poverty trap for poorer categories of peasants. The problem is not only with the policies, but also with their rigid top-down implementation. This denies rural residents of all categories the flexibility and freedom to air their views and/or participate in policy elaboration and implementation from the bottom-up.

Pro-poor growth is not just a matter of advancing the growth rate in the hope that the trickle-down effect will reduce poverty. Policymakers should understand which groups make up the poor, and what roles they can play in economic growth. Elaboration of a set of pro-poor policies for the rural economy should start with an identification of the opportunities and constraints of various rural categories within diverse local settings, and the positive and negative roles of these categories in the bargaining process over available resources and opportunities. Such analysis can then feed back into an integrated pro-poor policy that targets the poor both directly and indirectly. Several policy recommendations follow from these goals.

First, pro-poor objectives can be realized indirectly by targeting non-poor groups (abakire, abakungu, and abakene bifashije) with growth strategies that have a maximum trickle-down effect. Better-off categories could play an important intermediate role in trade chains between large-scale traders and subsistence peasants with small surpluses. Therefore, growth-enhancing policies should stimulate regional coordination and collective action to improve the bargaining position of local rural agents on regional markets. In Umudugudu B. the abakungu fulfill this role by providing an outlet for the surplus crops of poorer categories. In Umudugudu D, however, the abakungu use their intermediate position in an exploitative way: confronted with distress, poorer neighbors are obliged to sell their crops prematurely at a low price, allowing the abakungu to engage in speculation. Indeed, the risk of elites appropriating the gains from policies that target the poor indirectly is real and should be controlled through careful monitoring, and by enabling the various groups of poor themselves to speak out.

Second, better-off categories can play an important role within their local environments as investors in nonagricultural activities. The Rwandan government's ambition to increase nonagricultural employment fits in with the Vision 2020 policy objective to decrease by 2020 the proportion of agricultural-dependent persons from 85 to 50 percent (GoR 2000).[14] However, stringent official registration procedures and environmental and taxation regulations have imposed serious constraints on nonagricultural investment for small-scale local actors. Clearly, policies related to the nonagricultural economy should enhance the capacity of local investors to engage in such activities. In the rural economy the trickle-down effect of nonagricultural investment by local better-off categories is probably greater than the effects of investment on the part of large-scale outside entrepreneurs.

Most important, along with indirect approaches, direct approaches for helping the poorer categories must be deployed in the form of inclusive growth-oriented policies. However, it must be recognized that there are three essentially different categories of poor with different needs: the abakene, who still farm although they are unable to achieve self-sufficiency; the abatindi, who have marginal small landholdings and are dependent on off-farm wage labor (mainly in the agricultural sector); and the abatindi nyakujya, who are entirely marginalized. The latter play almost no role in growth-oriented strategies because their agricultural output is often constrained by physical limitations. The two other categories, however, do have the potential to participate in growth creation.

Policies to improve the role of abakene peasants in economic growth should focus on the removal of institutional constraints that confine them to risk-averse survival strategies. Indeed, much of the case material has illustrated the total lack of any buffers for this category. This blocks the abakene from engaging in potentially profitable agricultural activities that entail a degree of risk. Highly accessible small-scale credit programs might provide such a buffer. At this point, however, credit providers focus on maximum profits for minimal risks. This favors large-scale producers with ambitious production plans and sufficient collateral to engage in these credit programs. Government institutions, therefore, have a major role to play in the promotion of small-scale credit initiatives. This conclusion calls into question policymakers' focus on the private sector to solve the lack of rural credit. Rotating savings and credit associations often exist at the grassroots level and could be an important mechanism to channel funds to local communities. For example, a thorough study of "Banques Populaires" operations before 1994 and an application of its successes might provide a breakthrough in terms of how to proceed. In addition, the government could enhance the risk-coping potential of peasants through flexible insurance mechanisms (potentially linked to credit systems). This would allow peasants to adopt more risky strategies without the threat of complete collapse in one-time failures. It could even inspire abakene households to engage in market-oriented production, despite their limited landholdings.

An additional and crucial aspect is the existence of initiatives to improve the bargaining capacity of poorer peasants in local and regional markets. Again, collective action leveraged through financial support from donors and the state seems the only way to achieve this. It is also important for these peasants to believe that their voices are heard within the collectives. If not, the collectives may become instruments for imposing yet more agricultural obligations on the farm population. Further, the availability of buffers may even inspire the entrepreneurial abakene to set up small-scale nonagricultural businesses. Policies may stimulate this by linking local to regional and national trade chains for nonagricultural goods.

Finally, abatindi households can join in growth policies through the wage labor market. Given the current ecological boundaries, this category will become more important and numerous in the near future. From my interviews with Rwandan peasants, I learned that the idea of living without land is very difficult for them. They see few options besides farming, and most often their livelihood prospects are bleak. The automatic link between (agricultural) wage labor and "being poor" in the perception of the rural population is grounded in a world in which the demand for labor is limited while the supply of nonskilled laborers is high. Policies, therefore, should work on both sides of this chain. On the one hand, Rwandan policymakers should facilitate and stimulate investment in labor-intensive off-farm activities. This may be done directly through organizing labor-intensive works (e.g., constructing roads, infrastructure projects, etc.). What is even more important is to encourage local better-off categories to invest their profits locally in small-scale businesses instead of turning to the cities. Rwandan authorities should also improve the quality of the unskilled labor force with training initiatives for a variety of sectors. This would also enhance the bargaining position of the labor force in wage negotiations.

Overall, this article concludes that pro-poor growth requires more than combining growth with a reduction in the percentage of poor. The "rural poor" consist of different categories of peasants with very diverse needs, opportunities, and constraints. The well-being of all socioeconomic categories, poor and nonpoor, is interlinked and interdependent. This makes the local economy a hybrid system; and therefore, creating pro-poor growth is a hybrid process. It is not only a matter of targeting a particular group, focusing on a particular sector, or introducing (seemingly) efficiency-improving techniques.

Pro-poor growth entails a wider process of societal change in which overall economic development proceeds with the active participation of the relatively deprived socioeconomic categories that will benefit from policies that target them directly and indirectly (e.g., through a trickle-down effect). The current focus in pro-poor growth literature on macro-level developments should be complemented by micro-level perspectives that add nuance and complexity. We need to enrich our insights into the opportunities and constraints that different livelihood categories face and that affect their participation in growth strategies.

Acknowledgments

A previous version of this paper received the honorable mention for the 2007 Graduate Student Paper Prize from the African Studies Association (ASA). The author greatly acknowledges the recommendations and assistance provided by Danielle De Lame (Royal Museum for Central Africa), Alison Des Forges (Human Rights Watch), and Catharine Newbury (Smith College) who were members of the panel at the ASA Annual Meeting at which this paper was presented. The author also thanks Ella Kusnetz who improved the quality of the paper during the editing phase.

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Notes

1. “Pro-poor” growth by convention refers to economic growth that concurs with poverty reduction. Various definitions are presented further in the text.
2. These calculations are based upon a poverty line of 175 RWF per adult equivalent per day at 2001 prices, and 250 RWF per adult equivalent per day at 2006 prices (not equal to the 1$ per capita poverty line, as these data are not available).
3. Rwandan households are typically scattered over the hills. The *umudugudu* (plural: *imidugudu*) is the administrative division that corresponds with one or a few hills. The term was originally reserved for “villages” by the post-1994 villagization policy to house returning (mostly Tutsi) refugees. Under this policy, nonrefugees (often Hutu) also were required to leave their houses in the hill to settle in a structured village. The policy was highly contested by international

organizations such as Human Rights Watch. Now the term is used to indicate the administrative division that previously was referred to as a "cellule."

4. The *ubudehe* project is a community action planning project coordinated by local authorities and funded by the European Union. The local population of each village/hill was asked to rank the problems resulting in poverty and the survival strategies that had been developed. As part of the exercise, the local communities defined socioeconomic categories according to degrees of poverty and then ranked all households according to their status. A social map (indicating location and category of all households) of this exercise was made. These categories, which are described fully in table 1, may be thought of in terms of the following approximate definitions:
   Umutindi nyakujya (plural: *abatindi nyakujya*): the most vulnerable
   Umutindi (plural: *abatindi*): the vulnerable
   Umukene (plural: *abakene*): the poor
   Umukene wifashije (plural: *abakene bifashije*): the non-poor
   Umukungu (plural: *abakungu*): the wealthy
   Umukire (plural: *abakire)*: the very wealthy
5. Ingelaere (2006, 2007) maps actual social mobility in order "to understand the consequences of the violence experienced in the hills over the last fifteen years and the perceived regime performance in the domain of economic recovery" (2006:35). This article, however, focuses on the perceived potential for current and future social mobility, concentrating particularly upon upward mobility in order to identify current institutional opportunities and constraints that different categories of peasants face in improving their living conditions.
6. In the recent past there were many off-farm employment opportunities in this umudugudu, both for locals and for immigrant workers. However, since early 2007 many of these previously informal activities have been stopped by the authorities in an attempt to reorganize and integrate them into the formal economy.
7. Almost all of the households are in the abakene bifashije category. Many are self-sufficient. Our fieldwork suggests a need for further differentiation within the category.
8. De Lame (2005) remarks that the word *umukungu* had a pejorative connotation referring to (the resented) "rich people."
9. It may be that the same practice occurs in other settings, although our sources elsewhere did not refer to it specifically.
10. Ingelaere (2009:13,4) gives a more detailed account of "self-censorship among the population with regard to elements that do not fit into the official public transcript." This illustrates the "discrepancy between 'image' and 'reality'" in postgenocide Rwanda.
11. The registration process, to be finished by 2014, receives important financial support from DFID (United Kingdom).
12. Swampland covers about 10% of Rwandan territory (Seyler & Mugemana 2003) and has long been an important natural resource for local peasant communities. Originally the Rwandan swamplands were used for hunting, fishing, and cattle grazing (Cambrezy 1981), but increasing population pressure pushed farmers to use them for food crop production. Inclusion or exclusion was based upon the inherent capacity of a household to undertake the heavy preparatory work necessary to make savage swampland arable. Confronted with mounting

ecological pressures, marshland territories captured the interest of the Habyarimana administration by the mid 1970s, when the government declared that all marshland zones were to become state property. By the early 1980s a large variety of formal and informal institutional arrangements regulated access to marshlands: user rights granted by the state, user rights guaranteed through membership in collectives, implicit user rights derived from the physical investment in preparing the land for cultivation and from continuous cultivation. After the end of the war in 1994, the Rwandan government and international donors decided that the haphazard use of marshlands and wetlands was undesirable. The sustainable exploitation of the swamplands' potential was seen as crucial in an environment of high population growth and land shortages.

13. In Umudugudu B, one part of the swampland had been given into concession to a private investor, until he was chased in 2007. From that point onward, the swampland was managed by a cooperative. Another part was managed by a military agent who had been present in the region from 1994 onward. Since 2007 he had adopted the principle of collective production systems on his concession.
14. Vision 2020 is a development strategy elaborated by the Rwandan government in 2000 that outlined the main goals to be reached by the year 2020.