

*Insidious Power, Artful Practices:
A framework for analysing post-genocide Rwanda**

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With apologies for extreme tardiness.

This paper is a first attempt in my written work to make sense of how the distribution of power within Rwandan society has changed since the 1994 genocide of 800,000 ethnic Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu. I hypothesise that the distribution of power has not changed dramatically, despite government assertions to the contrary, because of a strong, pyramidal and state-sanctioned power that has its home in the post-genocide policy of national unity and reconciliation. The post-genocide policy of national unity and reconciliation is a tool of domination that dresses up its efforts to control a subordinate population in the language of ethnic unity and social inclusion. In post-genocide Rwanda, individuals are forced to participate in political life by the “tools” of national unity – for example, in *ingando* citizenship camps, at *gacaca* justice trials, during genocide mourning week and through their membership in civil society

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organisations. The structural and discursive elements of the policy mark a return to the relations of domination and oppression of the ruled by rulers, in this case of the Hutu by the Tutsi, which differs, in form but not substance, from the domination of the Tutsi by the Hutu that characterised the pre-genocide government of Juvénal Habyarimana.

Since the end of the genocide, Rwandan society has been undergoing sweeping political and social changes that have been imposed from the centre. Post-genocide processes of state reconstruction and social reconciliation have been largely directed at the political and legal institutions of the state and have reinforced the political power of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)-led government. The RPF likes to proclaim to international audiences, notably its donor community as well as to prospective investors and tourists that, “Rwanda is a nation rehabilitated: [it is] a country whose past truly is the past, whose present is peaceful and politically stable, and whose future beckons ever more brightly with each passing year” (ORTPN, 2004: 4). Underneath this pristine image are the lived realities of the ordinary Rwandan men and women who survived the genocide, and whose daily struggles of survival, of re-establishing livelihoods, of re-constituting social and economic networks, and of reconciling with neighbours, friends and in some cases family members, have been swept away in the name of state-security. As a Hutu woman said, “For me, the genocide is what happened after the killing stopped. I lost my husband and four of my children during the events. Now I suffer without hopes and dreams. My brother in prison, and I have no one to take care or to take care of me. I feel alone even when I am with other people. And then the government forces us to tell the truth about what we saw. I saw a lot of bodies but never did I see someone getting killed. I heard people dying but I did not see anything. How can I tell my truth when the government has told me what I have to say? I fear being sent to prison and I think now that my neighbours do not like that I live in [the same community as before the genocide]. Where can I go, what can I do? The government says Rwanda has been rebuilt but my life and home are still not repaired....” (Interview, Southwestern Rwanda, 4 August 2006).

These two quotes reveal the disconnect between the elite version of post-genocide Rwanda and the everyday lived realities of ordinary Rwandans. The purpose of my dissertation project, which is based on ethnographic research conducted in 2006, and in-

depth life history interviews with 37 ordinary Rwandans in Southwest Rwanda, is to narrate the stories of ordinary Rwandans about their lives before, during and after the genocide. The research is a deconstruction of the policy of national unity, to analyse how ordinary Rwandans understand national unity and to identify, describe and explain the social and political differences masked by the policy. Central to this deconstruction is a genealogy of both relational power between ordinary Rwandans and the structures of state power that looks beyond formal political power. Instead, it looks to the mundane and daily ways in which power is enacted and contested, which allows for an analysis that focuses on individuals as active subjects, rather than powerless passive ones.

Drawing on Foucauldian interpretations of power and inspired by the insights of standpoint feminists scholars, the present paper seeks to outline how power circulates in post-genocide Rwanda from the perspective of ordinary Rwandan individuals. Post-genocide Rwanda represents a context where political power is firmly held by the state, and where it is exercised at the local level in the form of directives from “on-high” (the central government in Kigali) and through the strict monitoring of the ability and willingness of local leaders to “implement government orders effectively and efficiently” (Interview, Ministry of Local Government official, 9 June 2006). Local leaders in turn keep a keen eye on the activities and speech of individuals within their bailiwick. Compliance with the dictates of the policy of national unity is paramount. Ordinary Rwandans are subject to the exercise of the power granted to local leaders and perform the prescribed rituals of national unity and reconciliation, regardless of their private realities. For example, many Tutsi survivors of the genocide are afraid to participate in local *gacaca* justice trials for fear of reprisal while some Hutu wonder if the *gacaca* courts are a form of genocide against them. Far from being displays of actual, or even perceived, unity and reconciliation, much of the interaction between and among ordinary Rwandans constitute ways of coping, rather than co-existing.

In order to identify and analyse the nature of relational power in post-genocide Rwanda in the context of the policy of national unity and reconciliation, it is necessary to map out a framework for understanding and explaining the disciplining effects of state power on the lives of ordinary Rwandans. Before doing so, however, some groundwork is required. The paper will proceed in four parts: First, a brief overview of the facts of

the 1994 genocide and of the policy of national unity and reconciliation will be presented. A comment on methodology follows. Third, the beginnings of the framework of analysing relational power in Rwanda is set out. Fourth, a preliminary analysis of some of the artful practices that Rwandans employ in their daily lives is made. Since this is a first draft, a historical analysis of structural power in Rwanda is not offered. A brief conclusion wraps things up.

Situating Post-Genocide Rwanda

Between April and July 1994, Rwanda was engulfed by genocide; approximately one million people were killed. Among the first targeted were Hutu politicians who were willing to share political power with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi-led rebel group that had invaded Rwanda in 1990. Community leaders, journalists, and civil rights activists -- Tutsi and Hutu alike -- were also targeted. Ordinary members of the Tutsi-ethnic group were singled out for killing, as the Habyarimana regime sought to assign blame for the inability to meet its clientelist obligations to a powerless and minority population. The RPF knew that its demands for power-sharing would result in “genocidal retaliation but [this was] viewed ... as an acceptable cost of achieving their goal of taking state power in Rwanda” (Kuperman, 2004: 63).

Most of the killing was perpetrated by ordinary Hutu peasants, who were often goaded by government soldiers or members of the *interahamwe* militia into killing their Tutsi relatives, neighbours or friends, threatened with the loss of their own life or that of loved ones if unwilling to participate in the frenzy of killing. Not all Hutu participated, and not all participated to the same degree. Some killed enthusiastically, others killed a few (Prunier, 1998: 242-250).¹ The RPF, eventually credited with stopping the genocide in the face of an international community that was unable to do so, also committed widespread reprisal killings of Hutu (DesForges, 1999). At least 500,000 Tutsi were killed (DesForges 1999).² Between 10,000 and 50,000 Hutu perished (DesForges, 1999);

¹ Estimates of the number of perpetrators vary widely. The Government of Rwanda estimates three million perpetrators. DesForges suggests that “hundreds of thousands” participated (1999: 2). Straus (2004) finds both numbers implausible and suggests between 175,000 and 210,000 participated.

² The United Nations estimates between 800,000 and “close to” 1 million Tutsi perished (UNDP, 2004: 6) while the Government of Rwanda revealed in a 2002 consensus that 1, 074,017 Rwandans died, of which

other sources suggest that “hundreds of thousands of Hutu died at the hands of other Hutu and the RPF” (Reyntjens, 2004: 178). At least 250,000 women – mostly Tutsi and some Hutu -- were raped (Human Rights Watch, 2004); some men also admit to being raped.³ Countless others, male and female, young and old, were tortured or maimed before being left for dead.

The genocide, not surprisingly, peaked the interest of many analysts – scholars, human rights activists, journalists, as well as policy and development practitioners -- to take up the study of how and why the 1994 genocide could have taken place (e.g., African Rights, 1995; DANIDA, 1996; Eltringham, 2003; Fujii, 2005; Gasana *et al*, 1999; Gourevitch, 1998; Hintjens, 1999; HRW, 1999; Kimonyo, 2000; Kuperman, 1996; Mamdani, 2001; Straus 2006; UN, 1996; Uvin 1998; Waugh, 2004). Rwanda, particularly for Anglophone observers, came into existence in 1994, when the genocide catapulted the tiny, central African country onto the world stage.

Many of these new studies and reports offered decontextualised analyses of Rwandan society. As the Newburys note, “Their introduction to [Rwandan] society and its people was through the genocide alone...” (Newbury and Newbury, 2000: 832). Historical, sociological and anthropological studies of Rwanda and Rwandans were either ignored or glossed over, despite the existence of a voluminous literature on the social history of Rwanda before the genocide (e.g., Codere, 1973; Des Forges, 1973; deLame 1996; d’Hertefeldt and deLame, 1987; LeMarchand, 1970; Newbury, 1988; Newbury 1991; Reyntjens 1985). Rwanda is seen through the lens of genocide, and the literature focused largely on elite politics, the manipulation of ethnic identities and the power of the state. Analysts of the genocide and its immediate aftermath are not therefore “burdened by much knowledge of Rwanda or the region” (Reyntjens, 2004: 179). This lack of insider knowledge allows the RPF to represent the genocide to Rwandans in terms that suit their version of the facts, and in ways that both simplify and mystify the genocide (see Pottier 2002 on the ability of the RPF to manage information in and about Rwanda).

94% were Tutsi (MINALOC, 2002). This number is considered an exaggeration as Tutsi numbered under 1 million in 1994, and more than 200,000 Tutsi survived the genocide.

³ Interview. Desk Officer. African Rights. Kigali. 19 June 2006.

The RPF version of events, as embodied in the discourse of national unity, is based on the ideal that Rwandan society was unified before colonisation, and since Rwandans were peacefully co-existing before the arrival of the Germans, then the Belgians, who instituted divide-and-rule policies, that unity is once again possible. The narrative of national unity both trivialises and exploits the perceived unity of pre-colonial times, where relations between Hutu and Tutsi were hierarchical, with the cattle-owning Tutsi holding the political power, controlling the sources of wealth, and exploiting the agriculturalist Hutu through a variety of social and political mechanisms (Newbury, 1988; Vansina, 2004). It is also silent on the ways in which the Tutsi manipulated new controls on the material and coercive resources of the state introduced under colonial rule. It does not mention how to be Tutsi meant access to the spoils of the colonial state; nor does it explicitly mention that urban Tutsi continued to enjoy some privilege under the first and second Republics of the postcolonial state (see, LeMarchand, 1970; Uvin, 1998).

The policy of national unity and reconciliation is a key instrument of authoritarian control. Its central idea is best captured in the slogan of “one Rwanda for all Rwandans”. The policy is premised on the idea that if Rwandans can identify as Rwandans, and not on the basis of their ethnic identity as Tutsi, Hutu or Twa, then an inclusive citizenship, based on “Rwandan-ness” will be created. In practice, “Rwandan-ness” has been deployed as a strategic tool that allows the government to determine who its opponents or critics are, and to silence them with allegations of being “un-Rwandan”. For example, the revised post-genocide constitution of 2003 eliminated public references to ethnic identity (article 33) and has criminalised “ethnic divisionism” and “trivializing the genocide” (article 13).⁴ Any reference to reprisal killings at the hands of the RPF, or of the numerous acts of torture, rape and intimidation committed during and after the genocide is taboo. Public discussion of the genocide is surveilled by the NURC. Debate on the genocide is limited to discussion of the hero-status of the RPR for liberating Tutsi

⁴ The constitutional provisions reinforce a 2002 criminal law that punishes public incitement to discrimination or divisionism by up to five years in prison, heavy fines, or both.

from “the noose of Hutu Power”⁵ and on the resilience and ability to forgive of Tutsi who survived.

Ordinary Rwandans have been cast by the policy as powerless. The government assumes that the population is an amorphous mass that lacks the ability and/or willingness to make decisions for themselves as “they are just simple peasant people and they need us to make decisions for them. We have given them peace but they don’t know what to do with it. Survivors are traumatised because of what happened to them. That is why we brought back *gacaca* and *ingando* camps. Hutu will tell the truth about what they did during the genocide and justice will come. They will get reconciled because that is how it used to be between Hutu and Tutsi. Once we teach them, they will learn.... Unity and reconciliation is within reach” (Interview with senior government official, Kigali, 15 May 2006).

Underpinning elite views of its subject population is the absence of any consideration of the experiences of ordinary Rwandans during, or after, the genocide (African Rights, 2003a –f and 2005 have begun to fill this gap). There has also been little scholarship, in English or in French, that takes the political realities of ordinary Rwandans as the starting point of analysis.⁶ Recent scholarship focuses on elite actors and the politics of the centre with little to no regard for the participation of ordinary Rwandans in the shaping of the post-genocide Rwandan state and society. There are a number of books that voice the experiences of individual, ordinary Rwandans during the genocide, but these works are journalistic in their accounts and do not place these experiences in political context nor do they speak deeply to the political complexities of the challenge of reconstruction or reconciliation (e.g., Bilinda 2006; Hatzfeld, 2005, 2005a; Koff, 2004; Pierce, 1999; Vanderwerff & Wade, 1996; cf Umutesi, 2004 for a Hutu voice). This work is focused largely on the experiences of Tutsi survivors and does

⁵ Interview. Senior RPF Official. Kigali. 12 May 2006.

⁶ Newbury and Newbury (2000) make a similar point with regard to the absence of historical analysis in understanding the 1994 genocide. They “especially want to explore an aspect of historiography by which politics have been removed from rural life and agricultural practices separated from political life”. Their article seeks to point out why it is important to “bring peasants back in” with a view to introducing the literature on rural and agrarian studies in Rwanda, the relevance of including “peasant realities” in academic analysis, as well as suggesting openings for future research that includes analysis of both elite and peasant perspectives.

not seek to make known individual voices from across the social spectrum, nor are these works primarily concerned with the political relations in post-genocide Rwanda.

In imposing a policy of national unity that seeks to create “one Rwanda for all Rwandans” that is devoid of the range of individual experiences that constitute the genocide, the RPF is wiping away the specificity of the individual acts of genocide that constitute the aggregated whole. It is also one that ignores how ordinary Rwandans were enticed and/or coerced to participate. Each act of violence –a killing, a rape, a threat, a looting – is different and took place within a specific set of circumstances as individuals made their choice to kill, hide, resist, or stand-by (Fujii, 2005; Straus 2005). This is not to downplay the magnitude of the genocide, but is to point out that in assigning collective responsibility to individual acts, the policy of national not only misinterprets the nature of the genocide, it also recreates the same conditions that it claims it seeks to undo. The RPF have imposed a policy of national unity that both simplifies and shrouds the individual acts that, in aggregate, constitute the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The purpose of the policy is to silence dissent and control the political and social landscape in painting a specific version of events around an event that defies easy description or definition. It also disrupts the link between the intimate nature of the violence of the genocide and the experiences of individual Rwandans who are encouraged to forgive and forget what happened to them, their family, their community and their country as the RPF tries to create an image of a unified, peaceful and prosperous Rwanda.

Researching the Individual Lived Experiences of Ordinary Rwandans

In seeking to deconstruct how ordinary Rwandans understand the policy of national unity and what meanings they attach to it required a methodology that emphasised the micro, interactional level as well as one that would reveal how individuals make sense of their life world as well as that of others. A multi-layered methodology that considers the local and situated practices that are structured by the material and discursive elements policy of national unity was necessary. The research drew on three overlapping research dimensions: empirical, interpretative and critical (Abélès, 1992; Inayatullah, 1990) as an approach that sought to contextualise material and discursive data along with the meanings given to them by individuals within the

structure of national unity, and then to situate these meanings within various historical structures of power relations.

The “tools” required to undertake this nuanced analysis have multiple footings. The first is deconstruction of the discourse of national unity as a means of mapping out possible strategies for bringing about change within a series of power relations. To deconstruct the limits on the parameters of acceptable speech as found in the policy of national unity as well as the speech (and silences) of individual Rwandans, a broad range of linguistic and non-linguistic data was used – reports, speeches, web-sites, newspaper articles, policies, laws, interviews, as well as symbolic practices such as art, poems, proverbs, as well as theatre and cultural performances.

The second is Foucauldian genealogy, meaning a history of the present which aims to determine which structures have been hegemonic and why. Genealogy is an understanding of how the past constitutes the present, e.g., the historical basis of national unity and the politicisation of ethnic identity in Rwanda. It is also a method that is important in critiquing which versions of history are used to maintain the present and how. For example, is the revisionist social history of Rwanda as presented by the RPF problematic for present and future peace and security? If so, how? More than an analysis of why revisionist history is problematic, the research shows how historical structures play out in the lives of ordinary Rwandans in dissecting the means they attach to it, as well as to their own history (or lived experiences).

The third is political ethnography, which was essential for investigating the dynamics of political processes at the local level, particularly where ordinary Rwandans interact with institutional or formal aspects of power. Ethnographic methods opened up the ability to observe and understand the informal aspects of power relations, *viz.*, the way in which Rwandans understand the situations they face and the options available to them. Participant observation⁷ and life history interviews were employed to render visible the politics and power relations of the everyday lived realities of ordinary Rwandans. Both of these tools spoke my epistemological commitment to voicing individual ordinary Rwandans as sources of knowledge, as individuals who have lived part of their lives in

⁷ Participant observation is "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (Schensul *et al.*,1999: 91).

conflict, and as a result possessed knowledge that is the direct result of their lived experiences.

Participant observation added a layer of context and nuance to the information I was gaining in the semi-structured life history interviews with ordinary Rwandans. I was able to interview two Twa people, twenty-one Hutu people of which six were accused of crimes of genocide, and fourteen Tutsi people, the majority of whom are survivors of the genocide. Only one individual within the Tutsi community was a returnee, meaning a return to Rwanda after the genocide. Sixteen women participated in the research. Seven participants were under the age of sixteen; two were children born of the genocide. The average age was 38 years for women and 44 years for men; three participants were over 70, one was over ninety. Two participants had finished primary school; the average length of schooling was five years. Three had salaried jobs; the remainder are peasants, day labourers or unemployed. All are resident in rural areas in Southwest Rwanda; six lived in government-sponsored communities. Two considered themselves *mayibobo* (homeless). Six individuals spoke and wrote a language other than Kinyarwanda.⁸ All practiced a Christian religion. The life history interview method allowed for sufficient contact over time to gain sufficient knowledge of the individual's life experiences, as well as of important themes that are reflective of their interactions with both the state, local authorities as well as with others.⁹

Insidious structures of power in Rwanda

The worldview of ordinary Rwandans has been re-cast by the 1994 genocide. The genocide represents a fundamental shift in social and political relations as well as a radical shift in thinking about ethnicity as individuals killed or where killed on the basis of being a Hutu or a Tutsi, and these identities no longer exist post-genocide. The policy of national unity is invoking ancient cultural institutions and historical practices to

⁸ Some participants understood a second language, usually French but in one case English. I use the benchmark of the ability to speak and write a foreign language as an indicator of social mobility. Without the means to communicate officially (i.e., in writing), an individual is considered illiterate in that language.

⁹ The life history method was an important tool in identifying the ethnic identity of each participant as individuals usually revealed their identity to me in the course of the interview period. I averaged seven meetings with each individual, resulting in an average of 9.4 hours of recorded interview data per participant.

forcibly re-create the image of ethnic unity. As discussed above, the pursuit of ethnic unity brings to the fore the intersection of the structure and relations of power between Rwandans and the various tools of national unity and reconciliation, as well as between ordinary Rwandans in the course of their everyday lives. The starting point for thinking about the circulation of power at every socio-political level and arena is found in the work of Michel Foucault, in that of the feminist scholars who have refined his work as well as in the additional insights of James Scott on “hidden transcripts” of power (Scott, 1990). Foucault writes that it is the relationship between the individual and institution where power operates most clearly (Foucault, 1977; 1978; 1980). “Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain.... Power is employed and exercised through a network like organization....” (Foucault, 1980: 98).

The practical, everyday effects of power are determined by the relationship of domination and resistance between the powerful and the powerless. From this perspective, state power is not an attribute of the apparatus of the state but rather a product of the relations between (and resultant distribution of power amongst) the state’s ruling elites and all of its citizens. This allows for analysis that looks beyond who has power (i.e., the state), to focus on the question of what kind of power is seen to be being exercised, and how this is known (understood), and by whom (Foucault 1980). The state influences the structure of power insofar as it is influential in dictating the social and political distribution of knowledge, something which the state in Rwanda does well. Such an approach to analysing power means that political and social change relies on more than the programmes, techniques and strategies of the ruling elite but also on the nature of the social and political relations between individuals and the state, and between individuals in their everyday lives (Foucault, 1997. See Bayart 1993; Ferguson 1994 for application to Africa).

Foucault’s work brings to the fore the insidious strategies of power and the way in which state institutions structure everyday life, including the variety of available “surveillance” techniques and the exercise of “strategies”, “technologies” and “programmes” of power. Programmes of power define the realm of social reality that is to be turned into an object of knowledge, intervened in and made functional.

Technologies of power are techniques and practices for the disciplining, surveillance, administration and shaping of individuals as subjects. Programmes define forms of knowledge and discourses about objects of knowledge. Technologies are apparatuses of power designed to implement that knowledge. Strategies of power are what agencies do in practice when exercising power. Strategies also include the acts of resistance that individuals employ when confronted with power (Foucault, 1977).

In the case of post-genocide Rwanda, the programme is the promotion of national unity in the name of reconciliation and peace. We have already discussed some of the techniques of national unity: (1) the exploitation of the perceived unity of pre-colonial Rwanda; (2) government surveillance of information, including the manipulation of the role of the RPF in stopping the genocide and of the levels of peace and reconciliation among ordinary Rwandans; (3) the constitutional illegality of public references to ethnic divisionism or trivialising the genocide; (4) the perceived powerlessness of ordinary Rwandans as “simple peasant people” by the government; (5) the maintenance of a climate of fear and intimidation through the deployment of security personnel at all levels of the administrative structure;¹⁰ (6) incentives for security personnel to remain vigilant against “criminal elements, those who hold genocidal ideologies, or anyone who fails to promote unity”;¹¹ and (7) the maintenance of established structures of hierarchy and power through institutional practices of unity such as *umuganda* (community work), *ubedehe* (cell level participatory development) and *ubusabane* (community festivals/gatherings).¹²

¹⁰ To wit, “you (members of the local defense forces) need to maintain a high level of discipline in order to exercise your duties. ... Any member who does not exercise his duties will be punished as stipulated by the law that established local defenses” (Namurinda, 2006).

¹¹ The distribution of wealth from the centre to members of the lower levels of the administration corresponds to pre-colonial practices of providing wealth to favoured members of a clan lineage as an expression of power (deLame, 2005; Newbury, 1988). Livestock (cattle, goats and rabbits) is given for incentives for controlling the population. Those who fail to control those within their jurisdiction are subject to a variety of sanctions, including dismissal, imprisonment, as well as naming and shaming for “poor work ethic”, “corruption”, “sexual immorality” or “having HIV/AIDS” (Interviews. 2006).

¹² Ordinary Rwandans understand that the elite hold power; it is both acknowledged and accepted that politics is the domain of the elite (whether political, business or religious). The idea of social mobility, that is moving up to the ranks of the powerful, or as one of my research participants put it, of “becoming an important person” is low. This high power divide exists where hierarchy is the societal standard, inequality is anticipated, less powerful people expect to be dependent on more powerful people, centralisation of state

The Rwandan government employs a number of strategies of power in the exercise of the maintenance of the façade of national unity and reconciliation. (I will only list the various strategies as an indication of the extent to which the government seeks to control the social and political sphere; see the footnotes for some context): (1) the symbolic representations of survivor trauma during mourning week¹³; (2) the “re-education” of certain segments of the population through *ingando* solidarity camps;¹⁴ (3) the requirement of participation at *gacaca* trials, whether as a survivor (to verify or corroborate testimony), as a génocidaire (to tell the truth of what they did) or as a member of the community, particularly if the individual has additional knowledge about specific events;¹⁵ (4) the control of information flows as well as the monitoring of dissent from government policy through a highly devolved administrative structure;¹⁶ and, (5) the control of civil society organisations and other forms of associational life, including what

institutions is popular and unquestioned, subordinates envision being told what to do, and privileges and social status are expected for elite members of society.

¹³ The image of the lonely, wounded survivor has come to represent the horrors of Rwanda’s genocide and is often invoked to silence criticism. Particularly powerful is the image of the wailing survivor, usually a woman, head in hands, and in a spasm of trauma that has come to represent Rwanda’s mourning week, which is dedicated to remembering and memorialising Tutsi lives lost. The genocide is memorialised from 6 to 13 April every year. All Rwandans are required to attend mourning week events, including re-burial of mass graves and speeches made by government officials reminding the population of the need to “never again” allow genocide in Rwanda.

¹⁴ *Ingando* camps vary from 2 weeks to 4 months in length. Initially intended to re-educate returning refugees and demobilized soldiers in 1996, the camps have since been extended to various categories of the Rwandan population, to include incoming university students, released prisoners, and incoming civil servants. The purpose is to let them “through discussion and open debates, grasp first hand the unity and reconciliation process, its challenges and numerous opportunities” (NURC, 2004: 54).

¹⁵ *Gacaca* (lit. justice on the grass) trials have been re-introduced to try the backlog of over 100,000 genocide suspects and to establish a truthful record of what happened during the genocide as a means to promote the unity and reconciliation of Rwandans. There are over 11,000 *gacaca* jurisdictions, meaning one at each *celle* and *secteur* (the two lowest administrative levels). The purpose is to bring local communities together to witness, identify, corroborate and prosecute perpetrators. Perpetrators are to “tell their truth” while survivors are, once the truth has been established, to forgive. Participation in *gacaca* is mandatory in most cases, and individuals are sometimes fined and/or imprisoned for failure to participate.

¹⁶ The lowest unit in the Rwandan administrative structure, according to the Government of Rwanda, is the family, while the highest is the central government (NURC, 2002; 14; NURC, 2004a: 9). Most decisions are made at the lower levels of government, with committee structures (*abunzi* dispute mediators and *abakagurambaga* peace volunteers) in place to oversee the individual and group activities of Rwandans. The low level bureaucrats report the activities of individuals in their sector to the immediate superior at the next level of government, who then decides if the information warrants transmission to the next level up, and so on.

development issues they can work on, who is able to join and how the rules and conditions of participation are set.¹⁷

Foucault's approach does not go quite far enough to further our ability to understand and explain situations where there is little, if any, popular resistance; it does not theorise relational power from the perspective of the subordinated individual but rather seeks to describe the ways in which resistance operates as a part of power. Individuals who are powerless do not regularly participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Structures of domination in society are maintained through the widely dispersed powers of the many agents who intervene in the decisions of others, even though they lacked the power to decide the policies they are implementing. The powerless are "those over whom power is exercised without their exercising it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have a right to give them" (Young, 2004: 52). The work of James Scott is helpful here as he looks at the way that both the powerful and the powerless are constrained in their relation. He shows that both the powerful and the powerless are constrained in their relation; while they might behave as "slave and master", with each maintaining the socially sanctioned roles, once out of each other's presence they behave differently (Scott, 1990: 9). In order to understand better the strategies of the powerless is an analysis of the behaviour of the powerful and powerless in each other's presence is an account of their behaviour when they with their equals. Here, a "hidden transcript" is developed that is a "critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant" (Scott, 1990: xii). The powerful also develop a hidden transcript which consists of the claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed in front of other people. Thus, in order to analyse relational power, the total relation must be analysed, the hidden transcripts as well as the public performance.

¹⁷ Civil society organisations are highly surveilled by the government. Most organisations, particularly those in Kigali, are dedicated to servicing survivor issues, including support to widows and orphans of the genocide, psycho-social trauma counselling, HIV/AIDS support, and the provision of micro-credit. Membership in civil society organisations is open to these individuals and many Hutu women do marginally benefit from their membership in organisations that support survivors, although specific privileges such as access to subsidised health care and the waiver of school fees for children is available only to Tutsi women in their status as survivors. Survivor and Hutu women who re-marry lose access to these privileges; not on the basis of their ethnicity but rather on the fact that they have been able to reconstitute their families.

Lived experiences of relational power in Rwanda

The conceptual approach developed thus far provides the analytical basics to understand and explaining the lived experience of power in societies where domination and oppression are standard. My research takes it down one more level to the relations between ordinary Rwandans in their everyday lives since the genocide. Rather than look at the relations between the powerful and powerless, the research considers the relations between powerless individuals – between ordinary Rwandans who are forced by the powerful (viz., local authorities) to forgive, reconcile and peacefully co-exist by the material and discursive structures of national unity and reconciliation. Given the power of the central government and the disciplining effects of the policy of national unity and reconciliation, the actions and speech of ordinary Rwandans is obviously circumspect, both with government officials and with their peers. How then can we interpret their actions and speech in the face of power? The current format does not allow for consideration of the cultural and historical roots of domination in Rwanda.¹⁸ Instead, the ways in which ordinary Rwandans engage with the various elements of the policy of national unity and reconciliation are tentatively introduced. (The analysis of interview data and field notes has not progressed to the stage where I can offer any sort of conclusion about what the present engagement of ordinary Rwandans with the policy means for future peace and stability in Rwanda.)

Before the genocide, there was a level of solidarity – social, economic and ethnic – among communities. Individuals worked together to engage formal power in strategic ways. There was, broadly speaking, unity of purpose.¹⁹ The actions and speech of individuals were monitored for conformity to the collective interest of the community. Rarely, if ever, did the tools of formal power – military force, economic power or tactics of intimidation -- appear at the community level.²⁰ The solidarity among ordinary

¹⁸ This is the subject of chapter three of the thesis.

¹⁹ I am not suggesting even for a moment that there were not power imbalances within communities pre-genocide. Indeed there were, and these remain, particularly gender and class inequalities. The point is that before the genocide, community life often went on without direct surveillance by the centre.

²⁰ An obvious exception to the presence of formal power in the lives of individuals before the genocide was during the massacres and pogroms of 1959, 1962 and the early 1970s. These acts however, only affected selected communities.

Rwandans was self-monitoring in the sense that individuals worked together to ensure a common front in the face of local elites. The relationship between local elites and ordinary people was far more constraining for individuals than was the formal power of the centre: “We knew about this business between Tutsi and Hutu but it did not affect us too much. That was Kigali business. Of course we knew about who was who [who was a Tutsi or Hutu] but we used that to get things from the [appropriate official]. If the [official] was a Tutsi, we always sent one of our Tutsi brothers. This helped get things done. After the RPF invaded [in 1990], when we had to send someone to Kigali, we always sent our best Hutu to make the request. After the war, we all know who is Hutu or Tutsi. We used to work together but now we keep an eye on everyone. I no longer know who my people are.... The contacts that someone had were important. Reputation meant something [in the community]. Now it doesn't matter who you know or who your people are; it matters what you did during the genocide”.

Ordinary Rwandans are no longer able to generate new social and economic networks or to reconstitute old ones. Any semblance of pre-existing patterns of unity within rural communities has been reconfigured in the pursuit of national unity and reconciliation. Local elites are not necessarily members of the community in question, and the exchange of goods and services is contingent on directives from the centre. New monitoring and surveillance forces have been created,²¹ with the government citing cultural relevance to justify the return of the institutions and practices that have been created with the specific purpose of promoting unity and reconciliation. The presence of these new forms of state surveillance, combined with the dramatic shifts in social and economic networks since the genocide have led to the creation of new forms of social conformity and compliance between Rwandans that can be violent and repressive. Successfully navigating the requirements of national unity means that the ordinary individual needs to both understand the nature and extent of the policy so that they can offer the requisite performance in its name and that their performance does not compromise the performance of others. For example, a survivor woman who was raped during the genocide, now has AIDS and who has lost her social and economic network

²¹ One example is the Local Defence Forces, of which there are 6,000 operational units.

through the loss of family and friends has a different set of options and limitations on her actions than does a woman who returned after the genocide (“returnee”) to take up a position as a local official. The survivor may choose to avoid *gacaca* trials as a mode of self-protection while the returnee official will seek, by force if necessary, to encourage her to attend *gacaca* as “the full participation of the population” is required by the policy of national unity (NURC, 2000: 21).

Individual action or speech under the policy of national unity is not the same; it does not run the same risks, nor the same threat of sanction. The costs of stepping outside the prescribed roles of national unity are quick and relentless from the side of the government: imprisonment without charge, disappearance, intimidation, even death. The cost at the community level is just as steep but of a different scale: gossip, character assassination, denunciation, shunning, and outcasting serve to isolate, ostracise and demonise individuals on the basis of where they were during the genocide, and whether they experienced, witnessed, resisted or acted the by-stander to the violence. This means that survivors and *génocidaires* have been cast into essentialist categories of victim and killer, and are the main protagonists of national unity. The official position is that reconciliation between these two groups is on-going and successful; Rwanda is both peaceful and safe. Survivors can speak of their experiences in sanctioned settings, such as during mourning week or during *gacaca* trials. *Génocidaires* can hang their head in shame and ask for forgiveness once they have told the truth about what they did during the genocide. Other categories do not even feature: Hutu women, youth, particularly those born of the genocide, and the Twa, who make up less than one percent of Rwanda’s population are all absent.

The unity of purpose in the face of state power has all but disappeared; instead ordinary Rwandans work covertly to disguise their actions and speech both in private with other Rwandans and with the formal requirements of the institutions and practices of national unity. Facility in the arts of disguising and concealing is self-taught, with little support from neighbours, friends or family. The penalties of falling afoul of the post-genocide order of national unity are too high. The most marginal seek to avoid contact with government and with others. For example, a participant in the research wanted to attend *ingando* (citizenship re-education camps) as a means “to find his place in the new

Rwanda”. He continues, “I wanted to go to *ingando* but was told I couldn’t because I was a Twa. [The official] said, ‘you don’t need re-education because you are not part of the genocide. Your people did not kill or get killed’. I was so angry with him. I lost my mother and my sister and I even hid some Tutsi in my home. I asked my wife to go out during the killing and get food for us. I couldn’t go myself; I was too scared. But I knew they wouldn’t even look at an old Twa woman. Those Tutsi we saved don’t even speak to me when they see me now. And I saved their lives! As soon as he [the official] said that, I slammed my fist on the table like this [gestures...]. He looked at me and I knew I had done a wrong thing. He called some people and I spent the next week in prison ... My neighbours make fun of me now because I needed a woman [his wife] to help me out of prison. [Rather than end up in prison again,] I just keep to myself and don’t ask for anything from anybody. I don’t want to denounce or get denounced... ”.

Gossip is a common form of veiled aggression between individuals since the genocide. It has a diffuse quality that allows for the possibility of such aggression and take takes a variety of forms, notably character assassination and denunciation. Gossip is designed to ruin the reputation of an identifiable individual. Character assassination is a common form of gossip and is used by the marginally powerful to maintain their position of relative privilege. For example, men who survived the genocide reported feeling of being culturally bound to re-constitute their family life as husband and head-of-household as quickly as possible. Since men are seen as most able to work to provide for their families, as well as for members of the extended family, they receive the least amount of support from the government. They also are unable to express their emotions around their experiences of the genocide and of the difficulties they face since the genocide. Given the stresses of being an adult male survivor of the genocide, several reported conduct amounting to character assassination about other survivor men in efforts to assure their ability to continue to receive government assistance. To wit, “...so I told them [the local authority] that he [his neighbour, also a survivor] had not lost as many people in the genocide as he said. And I said that he had a *kidogo* [second] wife. I said that he had people to take care of and to take care of him so why was he still receiving assistance. I asked why can he get support and I cannot...[sighs; long pause]. The official just kept writing on his pad. I couldn’t see what he was writing. So I said, ‘and

he visits women in the community [implying sexual impropriety] and he uses money intended for survivors to pay for them!’ I actually never saw him go with any women and his *kidogo* is actually a kid he had to adopt after the genocide. I don’t know if he knows that I said those things about him so now I feel nervous when I see him. But the official let me stay on the list [of those men who get assistance]...”.

Denunciation is slightly more complex, both in the imagination needed to tell a tale that will be believed by the authorities and in the actual telling of the tale. If it is poorly rendered, tales of denunciation can result in the shunning and/or outcasting of the teller by his/her community. Women are likely to denounce with the poking and prodding of a male member of her family. For example, many women who were called to provide testimony at local *gacaca* sessions are forced to testify in ways that support interests outside that of delivering justice or promoting reconciliation. One woman had been instructed to give testimony by the local authority, an individual who has business relations with her brother. The accused was detained on allegations of genocide crimes “only” in 2001, which suggests that he was targeted for reasons other than his actual involvement in the genocide. “My brother was in business with [the local official]; they knew [the accused] had a house and a good job [as a translator for an international organisation]. My brother told me to denounce him [during testimony]. He said if I didn’t I would end up dead or in prison. I didn’t know what to do; he is my blood brother but he grew up outside. He wasn’t even here during the war! I denounced him [the accused]. He got life [in prison]. I never saw him before but I denounced him. I am an unmarried woman so I have to do what I am told. What would happen to my children?”

Survivor or returnee men rarely employ denunciation techniques as they are not subject to the same levels of surveillance as are Hutu men. Hutu men are subject to three main forms of surveillance by both officials and other Rwandans: 1) they have been tried and convicted of acts of genocide, either through the modern or *gacaca* courts and are imprisoned for 25 years to life. In this case, their economic and social networks, particularly those who visit them in prison, are surveilled; 2) they have never been imprisoned for committing acts of genocide but remain under surveillance for any evidence of harbouring genocidal ideologies or of making revisionist/negationist statements about the genocide; and 3) they have been imprisoned on charges of

committing acts of genocide and have been released, either through acquittal (modern courts) or released following judgement at *gacaca* with some individuals remaining subject to suspicion in their communities, particularly those who are seen “to have it too easy”. At the level of the ordinary rural and peasant Hutu, scenario three is most likely as the other two apply to urban, educated, and well-resourced individuals. For ordinary Hutu men, the surveillance tends to be from friends and neighbours. Witness this statement from a prisoner: “I returned [to his community] after *gacaca* and I confessed everything I did. I even told them about things some others did because I was told this would help me get home. [...] When I got home, my wife and kids were living with a survivor! He wouldn’t let me talk to her but I he was her husband! I didn’t know what to do because he was in my house. I had no where to go. So I stayed where my parents stayed. Then his relative denounced me! She said I didn’t tell my truth. But I did; I know I did. I did what I said. [...] So, I ended up back in prison for life”.

Several themes in these snippets from my field research remain unexamined. That of being taken care of, or of having someone to care for you is a recurrent theme in the research that needs to be contextualised and understood. Equally, the strength and unity of social and economic networks, referred to most often by participants in the research as “my people” also need contextualising. Common narratives of distrust, fear and suspicion in the face of oppressive formal power, to name but a few, need to be deconstructed and analysed as do the presence of these emotions in the daily interactions between ordinary Rwandans. Also of significance, but still unexamined are the subtle use of the pronouns “we” and “I”. Most participants in the research changed their worldview from one of community (“we”) before the genocide to one of an individual (“I”) after. The implications of all of these themes for national unity and reconciliation form the bulk of my dissertation research.

Concluding thoughts....

An analysis of relational power among ordinary Rwandans in the post-genocide period provides useful and important glimpses into the lived experiences of subordination under systems of domination. The policy of national unity mask more than societal peace and harmony; it also masks the lived experiences of individuals in the process of unity to

reveal that unity is often violent, with varying degrees of intensity for different categories of individuals. In analysing how power plays out in the lives of ordinary people, we can begin to form a picture about how policies of national unity forces individuals to reconcile on the basis of their group relations. Rwanda provides a useful case in this regard because of the scope and magnitude of the 1994 genocide in tearing the social fabric. It is also instructive because of the historical and culture bases of formal, state power. Understanding and explaining the implications of forcing Rwandans to reconcile and forgive are the next step in this process.

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The lived experience under domination matters. Domination plays out in the live of ordinary people in a number of ways:

- . The next project is to determine what the strict sanctioning**