

The (Post)Development of Rwandan Rice-Growers' Cooperatives

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Legend

CCA	Canadian Co-operative Association
<i>Gacaca</i>	Traditional Rwandan community courts
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RCA	Rwandan Co-operative Authority
RSSP	Rural Sector Support Project
UGAMA	Cooperative Service Centre, Gitarama
<i>Umudugudu</i>	Rwandan administrative unit equivalent of a village

Abstract

The Rwandan countryside is currently undergoing a process of rapid reform under ambitious government programs to modernize agriculture for participation in national and international markets. While the government asserts that it is pursuing pro-poor growth, many critics present significant evidence to the contrary. This thesis examines the use of farmers cooperatives within the ongoing government campaign of agricultural modernization, and it asks whether the co-ops themselves are sources of personal empowerment and material gain for the small producers. Adopting the “sceptical” post-development position advanced by Aram Ziai, the present research attempts to take a pragmatic look at the ways in which the co-ops meet or fail to meet the material and non-material needs of their members while appreciating that cultural preferences are heterogeneous and dynamic. While the use of farmers cooperatives appears appropriate for the Rwandan marshland, the co-ops examined very much fall short of the post-development social movement model.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past twenty years, development studies has been under sustained fire from a variety of critics. The 1980's international debt crisis and the Lost Decade of development seem to have been replaced by two more lost decades. Gradually, as the Age of Development was replaced by the Age of Globalization (McMichael 2008) and the prominence of disciplinary international economic institutions, citizens of less developed countries or the global majority continue to struggle to achieve the promised fruits of globalization, all the while watching global resources and local environments pay heavily for the burgeoning and tumultuous global economy. Scholars began, in increasing numbers throughout the 1990s, to question not only the scale, methods, and priorities of development, but concept of development itself (Sachs 1992a, Escobar 1995a and 1995b, Rist 1997). In what came to be called post-development theory, post-development, and sometimes anti-development, many authors have argued that the West's drive to "develop" the Third World, or Less Developed Countries (LDCs), was in fact a form of destructive recolonization and cultural imperialism whose benefits accrued to Western economies.

In spite of the emergence of a loose body of work known as post-development, no clear "school of thought" with rigid boundaries can be identified. Nevertheless, we can define the characteristics common to the work of many post-development authors. According to Aram Ziai, "[t]he post-development school of development theory bluntly rejects 'development' simultaneously as a Eurocentric discourse, an imperialist project and a meaningless concept. It argues for alternatives to development, usually in the form of communities combining elements of 'traditional' and 'modern' culture, regaining control in the fields of politics, economics and knowledge in opposition to the state, global capitalism and science and thus

finding ‘alternatives to development’” (2004: 1045). Ziai then presents Arturo Escobar’s (1997: 215) broad description of the field of post-development as the only worthwhile definition presented by one of its proponents: “an interest not in development alternatives but in alternatives to development, thus a rejection of the entire paradigm; an interest in local culture and knowledge; a critical stance towards established scientific discourses; [and] the defence and promotion of localised, pluralistic grassroots movements” (Ziai 2004: 1045).

Post-development has also been defined as primarily a postmodern or post-structuralist critique of the discourse development which sees language as shaping social reality and thus the world around us, which sees knowledge as socially constructed and subjective, and which “laid bare the structuring, colonizing, disciplining, and depoliticizing nature of the post-1945 development discourses” (Sahle 2011: 71). While acknowledging the diversity of post-development approaches, Eunice Sahle maintains that post-development authors converge on the themes of “representation, knowledge-power, depoliticization, universalism, and homogenization” (ibid). These ideas will be revisited below. It is important to note, however, that while post-development is sometimes referred to as a Foucaultian critique of the development, Ziai maintains that only a select few of its authors merit such a description (2004: 1046-1049). This thesis, in both its concepts and objectives, is based upon Escobar’s four-point definition of post-development. It thus accepts but does not pursue the more post-structuralist or Foucaultian aspects of some post- development thinkers.

Texts are conventionally labelled as post-development when either their authors identify as such, when others have done so, or when the works entail a critique of development from a bottom-up, indigenous perspective.¹ Many authors who identify

¹ Post-development and postcolonial perspectives tend to share many features, and indeed some authors may identify or be categorized as both. However, while post-development is

themselves as post-development reject the assertion of the development discourse that the only path to human betterment is increased resource extraction, economic growth, and participation in global markets, and they often promote the preservation of – or a return to – more traditional, local, culturally-relevant, or simply sustainable forms of production and consumption (Ziai 2007b: 4, Escobar 2007: 20). Generally understood to be working within this tradition, Gilbert Rist has defined development as “a set of practices, sometimes appearing to conflict with one another, which require - for the reproduction of society - the general transformation and destruction of the natural environment and of social relations. Its aim is to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared, by the way of exchange, to effective demand” (1997: 13).

In what often seemed to be an impasse in a starkly dichotomous debate, the choice seemed to be between development and non-development; from the post-development perspective, the development project had to be abandoned, while from the more traditional development approach, growth remained essential to the achievement of development. But is such a sharp contrast inescapable? Can the strong critiques of the post-development literature not be reconciled with those promoting a middle-ground of human-scale development to enrich the lives of those who struggle endlessly just to survive? Is there no form of development intervention that can withstand the post-development critique? I pursue these questions in the following five chapters, by comparing Rwanda’s national development strategy with the practices and aspirations of two rice-growers’ cooperatives. In particular, I ask if the cooperatives can be seen as a way for communities to retain autonomy and ownership of local economic growth.

mainly concerned with issues related directly to development, postcolonialism addresses a far broader range of topics related to postcoloniality, such as power, discourse, hybridity, culture, and identity (Abrahamsen 2003).

When I travelled to Rwanda in the spring of 2011, my primary field research question was whether or in what ways cooperative organization helps Rwandan rice farmers meet their material and socio-political needs, as they themselves perceive those needs. There are two important elements to this question. First, it explicitly adopts the farmers themselves as the primary sources of knowledge: in spite of the numerous sources of information and theoretical understanding discussed throughout this paper, the definitions and aspirations of the interviewees retain primacy whenever discussing the participants. Second, the questions include those concerning both physical and social needs. The terms material and social are meant to capture the dualism of practical and seemingly objective needs, such as basic sustenance, with more subjective social needs, such as feelings of cultural recognition and self respect. Regarding material needs, I ask what effect, if any, the cooperatives have on subsistence, food security, poverty, and inequality, as well as what factors influence their success or failure. How does being a member of a rice cooperative affect the livelihoods of members? How do the co-ops affect local levels of food security, poverty, and inequality? Are there direct or indirect benefits of being a co-op member? Regarding social needs, I ask whether the co-ops are sources of personal or community empowerment, or of resistance to potentially harmful political policies. I ask whether in Rwanda, a country where almost all of the national rice production is organized cooperatively, farmers adopt political and activist discourses, and whether any shared notions of cooperation and resistance exist among producers. As such, the core goal of my field research was to understand the cooperative members' own perceived material and social needs and to what extent they were able to meet them. Proponents of post-development contest the mainstream development discourse by promoting more local, bottom-up perspectives. Consequently, carefully listening to and understanding these voices is of paramount importance during the research process.

I decided to study rice in Rwanda while I was travelling through East Africa in 2009 with a copy *Cooperating out of Poverty: The Renaissance of the African Cooperative Movement*. Rwanda appeared particularly appealing for two main reasons. First, Rwanda has a particularly robust history of cooperative production, such as pre-colonial traditions of cooperation, in social assistance, group cultivation, and various forms of tontines (Nyamwasa 2008: 281). And second, in spite of state domination in the colonial and post-colonial periods, Jean Demascène Nyamwasa describes Rwanda today as a country with an extensive cooperative sector and a government that has made cooperative agriculture a priority with a co-op friendly policy framework. Colonial administrations formally cooperativized agricultural production, and post-colonial governments continued to use the co-ops as a preferred means of rural administration. The number of functioning cooperatives was decimated during Rwanda's periods of liberalization and conflict, but their numbers have grown under the current regime. At the same time, Rwanda has relatively strong economic and social indicators, which may indicate a greater potential for success for the co-ops. Thus I chose Rwandan rice production expecting to find strong member participation and activism.²

I chose the case study method in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of farmers' experiences, ideas, and culture, not to make any claims that can be generalized to other locations. This is in line with a more post-development approach, which is focused on the lived experiences of the subaltern and those voices that are not generally heard in scientific texts. Instead of presenting and testing a set of hypotheses, I simply ask whether

² This was naïve. As will be discussed below, the state of civil society in Rwanda is not such that it has any capacity at all for farmer activism. Any of Rwanda's East African neighbours may have been a more likely country in which to find farmer activism, even if the co-ops themselves were financially less successful.

those interviewed maintain alternative conceptions of development, and whether or in what ways their cooperatives promote their ideas and interests. Similarly, the choice to conduct a second case study was not to make systematic and structured comparisons of the two in order to draw more general conclusions; rather, the second case study was added to give further depth to my analysis of farmers' experiences.

Rice production in Rwanda appeared to be particularly robust. Nearly all of the nation's rice is produced through cooperatives, and both production and services to members were expanding rapidly (ibid: 288:289). The process of swamp reclamation was rapidly turning non-arable land into irrigated, collectively owned, and productive marshland (ibid: 292). I predicted that member commitment would be higher in the cultivation of crops that were staple foods and full-time occupations, and rice appeared to be an important crop and a worthwhile case study.

In the two months preceding the formal interviews, I was given a workspace and access to relevant files at the UGAMA Cooperative Service Centre in Gitarama, a local non-governmental organization (NGO) whose mandate is to provide training and other technical support to local cooperatives. UGAMA's operating budget comes from a variety of sources, including the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), whose funds in turn came from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).³ My time was spent reading about the different cooperatives, observing the functions of the service centre, accompanying the centre's employees on visits to various other cooperatives, making friends, and learning

³ This link with Canada was surely the reason that I received such a warm welcome at UGAMA. The small organization of twenty or so employees already had two Canadian interns working for them, and so it seemed entirely ordinary that I was there. Although such analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, I was very impressed at the way in which Canadian aid money was used to create local employment and give much-needed services to farmers.

about Rwandan culture. This period was particularly valuable in that it allowed me to observe the breadth of the cooperative movement in Rwanda, as the NGO provided services to cooperatives of all kinds in the area.

I choose the two rice cooperatives that received services from UGAMA, the pair having several similarities as well as significant differences.⁴ Coproriz Abahuzabikorwa was a well-known success story, making it an ideal candidate in my search for an alternative development discourse. Coderika produced the same crop in the same region as Coproriz, and it was organized in the same way. Since 2004 they had both been receiving UGAMA's services in order to overcome acute mismanagement problems. At the time of the study, however, the two appeared anything but similar: Coproriz has a long history and is large, well-irrigated, and expanding its capacities, while Coderika is small, relatively new, poorly irrigated, (until recently) less productive, and still plagued by management problems (see Table 1). By taking an in-depth look at the experiences of farmers in these two differing situations within similar regional contexts, I hoped to be able to draw some insights into the lives of cooperative members and cooperative development more broadly.

While sampling was not technically random, great pains were taken to create the broadest, most representative snowball sample possible. I began at the offices of each co-op, meeting staff and elected members. I then interviewed or made appointments to interview many of them, as well as the member and non-member passers-by that I met along the way.

⁴ Research in Rwanda is not always easy, and the government keeps a close eye on researchers. As a result, I did not have the liberty, nor the time and resources, to objectively choose between all the country's co-ops. Instead, studying the two co-ops receiving UGAMA support gave me access to reports and personnel familiar with both co-ops, introductions to their leaders and staff, and sometimes even transportation to their remote locations. With even basic information on other cooperatives difficult to find, I accepted the advice of UGAMA's Head of Research and Monitoring and chose Coproriz and Coderika as my two case studies, recognizing that the results may (or may not) have been different at different co-ops.

Often men, especially local officials or more prosperous community members, would approach the three of us (myself, my interpreter, and my current interviewee) and introduce

Item	Coprporiz	Coderika
Members	2750 ⁵	244
Marshland	700 ha (400 arable)	35 ha
Members per hectare	7	7
First rice grown	1960s	2000s
Formation (incorporation)	2004 (2007)	2004 (2008)
Yearly rice harvests	2	1 ⁶
Paddy production (2009)	7–9 t/ha	7–9 t/ha
Gross sales (2009)	53,000,000 RWF [88,000 CAD]	4,000,000 RWF [6,700 CAD]
Harvest value per hectare	38,000 RWF [63 CAD]	40,000 RWF [67 CAD]
Price to farmer (2010)	140 RWF/kg [0.23 CAD]	200 RWF/kg [0.33 CAD]
Received UGAMA aid since	2004	2004
Management problems	Overcome	Ongoing
Operations	Rice, canteen, supply store	Rice, brick factory
Facilities	Drying sites, dry storage	Drying sites, dry storage

Table 1. Comparison of Coproriz and Coderika

themselves, while women and poorer members had to be approached and asked to participate by my charismatic research assistant, Pascal Murasira. After spending some days around the offices, we would then walk along the marshes interviewing members and non-members or making appointments to do so until we had a sample of participants that appeared to match the gender and socio-economic composition of the areas. Although participants were often late or missed appointments, we would always encounter other members and interview them instead. As such, the study reflects a more ethnographic method, as well as the difficulties of working in Rwanda, and makes no claim to a scientific sampling selection drawn for

⁵ Both co-ops have very slight female majorities, but an exact number was not available at the time of the interviews (Interview, UGAMA Staff 1, May 23, 2011).

⁶ Members of Coderika are free to grow other crops in the dry season, such as maize or tomatoes.

example from electoral rolls, but it nevertheless gives access to the views and experiences of a diverse set of people affected by the co-ops.

My data collection consisted primarily of 42 semi-structured interviews with farmer members, local non-members, cooperative managers, and other related professionals, with the help of my interpreter. Due to time constraints, not all participants were able to answer all of the questions. The interviews themselves took place at many locations, though most participants chose to meet with us in the shade near the co-op offices, a gazebo at Coproriz and a bench under a tree at Coderika. Passers-by would often join us until we explained that the interviews were individual, but we would make arrangements to interview them at another time if they were interested. Few of the questions were sensitive, thus interviewees were unperturbed by interruptions by others. Nevertheless, aware of the repressive political conditions in Rwanda, at no time were interviewees pressed to express critical opinions or to make any statement that could in any way endanger them.

The interviews focused on the four themes of poverty and inequality, activism and resistance, solidarity and empowerment, and development. While I kept the interviews flexible, I nonetheless followed a long list of questions that often took three one-hour sessions to complete. These questions and interview guide were organized under the categories of farming, membership, prices and services, cooperative principles, social benefits, women, threats, development, and other. In addition to the formal interviews, I was able to observe some of the functions and conditions of the cooperatives personally through my daily trips to the cooperatives' meeting areas. At one co-op's headquarters, I attended a public meeting to discuss the creation of a rice-processing factory, and at another I attended a meeting of group leaders at a public building, which the co-op rents for such purposes. I was also able to spend some time in the rice marshes themselves, and speak, through my

interpreter, with numerous local farmers and labourers in the month I spent conducting interviews at the two rural locations.

Fieldwork in post-genocide Rwanda entails numerous difficulties and poses serious ethical challenges. There is a strong culture of self-censorship, as regime loyalists and their local networks are always on the lookout for expressions of dissent (Reyntjens 2011: 15-16, Thomson 2011: 442). Although none of my questions referred directly to politically sensitive subjects, responses containing any criticism of the government would require the prior establishment of high levels of trust. Being highly aware that such criticism could potentially endanger or compromise the respondents, I offered each of them privacy and anonymity for their answers (though all refused to use pseudonyms). The use of an interpreter can be seen as another potential obstacle to obtaining information and gaining such trust of the local people. My interpreter, a fairly well-dressed, university-educated, genocide-survivor Tutsi in his mid-twenties, clearly had the potential to impede trust, and his identity was only one of many factors that precluded a frank discussion about ethnicity altogether. Such discussions were also precluded by my own positionality as a white outsider presumed to possess personal wealth and perhaps somehow a connection to future aid. In addition, the act of translation itself is an impediment to clear understanding. In spite of the clear obstacles, however, my interpreter was exceptionally charming, and he quickly developed a strong rapport with those he met. Moreover, his attention to subtlety and eloquent explanations of local culture greatly enhanced my observations and general comprehension. Even after establishing the verbal confidentiality agreement, the possibility remains that a respondent may have been concerned that my interpreter could share sensitive information, or that I could do so inadvertently. However, the interview questions did not address overt controversial or political topics, or raise issues that could be considered critical of the

government, and interviewees appeared comfortable with me, my interpreter, and the subjects discussed.

The post-development critique is predominantly directed at Western development interventions, not national development strategies, as in this case; however, in the case of Rwanda the contemporary government's agricultural policies are very much aligned with those of mainstream development institutions. Rwanda's national government has adopted the paradigm of liberal economic growth espoused by the international financial institutions and global capital, and it has initiated a process of imposing this vision of development and modernization on rural areas whose residents may or may not want to participate in such a social transformation (Ansoms 2010: 248). The previous regime was compelled to adopt the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment program in 1990, the same year the civil war began, and the post-war regime has proven more than willing to continue and intensify the liberalization process. While the government of Rwanda continues to have certain general governance obligations to international lenders, it has proven extremely effective in satisfying donors and silencing critics in order to retain very high levels of policy autonomy (Reyntjens 2011), as will be discussed at greater length below. The Kagame government appears to have embraced the spirit of the Washington Consensus, and it is attempting to liberalize Rwanda's economy and transform its society. Although the source of these policies is national instead of international, the policies themselves are no less subject to the post-development question of whether they are desired by those affected or the most culturally appropriate form for local development to take.

In the first chapter, I examine key issues in the debate within development studies regarding post-development, arguing that the impasse between the two is effectively overcome by a distinct body of work within the post-development literature. In the two

subsequent chapters, I examine both approving and critical positions in the literature on the Rwandan national development strategy and relate them to my own findings at two rural Rwandan rice-growers' cooperatives. In the final two chapters, I analyse my findings from the case studies in light of the conclusions of the first two chapters, followed by some very brief final conclusions. As indicated, I argue that the impasse between development and post-development studies has been overcome in the theoretical literature. The present case studies illustrate this not because post-development perspectives would lead to clear positions within the debates surrounding Rwandan national development, but because the more pragmatic post-development authors are able to fully engage with the various aspects of these difficult debates and consider conclusions which may require discipline regarding their own personal preferences. Whereas neo-populist post-development authors may feel compelled to entirely condemn the forceful changes being enacted in Rwanda, sceptical post-development authors are able to acknowledge the Rwandan population's desire for economic growth, as well as the sacrifices that they may be willing to make in order to achieve it. While the two rice cooperatives were created by acts of government and would be unable to resist potentially harmful policies in the future, certain elements of Rwandan rice development may nonetheless be reason for some optimism for proponents of post-development, such as their positive impacts on poverty, food security, access to services, capacity development, and broader community development. While many cooperative members continue to struggle daily, they are able, through the organizations that they themselves own and control (subject as they are to government regulations), to combine tiny surpluses and invest them into local infrastructure aimed at expanding activities, generating income, and increasing services to members. The co-ops are already the sources of hope and pride for their members, and the

cooperative model itself has some significant potential for community development in rural Rwanda.

I. PROBLEMS IN POST-DEVELOPMENT

The 1990s saw the formation of the basic canon of post-development studies, the first clear and sustained rejection of the concept of development.⁷ Wolfgang Sachs asserts that “development stands today like a ruin in the intellectual landscape” (1992a: 156). Arturo Escobar famously calls for alternatives to development instead of alternative development (1995a: 215). Gilbert Rist (1997) argues that development is the modern religion, relying on faith in the face of debilitating contradictions. Sachs (1992c) is joined by Rahnema (1997) and Esteva and Prakash (1998) in articulating the defining features of the otherwise heterogeneous literature: the rejection of development and the assertion of local, grassroots, social-movement-based initiatives in its place. Often with little more than this basic commonality, post-development authors have argued for a diversity of traditional or innovative ways of living that are more socially, culturally, locally, or environmentally appropriate than the neoliberal orthodoxy fervently exported by Western countries.

Post-development authors have never followed a discrete set of principles, and those most closely associated with the field may themselves identify with any number of perspectives and disciplines. That said, Eunice Sahle (2011) identifies the broad critique of development that has characterized the post-development literature. As indicated above, Sahle points first to the influence of postmodern and post-structuralist ideas. Language shapes not just our social realities, but also the world around us. Attempts to universalize knowledge, which is socially constructed and therefore not neutral, amount to the subordination and colonization of other forms of knowledge (2011: 71). The development

⁷ This is despite the fact that many of the authors concerned had at the time already published similarly critical works, and that others, such as Schumacher (1973), had already made related arguments in a less cohesive body of literature.

discourse creates a system of representation of the populations and countries that it defines and categorizes, creating a social reality that justifies and also influences ideas and behaviour, as did colonial discourses in the previous era. At the same time, “culture is conceptualized as a primary or ‘constitutive’ process” which shapes subjects and events as much as do material conditions (ibid: 72). The development discourse has also served to depoliticize state actions that have significant effects on the well-being of populations, reducing the options available to leaders by presenting major societal questions as mere technical problems (ibid: 73). As the ideas of development become hegemonic, they limit the possibilities for what can be said or even imagined (ibid: 75, citing Escobar 1995a: 39). The technical and seemingly neutral language of the development discourse has proven to be a powerful source of knowledge production worldwide, often justifying Western interventions with ahistorical accounts of people, places, and cultures (ibid: 76-77) that often rely upon the universalizing logic of an imaginary unilinear view of history and the homogenization of cultures (ibid: 81-82). As noted above, however, Ziai contends that few post-development scholars warrant the Foucaultian title often attributed to them. He contends that while Escobar, DuBois, and Ferguson do diligently base their writings in the work of Foucault, others such as Rahnema, Esteva, and partly also Sachs apply an “improper and somewhat vulgar use of Foucaultian concepts” (2004: 1048). Still others, such as Stephen Marglin (1990), have never claimed to base their work on Foucaultian concepts at all. Thus in spite of many common characteristics, it appears that “referring to the post-development idea in the singular runs the risk of caricaturing a number of different writers’ ideas” (Kiely 1999: 49, qtd. in Ziai 2004: 1049).

In addition to this general critique of development, Sahle also notes that most post-development scholars present a framework of “alternatives to development” which often

look to social movements for a variety of local reconceptualizations of development. “These movements,” she writes, “while not monolithic, tend to engage in participatory forms of politics, value local ways of knowing and solutions, seek autonomy from the state and international development institutions, and promote pluralistic ways of thinking in terms of economic, cultural, and political practices” (Sahle 2011: 79). By presenting pluralistic forms of knowledge production, post-development researchers attempt to challenge the hegemonic development theories and practices, which have become the dominant regime of truth that mutually reinforces existing systems of power (ibid). The pluralistic knowledge production of local discourses therefore has the potential to contribute to a new era characterized by diversity in both theory and practice.

The foundational scholarship of post-development studies was itself met with sustained criticism. In a review of four of the above seminal works of what had only recently come to be called the school of post-development, Stuart Corbridge (1998) outlines what he considers to be significant problems inherent in the post-development canon. While acknowledging post-development’s contribution to the development discourse in asserting alternative and often more common-sense understandings of a good life, Corbridge argues that many of the assertions of the post-development authors are riddled with problems such as fallacious argumentation, unhelpful dichotomies, ideological conclusions, the romanticization of tradition, and self-righteousness, and that the failures of various particular development projects in no way indicate that the idea of development itself need be abandoned altogether (138-139). He maintains that there are seven major problems with the post-development writings. First, they create a rigid binary between a modern, consumerist, destructive, spiritually empty West and a traditional, natural, sustainable, and spiritually-fulfilled Rest. Second, asserts Corbridge, post-development presents Western science and technology as

always oppressive or destructive, and it overlooks improvements in living standards and critical thinking. Third, the authors of post-development often go so far as to reject human rights regimes instead of acknowledging their emancipatory potential. Fourth, they romanticize all that is traditional and rural, with undue pessimism about resource use and urban life. Fifth, post-development overlooks the opportunity costs of total reliance on traditional knowledge and not pursuing education, connectivity, and increased knowledge. Sixth, Corbridge says that post-development asserts that the source of the world's ills is *too much* development, and never *too little*. And finally, he maintains that post-development entirely overlooks the benefits of development itself, such as the dramatic increases in life expectancy since 1950 (144-145). He ultimately concludes that, while development studies needs to engage with the critiques of post-development, its proponents must nevertheless overcome these shortcomings and include the achievements of development in a more nuanced understanding of the dilemmas inherent in the range of ideas and processes that fall under the term development.

The remainder of this chapter examines each of the seven problems identified by Corbridge. The first three will be examined individually, and the final four, those regarding the overall merit or inadequacy of development, can effectively be addressed all together. Given that he was reviewing the field's early works, I ask to what extent some of the subsequent post-development literature has overcome the problems set out by Corbridge a decade and a half ago. I conclude that there are in fact two broad camps within the greatly heterogeneous literature, and that the distinction between "sceptical" and "neo-populist" post-development proposed by Aram Ziai (2007d) best illustrates this: whereas the neo-populist post-development authors do, as Corbridge suggests, romanticize tradition and essentialize culture and development into unhelpful static binaries, resulting in the rejection

of all things modern, sceptical post-development authors provide an anti-essentialist critique of development that accepts the changing aspirations of dynamic cultures, promoting a selective adoption of modern practices and avoiding the problems described by Corbridge. Thus, as will be shown in the examples below, while Corbridge's seven points of critique do indeed apply to the neo-populist post-development camp, they do not apply to the authors of the sceptical one. By making this distinction in the literature, it is possible to overcome the impasse in the development vs. post-development debate and engage in a more productive dialogue about alternative forms of development.

Righteous tradition, wicked modernity

Beginning with the first of Corbridge's charges against post-development, namely that its proponents too often rely upon a strict, unhelpful dichotomy between the "West" and the "Rest", evidence is not hard to find. Corbridge himself maintains, for example, that Esteva and Prakash unfairly characterize Western lifestyles as empty and infected by "the plague of economic thinking" (1998: 10, qtd. in Corbridge 1998: 142), and that they overlook nearly universally desired modern conveniences, such as electrical fans in hot climates (ibid: 144). Similarly, albeit more far more subtly, Philip McMichael denies the desirability of affluence, suggesting a negative correlation between income and happiness (2008: 17). And in no subtle terms, K. Ravi Raman (2007) refers to the consumption of Coca-Cola in India as cultural homogenization, suggesting that, in addition to the clear health and environmental problems associated with such products, the purity of Indian culture is threatened by the drink. These and many other examples show that there is some merit to Corbridge's complaint that post-development authors can be overly simplistic in their treatment of the "West" and the "Rest".

At the same time, however, many authors consider a central tenet of post-development to be the rejection of a number of simplistic development dichotomies, first among them the West-Rest duality expressed by the terms developed and underdeveloped. Wolfgang Sachs (1992a) suggests that the unhelpful binary originates from the single category of “underdeveloped” given to the non-West since Harry Truman’s 1949 inaugural speech (156). He explains that this simplistic conceptualization assumes that there is only one possible path for development, despite historical social changes being present in all cultures (161). He further suggests that we replace the term “poor” in the development discourse with a distinction between frugality, destitution, and scarcity (1992b: 164). Sally Matthews (2007) tries to capture a more nuanced global social dichotomy by discussing alternatively the “poor and oppressed”, who struggle to meet their basic needs (in any country), and the “relatively privileged” global consumer class (131-132). In so doing, she drops the distinction that seeks to homogenize countries, regions, or continents. Above all else, post-development authors in the past two decades have engaged in a sustained attack against the premise of the development discourse that a minority of industrialized nations are rightly able to assert themselves as the definitive model and true goal of human activity and suggest that all other societies are simply in the less-desirable state of tardy emulation of the West. Given this critique, Aram Ziai argues that, when even the critics of post-development granted that the development discourse was in this way Eurocentric and technocratically authoritarian, it marked a decisive victory of post-development over the mainstream development discourse (2007b: 9). All this suggests that post-development authors may be the source of undue simplicity at certain times, and the remedy to it at others. It certainly points to a great diversity of positions and interpretations within the post-development camp.

Second, Corbridge contends that post-development thinkers perilously dismiss technology and scientific thought. Again, at times Corbridge is undoubtedly right. Vandana Shiva (2002), for example, does present modern farming as incoherent compared to the traditionally systematic use of waste as farming inputs in India. While she discusses efficiency in terms of local, regional, or national production and consumption instead of more typical international conceptions, she does present Western technology as bad technology (2002: 184). Other post-development authors, however, are not so quick to dismiss the benefits of modern technology. Mario Kamenetzky (1992), for example, maintains that it would be significantly easier today to satisfy the needs of the world's population than ever before in history. However, he argues for an economics concerned not with goods and services insofar as they can be monetized, but with a much broader incorporation of satisfiers of needs, both monetary and non-monetary (188). Thus the use of technology is not in question, but rather which technology and in whose interests.

Third, Corbridge worries that post-development authors uncritically endorse traditional societies, thereby legitimizing oppression and human rights violations. In particular, he cites the outright rejection of the globalization of human rights by Esteva and Prakash in spite of "dowry deaths, clitorectomies, gay bashing and to the million other ways in which people torment and torture each other" (1998: 137-138, qtd. in Corbridge 1998: 144). The outright rejection of universal human rights is both extreme and simplistic as a method of navigating the uncomfortable continuum between cultural imperialism and cultural relativity: attempts to stop the imposition of Western culture throughout the world should not require arguments that obscure or inhibit the condemnation of the cruel treatment of others. These alarming positions may also be the result of more insidious premises, like perceived threats to otherwise rigid and unchanging cultures. A culture that is pure, virtuous, and static may be

degraded by interaction with others. Ziai (2007d: 114) maintains that the post-development authors who romanticize soil cultures, those cultures which are centred around subsistence or small-scale agricultural production and consumption, also depict past societies as free from conflict and ubiquitous power relations, an implicit claim that few academics today could support.

However, other post-development authors escape the ethical perils of cultural relativity. Ziai notes that even Majid Rahnema, one of the most prominent proponents of the traditional society, acknowledges prior existence of great violence and domination and maintains that a real return to the traditional is “neither desirable nor feasible” (qtd. in Ziai 2007d: 117). Ziai himself argues that a constructivist understanding of culture eliminates the problems of oppression within cultural relativism:

If culture consists of a given set of rules and practices, deviant behaviour can be punished in the name of cultural tradition, and those who decide about the interpretation of cultural norms are in a dangerous position of power. In this context, a position of cultural relativism easily legitimates oppression. If, however, culture is defined in a constructivist manner as the (changing) practices of a certain group of people, deviant behaviour is a signal that apparently some practices are not any longer consensual, and the attempt by those in power to punish this behaviour appears illegitimate from a position of cultural relativism, because those who are punished belong to the same culture and can be assumed to have a different opinion on the interpretation of cultural tradition. Thus, the constructivist concept of culture takes the danger out of cultural relativism. (ibid: 118)

Thus outside observers are bound to neither cultural crusades nor complicity in abuse and oppression; internal dialogues are constantly ongoing within any culture, and authors dedicated to cultural sensitivity must look for them. Finding the voices of intimidated or silenced subalterns may prove extremely difficult, but outside observers must hear them before attempting to speak on their behalf. Moreover, if cultures are alive and changing, then selectivity of traditions and cultural exchanges are possible between members of different

cultures. Jane Parpart (2002) similarly argues that ongoing dialogues between ever-changing Western and local cultures do not require the abandonment of one's values in order to understand and respect those of the other.⁸ She contends that negotiation, empathy, and openness that recognizes that the West does not in fact have all the answers can lead to growth and maturation in both participating cultures (2002: 51). Saunders (2002b) and Matthews (2007) share Corbridge's concerns about relativism and abuse, but each works carefully to overcome such challenges. In her work with an NGO that strives to help a local community only in ways asked for by its members, Matthews describes the ongoing challenge in striking a delicate balance in her work: "Our concern not to impose particular values in the way many development initiatives have done in the past cannot lead us to embrace a naïve relativistic stance which refuses to favour any group or initiative above any other" (2007: 141). She concludes that anyone wanting to support grassroots movements outside of his or her own community must enter that community as an individual bearing one's own culture and strike a delicate balance of cultural exchange. These nuanced approaches to cultural sensitivity show examples of how post-development authors have taken to heart the critique of Corbridge and others and learned to effectively engage in respectful dialogues within and between cultures.

A return to the soil?

Corbridge's four remaining objections can be addressed together. He contends that post-development authors romanticize soil cultures to the point of preserving resources at the cost of human health and happiness, that they forgo the intellectual and societal benefits of global

⁸ While Parpart takes seriously the concerns of post-development, she considers her work as moving beyond post-development rather than adhering to (her understanding of) it.

connectivity, that they blame all social ills on development and never a lack of development, and that they entirely ignore the benefits of the modern era, such as increases in living standards and life expectancy. In short, they promote the wholesale abandonment of development and modernity in all its forms, despite the costs or implausibility of this choice. Certainly, there are many proponents of subsistence agriculture among post-development authors. Vandana Shiva argues that India's Green and White (modernized milk) Revolutions disrupted the country's highly advanced system where agricultural waste fed animals whose biological waste met domestic energy needs (2002: 184). K. Ravi Raman (2007) celebrates resistance to water depletion and pollution by Coca-Cola from a campaign of actors of disparate political groups as a distinctly post-development social movement, suggesting that post-development is little more than anti-development or resistance to change. These authors do indeed seem to treat the dilemma of modernity as a yes or no question.

But often more recent post-development literature takes a much less radical stance while making similar arguments for changes to global consumption patterns. Saunders (2002b: 21) sees a need only to counter modernity's normative monopoly, in what she calls "a valorization of modes of life devalued by modernity." Similarly, J. K. Gibson-Graham (2007), following Boaventura de Sousa Santos' conception of mainstream development as silencing all but the European vision of development, aims to give voice to the silenced modes of development, not silence the European one (2004:147). Philip McMichael (2008) wants rich countries to adopt consumption methods that are replicable throughout the world, which would entail drastic reductions in their per-capita consumption of natural resources (1-3). These authors promote soil cultures not in order to replace modernity, but to contest its normative monopoly in the imaginations of those contemplating development.

Further, many post-development authors are guilty of none of Corbridge's last four charges. Ziai (2007d: 118) reminds us that, in order to take seriously the post-development premise that the external development specialist has no place in defining the aspirations of a given society, those aspirations may include Western-style industrial development. Otherwise, post-development proponents can easily become guilty of purporting to reject universal blueprints while actually promoting one of their own, just as Corbridge suggests (2007d: 118). Ziai cites Gilbert Rist as someone who wrote to this effect early on in the debate: "The idea, then, in spite of 'development', is to organize and invent new ways of life – between modernization, with its sufferings but also some advantages, and a tradition from which people may derive inspiration while knowing it can never be revived" (Rist 1997: 244, quoted in Ziai 2007d: 117). Manfred Max-Neef and Paul Ekins, also not prepared to abandon the concept of development, redefine it as a creative process of myriad possible paths, saying that "development is a journey from where oneself or one's society happens to be to a new state which involves greater individual and social fulfilment and capability" (1992: 179). Anisur Rahman (1992) also refrains from rejecting development *per se*, focusing instead on the methods imposed internationally to bring it about. Rahman maintains that borrowing foreign money to invest in foreign technology to compete in international markets while esteeming one's successes by international standards is simply a formula for national debt and despair. He insists instead that development is a slow, creative process that must come from within, the current generation working for the betterment of the next, where citizens are the creative agents of development, and not mere consumers (176). Each society thus has the right to define its own path.

This has led most post-development authors to look to social movements and community-based movements for inspiration and direction. McMichael is encouraged by the

popular movements of “communities left behind” by development (2008: 271). He agrees that gains have been made in basic development indicators in past decades (if in large part due to the rise of the state-managed Chinese economy), but he fears such human development gains could be lost in climate crises to come (2008: 273). Arturo Escobar (2007) asserts that even material needs and desires are culturally constructed, and different forms of social relations and exchange are not simply interchangeable, as indicated by activism to express these preferences in social movements in many communities around the world. Thus a primary goal of many social movements is to achieve systems of production and consumption that are culturally meaningful and allow fulfilling lifestyles for those who participate in them. Post-development authors, despite great variation in defining cultures and communities, generally agree that they aim to promote culturally relevant community-based development.

Conclusion

Looking at all seven points of critique, a clear pattern emerges. For every author that warrants each criticism, another does not. While some authors commit all of Corbridge’s described sins, many do none. This same distinction leads Ziai to argue that there are two different post-development camps, or even two different post-development discourses: “On the one hand, a discourse which is romanticizing traditional culture, portraying cultures as static and rigid, is based on a complete rejection of modernity and promotes the return to subsistence agriculture. On the other hand, a discourse which is more sceptical in evaluating local communities and cultural tradition, more cautious in criticizing modernity, employs a constructivist perspective on culture and avoids sketching models of future transformations of society” (Ziai 2007d: 120). Despite listing a small number of exceptions, Ziai maintains

that authors are generally consistent with their adherence to one or the other of the two discourses, which he calls respectively neo-populist and sceptical post-development. The former derives from Björn Hettne's conception of neo-populism:

Traditional populism was essentially a defence of the territorial community against the functional system created by modern economic growth, both in its original capitalist form and in its derivative socialist form. Neo-populism, similarly, is an attempt to re-create community as an offensive against the industrial system... it negates mainstream development and in this negation lies the essence of the Utopian vision, historically expressed by the counterpoint tradition in Western politics, as well as in resistance against the imposition of the non-indigenous nation state on the peoples of the non-European world... Neo-populism resembles classical populism in several respects: the urge for community, the stress on primary production, the distaste of industrial civilization. However, there are significant new elements of relevance in this context: an environmental consciousness, encompassing the global ecological system, and a strong commitment to a just world order. (Hettne 1995: 117, qtd. in Ziai 2007d: 116)

The neo-populist camp of post-development is thus also the camp often called anti-development. Conversely, the sceptical variant, that which is genuinely *post*-development in that it is something both new and different, "is based on an implied meta-theory which can be loosely described as postmodern" (ibid). This entails an anti-essentialism which prevents its adherents from ascribing definitive characteristics to concepts like development, tradition, and culture, as well as from making normative statements about development on behalf of others. Hence development can neither be defined nor repudiated absolutely. Rather, sceptical post-development seeks to reaffirm any given society's right to define its own aspirations, leaving behind the Eurocentric conceptions of programs of development. Ziai maintains that the differences in the paths of the sceptical and neo-populist post-development discourses should not be underestimated: "if a critique of the Eurocentrism and cultural imperialism of 'development' is combined with a constructivist and anti-essentialist perspective, it will inevitably lead to the radical democratic position prominent in the

sceptical post-development discourse. If the cultural critique is linked with a static conception of culture, it will lead to a conservative or reactionary anti-modern position” (ibid: 121). And so, for Ziai, one’s conception of the basic elements of society and development will dictate whether one succumbs to the pitfalls identified by Corbridge.

Moving forward, this thesis aims to embody what Ziai calls the sceptical variant of post-development, which avoids essentialism and normative prescriptions while at the same time taking a careful look at how individual communities’ goals, health, and happiness might be better served by visions of development that originate from their own community members. The point of avoiding prescriptive models is not to avoid normative arguments altogether, but to promote the desires and aspirations of the communities examined, they themselves being in a constant process of internal contestation and change. In cases where a community or indeed society is victimizing and also silencing a segment of its population, the task of the researcher is not to speak on behalf of subaltern voices, but in fact to find those voices, listen to them, and amplify them so that they are no longer silenced. Post-development field research thus involves listening to otherwise unheard voices and promoting their otherwise unheard conceptions of development. The following two chapters examine first current Rwandan national development objectives and practices and then two instances of cooperative development in Rwanda. Taking very seriously the desire of sceptical post-development authors to understand culture and tradition as dynamic and complex and to respect any given community’s right to define its own path of development, I ask what can be said for these different modes of development, and to what extent the peasant communities are able to pursue and achieve their own goals.

II. RWANDAN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Two decades after suffering a bloody civil war and catastrophic genocide,⁹ Rwanda is often called a developmental success story. While still suffering from food insecurity, low human development indicators, trade and budgetary deficits, and increasing inequality, Rwanda has nonetheless accomplished a remarkable economic recovery and gains in the provision of education, health services, and infrastructure. On track to meet a number of Millennium Development Goals (Ansoms and Rostagno 2012, UNDP 2010, ONE Campaign 2013), the country is often cited as one of Africa's greatest successes (Crisafulli and Redmond 2012, Clinton Global Initiative 2009, Zakaria 2009). In this chapter, I examine the Rwandan national development strategy, as indicated by the Government's stated vision, its policies for national development, and the effects they have had to date. How does the government define development, and what is its vision for the future? Do its policies and actions correspond with its stated goals? How willing is the government to respect the wishes of different communities? To answer these questions, I examine some key national policy documents, technical reports, and academic articles. In the end I find that the Government of Rwanda, while calling its ambitious top-down national development program reconciliatory and pro-poor, engages in repressive population control and clearly favours an emerging middle class to mobilize capital and transform the country into a modern, middle-income, knowledge-based economy. Moreover, one cannot separate the national economic strategy from the government's wider campaign of social re-engineering. Proponents of the government's efforts call them necessary for long-term development and eventual

⁹ For accounts of the Rwandan genocide itself, see Des Forges 1999, Uvin 1998, Straus 2006, Newbury 1998, and Verwimp 2000.

democratization; however, policies that would better match the pro-poor rhetoric would include those that targeted lower-middle class peasants whose small surpluses could be turned into community development if they had more favourable access to credit, insurance, technical services, and markets.

Again, the application of a post-development critique to a national government instead of foreign institutions may appear unusual. However, as stated above, these lines are blurred in the present case, as an outside structural adjustment program has been embraced by the national government and combined with its own national development strategy. As will be discussed at more length below, the Rwandan government has shrewdly and painstakingly carved out autonomous policy space while managing to satisfy international donors, and it is able to pursue its controversial policies with unusually high levels of independence. However, the national government in Kigali is attempting a top-down modernization and liberalization of rural society in ways that local populations may or may not consent to. Because much of the RPF cadre has lived most of their lives in Uganda and now reside in urban Rwanda, there is a clear sense that the rural population is under foreign rule within their own borders. Here as in more orthodox applications, the post-development critique asks to what extent the local populations desire and benefit from the changes that they face.

Rebuilt by a heavy hand

When it first came to power, the post-genocide regime faced extraordinarily unfavourable circumstances. In the years leading up to the genocide, Rwanda was undergoing structural adjustment in an attempt to manage its heavy debt burden, while its overwhelmingly agrarian population faced the perils of population growth exceeding growth in food production (André and Platteau 1998). The civil war and genocide, in addition to taking the lives of

nearly ten percent of the total population through unspeakable brutality, devastated national infrastructure, farmland, and livestock (Hintjens 1999, Newbury 1998 and 2006, Justino and Verwimp 2013). The victorious Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which formed government as a political party by the same name,¹⁰ was beset for nearly a decade after the war's end by an insurgency from the *génocidaires* who had been driven into the Democratic Republic of Congo. During this time, the new regime resorted to brutal forms of counter-insurgency, such as the execution of entire Hutu villages along the Rwandan border with the DRC, as well as other heavy-handed means of controlling the Rwandan population as a whole (Ingelaere 2010a: 288). As the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Tanzania and the *Gacaca* community courts began to bring the accused perpetrators of genocide to justice, the Rwandan government limited free speech by imprisoning anyone expressing dissent for “genocide ideology” or “divisionism” (Reyntjens 2011: 15-16, Thomson 2011: 442).

Financed in no small part by large amounts of aid from an international community driven by a sense of collective guilt for its failure to prevent the genocide, Rwanda began to rebuild itself. Paul Kagame, the general of the RPF army that won the war, became Vice President and eventually President of Rwanda in 2000. Under Kagame's semi-authoritarian or quasi-democratic rule (Reyntjens 2004 and 2011, Ansoms and Rostagno 2012, Ingelaere 2010a, Burnet 2008), the post-genocide regime has led a sustained and forceful campaign to change Rwanda economically and socially. The government has banned the discussion of ethnic divisions or any public dissent as threats to national unity, enacted numerous rules to restructure society, rewritten national history, reorganized rural land ownership, redrawn the map of the country, created new administrative units, renamed cities and regions, and pushed to modernize the economy (Ingelaere 2010a and 2011, Reyntjens 2004 and 2011, Huggins

¹⁰ The army was then renamed the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA).

2011, Ansoms 2009 and 2011, Thomson 2011). Given this broad and sweeping campaign to recreate Rwanda, it is clear that any discussion of government policies for economic development must be studied in the context of being part of a much larger program of social re-engineering.

A common starting point for such a discussion is the state of democracy in Rwanda, which Freedom House has categorized as “Not Free” (2013). The government purports to be decentralizing democratic control, and it is quite adept at applying the language of good governance preferred by international donors. In fact, Rwanda appears in some respects to be quite progressive; for example, 56 percent of parliamentarians are women, the greatest percentage anywhere in the world (IPU 2013). However, as Bert Ingelaere (2011) shows, democracy in Rwanda is highly dubious. The ostensible decentralization process is in fact the opposite of what it purports to be: the local authorities who wield real political power are loyal appointees of the central government, most of them ethnic Tutsi, and they have conducted a tightening of central control on even small remote communities (Ingelaere 2011: 68). A similar level of tightness of administration and control allowed the previous regime its brutal efficiency in the preparation and execution of the 1994 genocide. Ingelaere goes on to describe his experiences observing rural elections, which were organized, tightly controlled, and whose results were wholly determined by RPF party members and soldiers (ibid: 72, see also Huggins 2010a: 40). The same goes for the leadership in Kigali: Joseph Sebarenzi, Speaker of the Rwandan Parliament from 1997 to 2000, writes about his efforts to help pass legislation that would make the executive branch of government accountable to parliament. After signing the legislation in spite of RPF objections, he was forced to resign and eventually flee to escape assassination, making him the first prominent Tutsi forced to flee the Tutsi-dominated post-genocide regime (Sebarenzi 2011: 343-346). He was, however,

only the first of several political rivals, dissidents, human rights activists, and journalists targeted by the regime of Paul Kagame (see e.g. Reyntjens 2011). Sebarenzi ultimately warns, however, not only that political reforms will have to take place in order to prevent future conflict, but also that domestic and international pressure will have to be applied in a way which recognizes that Kagame has accumulated a sufficient number of enemies to now be legitimately threatened by the idea of loosening his control on the state (2011: 351-352). Thus there are significant obstacles to overcome in Rwanda before anything resembling real democracy can exist.

Civil society organizations have also been tightly controlled. The very concept of civil society is itself contested, especially in Africa (Bayart 1986). In mainstream Western political theory, the term civil society refers to non-state actors generally, as illustrated by the World Bank's broad definition:

the space among family, market and state; it consists of not-for-profit organizations and special interest groups, either formal or informal, working to improve the lives of their constituents. In this sense, the Bank considers research and policy design organizations, labor unions, the media, NGOs, grassroots associations, community-based organizations, religious groups and many other typical examples of actors that comprise the dynamic web known as civil society. (World Bank 2000, qtd. in Pfeiffer 2004)

In the Rwandan and African context, however, civil society is often closely connected and or tightly controlled by the state (Bayart 1986). In pre-genocide Rwanda the country's numerous non-governmental organizations had very little influence in government policy, whereas the current regime has a "you're with us or against us" attitude that often leads it to label any dissent at all as "genocide ideology" (Gready 2011: 88-89). The national government passed legislation in 2001 that allows it to control the finances and management of both domestic and international NGOs, and it has expelled international organizations whose work did not please it (ibid, Huggins 2010: 49). In fact, Jennie Burnet argues that the

RPF and even academics in Rwanda conceptualize civil society as an extension of the state instead of organizations and individuals that are separate (2008: 375-376), as the above definition suggests. However, while many may conclude that Rwandan civil society is entirely controlled by the state, Paul Gready sees uneven and sporadic glimpses of independence: “While a synthesis of the dark side of Rwanda is very dark indeed, there remain occasional spaces created by electoral policies, decentralization policies, development initiatives (...), and the dependence of the government on other actors, which, on occasion, can be exploited by donors and civil society” (ibid: 91). Gready concludes that, despite the great difficulties faced by NGOs in Rwanda, some have managed to effectively engage with the state by “role combination,” such as providing services in addition to advocacy, and “shifting register,” using multiple strategies and engaging with organizations at different national and international levels (ibid: 97). Broadly speaking, however, Rwanda’s civil society organizations operate in very difficult and sometimes unpredictable conditions, significantly curtailing the voices of domestic and international citizens’ groups.

In spite of all of this criticism, an entirely different interpretation has recently emerged, suggesting that dissent and political division must be restricted in order to achieve economic development. Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2012) argue that the ruling RPF party engages in developmental patrimonialism, which they define as “when the ruling elite acquires an interest in, and a capability for, managing economic rents in a centralized way with a view to enhancing their own and others’ incomes in the long run rather than maximizing them in the short run” (381). Instead of the more typical patterns of government corruption which require the enrichment of those who keep it in power, the current RPF regime is able to fund itself with the dividends and taxes from its own extensive business assets. Importantly, however, even in enterprises of substantial size in which the RPF has a controlling stake or sole

propriety, such as in Tri Star Investments (now called CVL), the RPF has the companies managed independently by individuals within the party who have considerable business experience (ibid: 388). This arms-length party ownership allows the government to finance its own activities and invest in key sectors to promote national growth while carefully avoiding, according to the authors, both the politicization of state enterprises and the corrupt clientelism which cripples many African governments' abilities to act on behalf of the interests of their wider populations.

Furthering this interpretation, Tim Kelsall (2013), in collaboration with Booth, Golooba-Mutebi, and several others, argues that there is historical evidence that limiting democracy and tightly managing economic rents may be necessary in cases such as Rwanda. Kelsall first argues that, contrary to the prevailing liberal orthodoxy which maintains that African governments should limit themselves to creating a positive investment environment by ensuring economic stability, free competition, efficient regulation, and the protection of private property, far more ambitious industrial policies will be required in Africa in order to achieve sustained growth, diversification, and poverty reduction (2013: 3-5). "Virtually all successful developers," he argues, "have at one time or another employed industrial policies that have helped first to raise productivity in agriculture, then to increase the share of manufacturing and services in GDP, and then to move into higher-value areas of manufacturing and services" (ibid: 8). Examining the developmental successes and failures of subsequent regimes in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Malawi, Kelsall argues that a high degree of centralization is required to contain the rent-seeking behaviour of economic actors and to ensure that they act in the interests of the public. Moreover, centralized rents must be oriented toward long-term goals, lest the regime be a centralized kleptocracy (ibid: 24). However, a regime can only pursue such long-term goals if its political future is secure,

which requires restrictions on democracy. According to Kelsall, the successful approaches were all very similar:

successful developers centralized economic rents, orienting them to the long term through reasonably successful industrial policies that provided incentives for transformative investments in agriculture and industry. In all three of the cases we considered, strong post-independence leaders did this by limiting political competition (while ensuring that the polity remained relatively inclusive), building top-down patron-client networks, and creating space for competent technocratic management and industrial planning. (ibid: 46)

He thus argues that “there may be a trade-off between human rights in the form of political civil liberties, and human rights in the form of social and economic rights” (ibid: 47-48). Although he admits that the level of political repression in Rwanda is perhaps greater than needed for the government to achieve its economic goals, Kelsall concludes that an open democratic system would impede those goals and perhaps even lead to violent conflict (ibid: 143, 157-158).

While restricting political and civil rights at home, the RPF government has masterfully secured large aid flows while repelling international criticism and retaining unusually high levels of policy autonomy. The Rwandan government is eminently dependent on international donors for its budget, with nearly fifty percent of national revenues coming from government aid in 2008. Eugenia Zorbas identifies four reasons for these comparatively high levels of aid flows into Rwanda: international guilt from the genocide, the regime’s ability to adopt the language and certain practices of aid agencies, the agencies’ eagerness for a case of success, and support for the RPF in the UK and USA (2011: 104). The regime has proven very adept at selling its policies to the international community as effective governance: “[t]o quell protest from the diplomatic and international aid communities, the RPF has dressed its increasingly authoritarian governance in democratic clothing by promoting its policies as the best methods to ensure ‘security’ and ‘good governance’”

(Burnet 2008: 366). Kagame's government has harnessed international guilt for non-intervention in the genocide, turning the genocide into "an ideological weapon allowing the RPF to acquire and maintain victim status and, as a perceived form of compensation, to enjoy complete immunity" (Reyntjens 2004: 199). Given that the desire for a success story is most donors' only real strategic interest in the country, they are also willing to ignore evidence to the contrary, such as a 2007 UNDP report showing that Rwanda's Gini coefficient had nearly doubled in the previous twenty five years, or that rural poverty was increasing in two provinces and declining negligibly in the other three (Zorbas 2011: 110). In spite of these trends with poverty and inequality, Rwanda has succeeded with other aid deliverables in the areas of health, education, and the status of women, to the point where many have called it a "donor darling" country (Maryssa et al. 2007, Reyntjens 2011). Given that improvements in good governance and human rights are difficult for aid agencies to quantify, that truly collaborative international development partnerships are largely fictitious, and that Kagame and his government are seen to be leaders in aid effectiveness, "the Government of Rwanda can largely continue to define and pursue its own preferred development strategy," despite evidence that it "does not fundamentally improve the lot of the poor and vulnerable nor does it alter the conditions of structural violence" (Zorbas 2011: 114-115). While Kagame is required to meet certain development objectives of his donors, he is able to do so selectively, maintaining the autonomy afforded to him by his "donor darling" status as well as the "genocide credit" of international guilt (Reyntjens 2011: 27). To Zorbas (2011), the situation represents the inability of the international development community to effectively pursue their stated goals of welfare and peace. With its variety of tactics, the Rwandan government is able to satisfy donors on enough fronts to remain an

official success story, so it may otherwise enjoy policy autonomy free from their scrutiny and criticism.

A New Rwanda

With this considerable budget assistance and policy freedom, the Rwandan government has undertaken an ambitious campaign to re-engineer rural society. One principal way they are doing so is through villagization. Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa, and more than 80 percent of Rwandans live in rural settings. After the genocide, villagization served the short-term interest of the government to accommodate returning refugees, both “old-case” Tutsi returnees who had fled at independence in the early 1960s and “new-case” Hutu who fled during the genocide. In addition, villagization served the government’s long-term interest of agricultural specialization and modernization. However, although the government had called the relocation strictly voluntary, villagization and crop specialization policies “often entail substantial coercion and are resented by rural people because of the threat to their food security and the harsh penalties for noncompliance” (Newbury 2011: 223-224). Compliance is thus assured.

Rwandan homes have traditionally been grouped most basically by the hill on which they sit, and even today one speaks of one’s hill of origin. The corresponding colonial and post-colonial administrative unit had been the cellule, but in 1996 the new regime began using *umudugudu* (plural *imidugudu*) to denote groups of houses near a road. Then, in 2005, it replaced the term cellule with umudugudu, removing the distinction between existing settlements and those created by the villagization policies. The government maintains that there are significant advantages to villagization, such as bringing the population closer to roads, water, schools, and hospitals (Newbury 2011: 230). Importantly, they say that it

allows for more rational land use, wherein houses are not built on arable land. They also maintain that residents can engage in more income-generating activities, such as handicrafts, in villages. They say that villagization is essential for security, effectively cutting off any avenue for debate (ibid). These forced social re-engineering schemes have been designed and implemented predominantly by urban technocrats who have lived all or most of their lives in neighbouring Uganda, and who are thus unfamiliar with the highly complex land use and ownership arrangements resulting from Rwanda's intensive land use and population movements (ibid: 228-229). Moreover, farming one's land is more difficult when one lives a greater distance away, and many relocated farmers did not have the resources needed to replace the homes they were forced to leave (ibid, Pottier 2006: 518). Finally, the *umudugudu* policy may in fact worsen ethnic tensions, as it has in some places replaced traditionally mixed communities with segregated villages. Thus, according to Newbury, the *umudugudu* policy has failed in three ways: it constitutes a coercive violence against the rural population, it reduces economic security and living standards, and it increases social tensions (2011: 235).

In addition to reordering where people live, the government has forced several other changes to how people live. In 2006 the Government of Rwanda passed a series of laws that demanded the replacement of numerous traditional behaviours with modern ones which it deemed more befitting of a rapidly-modernizing country. These include a new requirement "to wear shoes, to be clean, use mosquito nets, adhere to the health insurance guidelines, wear school uniforms, construct toilets, make compost pits, and dry dishes on tables (instead of on the grass)" (Ansoms 2011: 246). According to An Ansoms, these cosmetic changes to rural society merely serve to hide poverty and inequality, while they do nothing to address their structural causes (2011: 240). While appreciating the goal of health and hygiene

standards, Bert Ingelaere nonetheless notes that many rural Rwandans can neither afford shoes nor to pay the fines for non-compliance. The result is that peasants may end up in debt or even in jail if they are unable to comply (2011: 73-74). Once again, the heavy-handedness of Rwandan social policy may do more to create fear and resentment than it does to propel social development.

The government has also undertaken sweeping land ownership and tenure reform. Land distribution in Rwanda is highly unequal, and it has only been increasing: the country's Gini coefficient of land distribution went from 0.43 in 1990 to 0.594 in 2002 (Huggins 2011: 255). At least 11.5 percent of the total population is landless, and almost 30 percent of households have less than 0.2 hectares, which is less than one third of the 0.7 hectares estimated by the United Nations to be needed for food security. To make matters worse, about half of all land in Rwanda suffers from soil erosion and declining productivity (ibid). In response to the critical land situation, the Rwandan government first approved new national land policy in 2004, the implementation of which officially began in 2005, and then a national land registration project began in 2009. While some have celebrated the new land regime for being progressive in terms of women's land rights (Daley et al. 2010), Chris Huggins is concerned that the ambitious timeline to register all land in the country, a mere five years, creates the potential for land-grabbing by state officials. Huggins' research into the Presidential Commission on Land in the Eastern Province, which was to redistribute large land holdings in 2008 before the registration campaign, revealed a process that was non-transparent, favourable to those in positions of power, and unwilling to address its own problems of legal authority, procedure, and internal conflicts of interest. He concludes with the words of Allison Des Forges: "the policy and laws appear to offer more security for the prosperous and powerful, eagerly solicited for their capacity to invest, than for the majority

of Rwandans who make a bare living from their plots” (Huggins 2011: 259). Accordingly, while many smallholder and landless peasants have benefitted from recent land redistribution, they are by no means the principal beneficiaries of the land tenure reform (Ansoms 2008: 14). Rural inequality is being maintained and entrenched.

The Rwandan government has also taken determined steps to modernize the agricultural sector in order to propel wider national industrial development. In its “Vision 2020” policy document outlining its ambitions to turn Rwanda into a middle-income country by the year 2020, the Rwandan government derides the previous regimes’ agricultural policies:

Rwanda’s economic policies since independence are said to have targeted agriculture as the main engine of economic growth. However, the agricultural sector has continued to perform poorly, with consistently declining productivity. It will be necessary to formulate and implement realistic developmental policies that move beyond past delusions of viable subsistence-based agriculture. (RoR 2000: 17)

Four years later, in its comprehensive new land policy document, the government takes this statement even further, asserting that “the land resource has been badly managed” (RoR 2004: 15), as families divide their plots amongst their children, and that “it is obvious that the Rwandan family farm unit is no longer viable” (ibid: 16). An Ansoms highlights the way that the government blames the peasants for their plight, blaming their “ignorance and resistance to productivity-enhancing measures” while it overlooks “the institutional barriers that small-scale peasants face, such as land scarcity, climate changes, crop diseases, limited options to diversify incomes, no cash reserves, and the lack of safety nets” (2011: 243). According to the economic planners in Kigali, the peasants and their ways are the problems, but there are several technical solutions to overcome them. While many, such as Mwabu (2004), agree that Rwandan farmers could potentially benefit from the economies of scale

sought by government policies, Ansoms research finds larger farms to be no more productive per unit (2008: 18). Nevertheless, the government's commitment to agricultural modernization is unbending.

The principal method the Rwandan policymakers want to professionalize rural agriculture and maximize economic output is through enforced mono-cropping and regional specialization. Ansoms is particularly concerned about the top-down nature of this economic planning, stating three reasons: extensive local variation in soil and climate conditions hinder effective central planning; peasants understand that diversification is their only protection against drought, disease, soil fatigue, crop failure, and market fluctuations; and small producers have insufficient bargaining power to properly capitalize on commodity markets. Given that similar policies have been tried and failed in Rwanda in the past, it is disconcerting to see the government's total faith in such technical solutions and their willingness to use force to ensure compliance (2011: 244, 2010: 12).

In addition to central planning of crop selection, the Rwandan government also wishes to create larger farm units. While official policy aims at using schemes of collective farm use without necessarily changing existing farm ownership, most officials interviewed by Ansoms "saw no significant role for smallholders in a green revolution within the agricultural sector," despite the fact that they constitute nine out of every ten units of production in the countryside. Policymakers may envision a rural economy with sufficient demand for off-farm labour to absorb the enormous amounts of surplus labour that would result from their vision of industrialized farming, but Ansoms argues that even modest gains in productivity aimed at smallholders themselves would create demand for off-farm labour without creating such an unmanageable glut in supply (2011: 245-246). Johan Pottier calls such unbending commitment to consolidation over fragmentation "voluntary blindness" by the government

and donors, as a land policy that calls for fewer plots with fewer owners necessarily entails the weakest losing their land and the widening of class differences (2006: 532-533). Moreover, Blarel et al. (1992) argue that having multiple parcels of land mitigates a household's risk of crop failure, and that consolidation programs can therefore make families worse off. Thus land consolidation, even if it does succeed in creating growth and eventually diversification, is not likely to benefit smallholders, and certainly not in the near future.

The government nonetheless purports to be committed to pro-poor growth, despite allocating relatively low amounts of government spending to the agricultural sector (Evans et al. 2006: 12, Ansoms 2008: 10, Kelsall 2013: 143), and that government policies have done little to help the poor participate in the growth that the sector has been experiencing. In addition to high land inequality, poor peasants still face such constraints as limited access to markets, credit, insurance, and fertilizers. Even in a study that calls Rwanda's current agricultural transformation "overwhelmingly positive," Ronnas et al. admit that the "development of agriculture will not necessarily be particularly pro-poor," and "it may not offer sufficient improvements in employment and income opportunities for the large number of near-landless agricultural households to allow them to escape poverty" (2010: 2-3). Ansoms argues that there are two problems with the Rwandan government's approach to what they call pro-poor growth: first, they have targeted the sector that contains the most poor without targeting the poor themselves, and second, they have focused on growth in output over distribution (2011: 25-27). Overall, she sees the Rwandan national development strategy as seriously problematic:

The Rwandan government's social engineering ambitions reflect a very top-down developmentalist agenda that leaves little room for bottom-up feedback mechanisms. In fact, there is a profound mismatch between the Rwandan elite's ambitions and the rural realities on the ground. The elite

push for rapid modernization and “professionalization” of the agricultural sector risks increasing both poverty and inequality. (2010: 248)

Ansoms argues that, were the government to actually pursue pro-poor growth, it would have to change focus from creating an industrial capitalist class of Rwandan farmers and focus instead on entrepreneurial opportunities for the multitude of family farmers who are self-sufficient and able to produce some modest surpluses. The government could create a system of incentives and access to credit for small-scale entrepreneurs, as well as mechanisms of insurance against risk and volatility. In order to better their bargaining position in commodity markets, Ansoms suggests the use of democratically-controlled farmer cooperatives (which I will discuss at length below). Above all, she argues that community trickle-down and growth in the off-farm economy can be achieved by properly targeting the lower levels of the peasant middle-class, who spend their money locally (2011: 248). Such pro-poor policies are eminently possible, but they would require a significant divergence from the policies that the government today calls pro-poor.

Despite Rwanda’s impressive post-war recovery and present prospects for economic growth, one can call current government policies neither reconciliatory nor pro-poor. The current regime is taking determined steps to realize its vision of becoming a modernized, middle-income country by forcibly re-organizing rural society to turn agriculture into an industrialized engine of economic growth. Economic and social policies are therefore inseparable, as the government vision aims to transform an overwhelmingly agrarian society into an agro-industrial one. To do so, they have forced villagization, land consolidation, monocropping, and social modernization with the intent of promoting a middle-class industrial farmer to eventually replace the family farm unit. Ugandan-born urban policy-makers, many of whom have returned after the genocide, envision economic diversification,

the creation of off-farm industrial growth, and trickle-down benefits to all members of rural society; however, the majority of Rwandans face the coercive end to their traditional livelihoods with neither democratic accountability nor a strong civil society to voice their concerns. Many in the academic community now worry that a regime such as this, reliant as it is on fear and coercion to pursue its policy goals, breeds only resentment and the prospect of future conflict. Approaching these same topics from the post-development perspective outlined by Ziai (2007d), however, the goal again is to avoid essentializations and normative prescriptions which ignore cultural complexity and self-transformation. In accepting the right of any community or society to define its own aspirations, we must ask to what extent rural Rwandans share this vision of development, what if any choice they have in participating in this program of societal transformation, and what are their prospects of being able to mitigate against the most adverse effects of these ongoing changes. These questions will be the topic of the sections that follow.

III. TWO CO-OPS, MOST SIMILAR AND MOST DIFFERENT

The two cooperatives chosen for this study, Coproriz Abahuzabikorwa and Coderika, are located relatively near to one another and both receive support from UGAMA Cooperative Service Centre, yet they are very different. The first is a large, well-established, and expanding operation, while the other is a small, relatively young organization struggling to maintain itself. Both had been chosen by UGAMA for support in 2004 due to their clear need for assistance, but UGAMA staff explained that only one had been able to overcome its problems and grow as an organization. Having decided months previously to find a first case study of an apparently successful cooperative and a second case study of a similar but comparatively unsuccessful one, the two UGAMA-aided co-ops had several things in common, most importantly the services from UGAMA themselves, as well as much greater access to and information about the co-ops. The first case study was to some extent an inquiry into the best-case scenario for cooperation in rural Rwanda, and the second case study was meant to examine to what extent similar conditions may have a dramatically different result. Within the context of these two cases, I would then address my questions about physical and social needs, which I grouped into the four themes of poverty and inequality, activism and resistance, solidarity and empowerment, and development.

Coproriz Abahuzabikorwa

Upon my arrival in the spring of 2011, I found the first, larger co-op deserving of its reputation of success. Coproriz Abahuzabikorwa, whose name means “Cooperative for the Production of Rice: All Moving Forward Together,” is a cooperative that controls a vast expanse of the Mukunguli marsh in central Rwanda on behalf of its 2,750 farmer members.

A half an hour in a taxi van on perfect pavement and another forty minutes on a motorcycle taxi on a bumpy dirt road gashed by rainwater will take you from the city of Gitarama to the beautiful Mukunguli marsh, which at harvest resembles a vast green lake carved into neat squares and surrounded by typical, fully-cultivated Rwandan hillsides. The marshland is divided into thousands of twenty by twenty five meter blocks (thus 500 square meters each) by small banks of dirt, which hold water for the paddy rice. Once the road finally winds, bumps, and splashes past some clusters of houses and down to the edge of the marsh, it leads past a small branch office of the Caf Isonga bank, the new Coproriz canteen, gazebo, and farmer supply store, and finally to the Coproriz offices, meeting hall, and grain storage buildings. A few hundred feet into the marsh is the first rice drying and storage station, a small empty building surrounded by flat cement. The Coproriz headquarters was a buzz of construction during my time there, as they expanded their headquarters and storage. At the time of my first visit with UGAMA, the buildings were unenclosed, but upon my return a few weeks later they were completely surrounded by a high brick fence, as is common in Rwanda. In that short amount of time, the Coproriz members had greatly increased the capacity and security of their rice stores.

Rice production in the Mukunguli marsh goes back much farther than the formal establishment of Coproriz Abahuzabikorwa in 2007. In the 1960s, during Mao Zedong's fervent campaigns of agricultural expansion, Chinese farmers introduced rice in the region, converting the marshland into rice paddy fields. The Chinese leased the land, taught the local population to cultivate the rice (though for a time keeping the planting process to themselves), and bought the majority of the rice for consumption in China (KIT and IIRR 2010: 135). As local markets for rice developed, the Chinese continued to take 20 percent of production as payment for the use of their land until they fled the country in 1994 during the

genocide. It took several years for the marshes to again be cultivated after the genocide, and it took some time more before the irrigation system, the availability of fertilizer, and local markets supported the production of rice. The Rwandan government encouraged the farmers to come together in associations in 2003, and later cooperatives in 2007. Since 2003, Coproriz Abahuzabikorwa's membership has increased from 280 to 2,750 households (KIT and IIRR 2010: 135-136).

Today Coproriz controls a vast expanse of the Mukunguli marsh, a total of 700 hectares spanning both the Kamonyi and Ruhango districts of the Rwanda's Southern Province, about 75 kilometres south of Kigali. The co-op's 39-year lease on the marshland is currently valid 2045 (Interview, Coproriz Male Member 4, May 9 2011). In 2009, Coproriz distributed 1.3 billion Rwandan Francs (2.7 million CAD) in sales of rice to its members (UGAMA 2010a: 5). The majority of members are women, many widows of the genocide, their husbands killed or imprisoned. While many members have only one block, at least one was said to own as many as sixty. Cooperative water sharing and NGO- and government-built irrigation systems mitigate against drought and floods, allowing the members two rice harvests per year. The General Assembly of members meets at least twice a year, and its members elect a three-person Board of Directors to one-year terms and a nine-person Steering Committee to five-year terms. The majorities of both elected bodies were held by men. The co-op today also employs a professional manager, two agronomists, and at least three junior accountants.

Both cooperatives included in this study function in the same way. At the beginning of each season, members are advised when to plant the seeds provided to them on credit. One person can maintain one block unassisted (weeding, water management, driving off birds, etc.), though usually four people are needed at planting and harvest. Once a member has

harvested her rice, she sun-dries it on tarps at drying sites (concrete platforms at the marshes). A representative of the co-op then weighs and collects all of the rice, with the exception of approximately ten percent (for those with a small number of blocks), which members must retain for personal household consumption. The co-op stores the rice (when facilities allow) until co-op delegates are able to find a purchaser with an acceptable price.¹¹ The co-ops then pay the members for their rice, minus costs, such as inputs and transport, as well as whatever the general assembly has decided the cooperative should retain for its functioning costs.

As recently as 2005 Coproriz was in a serious state of crisis, being indebted, mismanaged, and the victim of a large theft by elected managers. It was chosen to receive support from the UGAMA Cooperative Service Centre due to its acute need at that time. The members of Coproriz maintain, however, that the cooperative's current level of prosperity began in November 2008, when they elected a new president and vice-president and hired a professional manager as the Coordinator of Coproriz. In the first two and a half years of the three-year mandate, the new administration kept meticulous financial records, making all transactions with members through the Caf Isonga bank. Following suggestions of the Steering Committee and decisions by the General Assembly, the new administration has retained 10 percent of each harvest's profits in order to expand the co-op's infrastructure. By 2011 the co-op had paid its debts, and it was able to use its funds to expand its infrastructure. In an agreement with the government and a national power company, Coproriz was able to negotiate co-payment of the costs of putting in power poles to bring electricity to the headquarters and nearby households, who would be connected if they were able to pay a

¹¹ Whereas Coderika members had the storage capacity necessary to set a minimum price and wait for the cyclical market to meet it, at the time of this study, Coproriz was had not yet completed the facilities to give them that option.

certain fee. With the help of UGAMA Cooperative Service Centre writing proposals to the Canadian Cooperative Association (CCA, who funds a full quarter of UGAMA's annual budget), Coproriz was able to secure funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to build a new canteen and farmer supply store. The co-op also owned a truck equipped with a hydraulic lift to offload bags of rice. I was also able, while I was there, to attend a meeting regarding the proposed creation of a rice-processing factory nearby, which the members enthusiastically explained would reduce their transport costs and create local employment.

Coderika

West of the Mukunguli marsh and Coproriz, farther along the windy, rough dirt roads, the blocks of Coderika sit surrounded by other small rice cooperatives in the expansive and stunningly green Kanyegengese marsh. With a tenth of the members and half as much land per hectare as Coproriz, Coderika, "Cooperative of Rice Farmers in the Kanyegengese Valley," is a modest organization of 244 members on 35 hectares of marsh, women being a slight majority (Interview, UGAMA Staff 1, May 23, 2011). Like Coproriz, Coderika also has a nine-person Steering Committee elected to five-year terms and a three-person Board of Directors elected to one-year terms, with male majorities in both bodies. Coderika was also selected by UGAMA as a co-op in dire need of assistance: since its creation, each of its three elected leaders had to be removed from office. However, in 2011 Coderika had yet to overcome its managerial crisis. The co-op's biggest asset was its storage facility at the marsh, which was adequate for its small membership. Having no meeting space of their own, however, Coderika members were forced to rent a small government building in a village atop a hill thirty minutes from the marsh for general assemblies and UGAMA training

sessions. The co-op also rented a small office in the tiny town Kinazi, which was more than an hour's walk from the marsh. Finally, due to inadequate irrigation systems, members are only able to grow rice during the rainy season, and their crops are sometimes destroyed by floods. During the dry season, Coderika members grow maize or tomatoes in their blocks, though these crops are less lucrative than rice.

At the time of my research, the elected President of Coderika had been formally charged for mismanaging, losing, or possibly stealing a large sum of money from the co-op. The kind-faced, young farmer had received no training in management, and he was notorious for dealing in cash, keeping poor records, and allowing members to keep the change from transactions with the co-op. Yet given the amount of money that was unaccounted for, members all seemed convinced that he was at least as generous with himself. He had remained president, however, pledging to repay the money at a rate that my own estimates deemed entirely impossible. Finally, on the very day that he had agreed to participate in this study, he was arrested for non-repayment. The members immediately began calling him the former president, and they said an election for a new president would be held as soon as possible.

Hopefulness versus reality

My own study of the two rice co-ops in central Rwanda consisted of 42 semi-structured interviews with members, potential members, managers, and NGO staff. Despite the great differences in the size and apparent success of the two cooperatives, the lives of individual farmer members were not necessarily very different. Rice is non-traditional in Rwanda in the sense that the history of its cultivation only goes back a single generation. It is grown in the marshland away from the members' homes and properties, and the vast majority of rice

farmers and labourers also engage in other farming, gardening, or labour activities outside of the marsh. While the distribution of Coderika's blocks are far more egalitarian than those of Coproriz, members of either cooperative seemed as likely to have large, small, or no land holdings outside of the marsh. In the following chapters, I discuss the different topics covered in the interview process by addressing both cooperatives together, including the kinds of answers I received, as well as whether the answers differed greatly from one co-op to the other. The topics themselves are farming, membership, prices and services, cooperative principles, social benefits, women's experiences, threats, development, and other.

It would be dishonest not to admit that, heading into the field research, my optimism for the potential of such farmer organizations was bound to be disappointed. With all the tacit hopefulness of the post-development authors, I went in search of a local social movement that sought to take control of the food production system on behalf of the producers themselves. I sought the kind of grassroots organization that could be the seed of the solution to poverty and inequality, a locally-appropriate form of development. I hoped to find, hidden in the marsh amidst the Rwandan hills, the makings of a movement for food sovereignty. I wanted to know if the cooperative model, used so widely by producers in Rwanda, was making a difference in rural people's lives, and whether it suggested that a more humane form of capitalism was possible. These are no small feats for organizations whose mandate is merely to find buyers for small farmers living in remote locations.

Most answers to these ambitious and optimistic research questions quite reasonably had to be no. However, in spite of the many negative answers, there were several positive ones. My questions can be grouped together into four broad themes: practical questions of poverty, inequality, and food security; social questions about solidarity and empowerment;

political questions about activism and resistance; and theoretical questions about development itself. While the search for political activism and resistance proved wholly fruitless, practical livelihood questions and those of personal empowerment showed cause for cautious optimism. The social aspects of cooperation were perhaps the only unequivocally positive responses. Lastly, regarding more theoretical visions of local development, while the individual interviewees held relatively straight-forward definitions of development, the co-ops themselves constitute a kind of community economic development that is capable of delivering the forms of crucial services that many other farmers lack.

At the completion of my study, it became clear that the answers to my research questions¹² were no, almost, and yes: while Coproriz and Coderika were *not* grassroots activist social movements capable of collectively resisting adverse political forces or of reducing inequality, they were *almost* able to provide food security and lift members from poverty. Both cooperative *were*, however, great sources of empowerment, pride, solidarity, and nascent community, providing members with markets, services, expanded activities, infrastructure, and importantly, access to a very particular kind of cooperative capitalism. The prospect of modest increases in standards of living seems reasonable for the members of Coproriz, whose access to services appeared to be improving. Coderika, too, could perhaps experience similar gains with continued technical assistance from UGAMA. However, neither outcome is certain. In what follows, I explain the basis for this “no, almost, yes” answer by examining participant responses organized by negative, marginal, and positive answers. The format of the interviews themselves can be found in Appendix A.

¹² See pages 3-4 for a full list of initial research questions about material and social needs (including the effects the co-ops on food security, poverty, and inequality, the factors for success, the direct and indirect effects of membership, and the co-ops as potential sources of personal and community empowerment or resistance).

In addition to direct quotations, responses are presented numerically and in tables of abridged responses whenever possible. Numerical answers are left whole instead of being converted into percentages to avoid exaggerating the statistical significance of the sample size. Percentage calculations inevitably give the impression that they are representative of the whole, which these findings may or may not be. In addition, going through the interview guide in its entirety could take up to four hours, which the interviewees often found exhausting and also a significant time burden. As a result, I was not able to ask all interviewees all of the questions, which has resulted in many responses that are analogous but not directly comparable. Some questions also required modification as I learned more about the local context, be it measurements, common practices, or even the official answer required by the state. The best example of the latter relates to questions concerning gender, for which the answer required by the state is that there is total equality of the sexes in Rwanda. More nuanced and truthful answers depended upon the level of trust felt by the respondent, as well as way in which the questions were phrased. Thus responses have been tabulated and enumerated whenever possible given the nature and quantity of the data, and individual quotations and observations have been used when the data does not allow for such comparisons.

IV. WHAT THEY ARE NOT, WHAT THEY COULD BE, AND WHAT THEY ARE

This chapter consists of eight sections grouped into three categories. The first category includes topics representing negative answers to my research questions: the reduction of inequality, access for the poorest, and political resistance. The second category consists of one short section on food security and poverty reduction, wherein responses suggest the potential for but not yet the achievement of success. The third category consists of four sections representing positive answers to my research questions, which include the operation of local enterprise, provision of services, empowerment of women, and creation of community. Farmers in Rwanda today experience a great amount of stress from a variety of sources related to environmental conditions, land scarcity, and government policies; the cooperatives provide a means to deal with some of the adverse forces facing rural farmers being pushed into a market economy. However, rice co-ops are neither accessible to the poorest nor a means of reducing inequality due to the cost of membership. They have no capacity to resist government policies, but neither do they have reason to want to do so. While individual households have experienced reduced poverty and increased food security, the data here are insufficient to speculate about larger trends. The respondents from Coproriz and Coderika demonstrate, however, the unequivocal value of their organizations derives from the collective ownership of production, the provision of crucial services, the empowerment of women, and the creation of community.

Not a means of addressing inequality in any significant way

The primary source of hardship for Rwandan peasants is an acute scarcity of land, and the co-ops are unable to address this problem in way. As indicated above, most members had

houses and small plots of land on the hillsides within an hour's walk of the marsh, and some had large holdings (see Table 2 and Appendix B). Some members of Coproriz had large holdings within the marsh as well, but no member of Coderika was said to have more than five blocks.¹³ Importantly, however, equality inside the cooperative did not translate to equality outside, as Coderika members may have large amounts of land on the hills, or other assets, such as goats, cows, bicycles, or motorcycles.

Item	Coproriz	Coderika	Non-member	Total
Respondents	13	20	9	42
Male	8	8	5	21
Female	5	12	2	19
Leadership position	4	11	1 ¹⁴	16
More than 2 blocks	8	9 ¹⁵	1	10
More than 0.1 ha outside marsh	8	11	2	21

Table 2. Overview of respondents

Three members of Coproriz were said to own cars, but none at Coderika did so. Members come from various socio-economic strata, but they are all entrepreneurs of one scale or another. Every member is essentially the owner of a small business in a culture of ubiquitous entrepreneurialism, and the co-ops were in essence business associations for rice farming enterprises of all sizes. Each block required approximately three people at planting and harvest, and one nearly full-time employee to manage water, continually clear weeds and drive away birds as the harvest approached. Thus most members were also employers of labourers. In addition, farmers often used any surplus cash from their harvest to rent more land or otherwise invest it productively. For example, I witnessed one extremely modest but

¹³ Some of the respondents interviewed at Coderika also had blocks with Coproriz or other nearby cooperatives. This is the case for all of the Coderika interviewees listed as having more than five blocks.

¹⁴ The Coordinator of Coproriz is here defined as a non-member leader.

¹⁵ Including blocks at other rice co-ops.

entrepreneurial member receive a truckload of cassava root to peel, soak, and set to dry. A crowd of his neighbours eagerly rushed in, smiling at the prospect of the employment peeling cassava. Thus the majority of members are farmers, entrepreneurs, and labourers at the same time. Moreover, since a single block produces only enough to perhaps feed a very small family, co-op membership alone was certainly not a guarantee of food security.

The next group of questions referred to membership in the cooperative. I asked 32 rice-cooperative members and 3 non-members¹⁶ why they were or were not a member of a rice co-op. At no time did a respondent indicate that she or he did not wish to be a member. When asked why, 32 cited practical benefits (such as income and services), 16 indicated a desire to work with others, and 8 mentioned government policies (see Table 3 and Appendix C). A quarter of the members interviewed indicated that they already had holdings in the marsh, and that they needed to join in order to retain the land that they already occupied at

Item	Practical	Community	Government
Profitability	17		
Joining others		9	
Government policy			8
Mutual help		7	
Overcoming poverty	6		
Bargaining power	3		
Technical help	3		
Credit	1		
Inputs	1		
Training	1		
Total	32	16	8

Table 3. Reasons for joining a rice cooperative.

the time of cooperativization. Some also admitted that they initially did not want to join but knew better than to resist government policies. At the time of the interviews, however, the

¹⁶ In this calculation, respondents who were members of a neighbouring rice co-op were counted as members, though their titles still indicate that they are not members of Coproriz or Coderika.

benefits of membership were clear to everyone: growing rice is the most lucrative activity in the lowlands, and the co-ops provided the inputs and rice varieties that maximized members' yields.

Availability can be an obstacle to acquiring a block, but only a temporary one; the high price is the primary impediment for would-be rice producers. Farmers with surplus production can invest in renting or buying less expensive parcels of land on the hills in hopes of saving up for a block, the accomplishment of which would require fortunate harvests and timing for block availability. The practice of farmer-to-farmer sale was accepted at both co-ops but technically illegal, since the land is officially owned by the government and leased to the co-ops for distribution amongst members. Nevertheless, possession of a block is a kind of quasi-ownership of it. A member may sell such a possession to another person by naming the buyer the seller's next of kin. The buyer then takes over the block and the membership, claiming that no money has been exchanged. At Coproriz, there is no reason to have more than one membership per family, but Coderika households may have multiple members in order to receive the co-op's dividend payments at harvest. Although many landless people received blocks at little or no cost during the initial distribution in both co-ops, that event was a one-time act of land redistribution by the government. Today membership remains unattainable for those who cannot pay the rising cost of a membership or a block, making co-op land at least as difficult to attain as land on the hillsides. Thus the co-ops have no real means to address unequal access to land and incomes.

The situation for the poorest rural populations in Rwanda is not currently improving. Eugenia Zorbas notes that, in spite of many celebrated human development outcomes in Rwanda in recent years, as of 2007 rural poverty was rising in two provinces and declining negligibly in the other three (2011: 110). Moreover, as long as they can continue to report

certain positive outcomes, the international community is willing to ignore the continued or worsening plight of the poorest and most vulnerable, for whom land can be desperately scarce (ibid: 114-115). In addition to cultivating in the marshland, most respondents farmed an inherited fraction of their parents' land, plots they had bought, and whatever seasonal land rental they could afford at any given time. The availability of land to rent allows farmers to immediately reinvest any surplus into future productivity, turning one good harvest into the potential for more. A few good harvests may even allow a farmer to buy another plot of land. However, a bad harvest on rented land may result in a net loss, and consecutive poor harvests may force a producer to sell a plot of her or his own land. Peasant families often divide their land amongst their children as each comes of age, with traditionally large families resulting in plots far too small to support the new generations (RoR 2004: 41). This effect is ironically heightened by improvements in health indicators: in addition to high birth rates, increased access to health services have decreased infant mortality and increased life expectancy. The result is a rapidly growing rural population, increased scarcity of land, and decreased food security.

The national government has tried to address this situation in two ways. First, the 2004 National Land Policy prohibits the division of plots into portions smaller than one hectare (ibid); however, families may continue to share land in the same way as before, albeit informally. In addition, as noted above, anti-fragmentation policies can have harmful effects on farmers who use plot diversity as a risk-management strategy (Blarel et al. 1992). The second policy put forth by the government to slow population growth and land scarcity is family planning, which corresponds with increased access to medical services and decreasing mortality rates. The government has attempted to increase access to birth control, such as condoms, and they have also begun a campaign to educate citizens on birth control

techniques. Co-op respondents reported receiving training both from the government and from UGAMA Cooperative Service Centre, and they seemed to embrace the idea of smaller families not only in typical Rwandan compliance, but also as being one of several logical adaptations for prosperity:

In this area, especially in our marsh, it is not well irrigated. So when we do not get enough rain, the yield is seriously affected. We would like more training, to make our rice more profitable. There is a huge problem with population growth. We need more family planning. The co-ops that are more advanced in management, it would be good if we could do study tours and learn from them. (Interview, Coderika Male Member 3, May 16, 2011)

While critics such as Bert Ingelaere (2011) and An Ansoms (2011) point to several ways in which the government's ambitious program of social re-engineering involve both violence and the potential for great harm, family planning does not seem to involve either coercion or dubious goals. Large families are typically needed for mutual support in old age, difficult times, or the loss of a family's bread earner, but increased survival rates have reduced this need. The scarcity of land and the costs of health and education have now made large numbers of children a source of insecurity rather than security. A member of Coderika's steering committee lists her reduced family size as one of several ways in which UGAMA has assisted members: "we get training, help with our rice, advice about pesticides to fight disease, and they also come to general assemblies to advise, when invited. We received training on gender, and that's when I stopped giving birth" (Interview, Coderika Female Member 2, May 16, 2011). None of the respondents reported any coercive or potentially negative effects of the family planning education program, and it therefore seems to be a positive and in fact crucial step toward food security in rural Rwanda. The cooperatives' provision of this kind of training in addition to government programs was reported to have been greatly appreciated, although such policies may take some time to have any significant

effect on rural scarcity. Apart from these modest contributions in capacity building, the co-ops themselves have no means of addressing the structural sources of rural scarcity, poverty, and inequality.

Not a social movement, not a means of collective political resistance

Many post-development authors look to grassroots social movements for alternatives to Western-style liberal economic development, but it would be very difficult to call these cooperatives a grassroots social movement. Both co-ops were formed at the will of the government, not the farmers themselves. In fact, the social fabric itself in Rwanda is largely held together by the state. The co-ops can be called grassroots democratic organizations, as they are local-level organizations owned and controlled by their members, but the members nonetheless had no choice in the creation of the organizations. In addition to their creation at the will of the government, their current autonomy is possible only because the farmers' and the government's interests appear to align. If future government policies threaten the interests of rice farmers, the co-ops as they are today would have no capacity to resist the government.

The inability to oppose negative policies was clearly expressed in an interview wherein I asked a Coproriz member what the farmers would do if the government tried to replace peasants with mechanized industrial farming equipment. "The locals would riot. That would be the end of our livelihoods." When I asked if he was serious, he replied "No, that was just a joke. If it was a national policy, we would not do anything; we would just die inside" (Interview, Coproriz Male Member 1, May 12, 2011). This moment of candour illustrates the extent of the crisis of Rwandan civil society. The members of Coproriz number nearly three thousand, yet they would not have the slightest capacity to openly resist a government policy

that could cost them their livelihoods. Some respondents mentioned that the government was beginning to force monocropping on the hillsides like in the marsh, but they knew they had little capacity to resist. Besides, they would often add, the policies that we have resisted in the past have proven to be good ideas anyway.

This has not been the case everywhere, however. Van Damme, Ansoms, and Baret (2013) show how banana growers throughout the country were faced with monocropping policies that threatened their well-being. Officials from multiple levels of government informed banana growers that they would be fined if they did not replace much of their intercropped beans and beer bananas, which are highly-resistant and labour-saving, with monocropped cooking and dessert bananas, which are labour intensive, difficult to preserve, less marketable locally, and prone to multiple sources of crop failure (2003: 117-119). In addition to forcing the replacement of existing bananas with high-risk and less desirable ones, the policies required the total loss of the simultaneous production of beans in the open spaces among the trees. While some farmers subtly resisted the policies by growing beer banana trees behind cooking banana trees and others defiantly chose to pay the fines (2,000 – 5,000 RWF [3.33 – 8.33 CAD]) for continued intercropping, “most of them reluctantly adopted the approach because of extensive government control” (ibid: 122). The ban on intercropping with beans was finally lifted in November 2009 when officials eventually realized that it was causing harm and no benefit to farmers (ibid). Monocropping policies thus appear to be far more problematic outside the marshland.

One Coderika member, however, after describing the monocropping as problematic for smallholders, compares current misgivings to similar feelings about new restrictions on grazing cattle:

There are some people, especially those who are not members of co-ops, it is always hard for them to understand any new policy, idea, or change. For example, when they told people to stop grazing so many cows, most members resisted, but when the government enforced it, they realized that having one cow is much easier to take care of, and it is much more beneficial to not have so many unproductive cows. And the cows used to damage people's crops, and the owners would have to repay the farmers. The government always thinks good things for the people, though it always takes time for people to understand. (Interview, Coderika Female Member 7, May 16 2011)

This statement contains both the official message of the government, wherein farmers are simply being obstinate by trying to adhere to the practices that they have relied upon, as well as evidence of some genuine faith in the policies themselves. Unwilling to discuss impossible alternatives to government policies, a Coproriz man expresses similar hopefulness for them:

Before the co-op was here, the land was ours, but now it belongs to the government. Since the war. *[Would it be better if people owned their land?]* It will not be possible, because even the hills are being collectivized. *[Do people choose to be collectivized?]* It's just the government who decides. The government wants people to do only one crop in one area. It helps to make crops more marketable. *[So the policy is a good idea?]* Yes, we are excited about it. With a common crop, we are always producing to raise incomes. (Interview, Coproriz Male Member 2, May 5, 2011)

Once again, this statement exhibits multiple elements of note. Although he may wish to own the land himself (which no farmer in the marsh had ever officially done), he is entirely resigned to following whatever directions the government issues. The sincerity of his optimism about increased production would appear questionable, had local paddy rice production not jumped in 2008 from the traditional 3-4 tonnes per hectare to 8-9 tonnes per hectare with the introduction of fertilizer and new rice varieties (Interview, UGAMA Staff 1, May 23, 2011). In the case of rice, government plans for smallholder intensification appear to be resulting in positive outcomes, even if none of the farmers interviewed expressed any similar results with monocropping on their land in the hills. Respondents expressed

resignation and sometimes optimism, but they never considered organized resistance to be an option.

That is not to say that individual people are not constantly engaging in discrete forms of resistance. Scott (1985) famously argues that while open defiance by peasants is extremely rare, most often crushed, and even capable of inadvertently bringing about more repressive regimes, the vast majority of peasants cannot openly rebel. Instead they engage in everyday forms of resistance: “foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth” (Scott 1985: 29). These subtle and far more common acts of resistance require neither planning nor collective action, and they avoid open confrontation. While such tactics are neither reserved to the peasantry alone nor likely in most cases to diminish the levels of exploitation being resisted (ibid: 29-30), the spread of small-scale peasant resistance, like the evasion or defection of soldiers in a war, can cause a regime to completely fail in its objectives. Such campaigns, though barely visible, can be equally large and far more effective than great rebellions. Moreover, they are only effective to the extent that they remain undetected (ibid: 30-33). There is point where individual acts may also become unseen collective action:

Seen in the light of a supportive subculture and the knowledge that the risk to any single resister is generally reduced to the extent that the whole community is involved, it becomes plausible to speak of a social movement. Curiously, however, this is a social movement with no formal organization, no formal leaders, no manifestos, no dues, no name, and no banner. By virtue of their institutional invisibility, activities on anything less than a massive scale are, if they are noticed at all, rarely accorded any social significance. (ibid: 35)

Faced with the non-attainment of its goals amidst invisible resistance, a state may respond by lowering expectations, creating new incentives, or resorting to coercion. Regardless of that choice, the peasantry will have changed or narrowed what options are available to the state.

These are the ways that peasants have applied their collective political will throughout history, not through the rebellions that have received history's attention (ibid: 36).

The co-ops made no attempts to defy or transform state policies, but they were free from state interventions in their daily activities. Both cooperatives operated independently from the state, given that government policies are more regulatory than they are managerial.¹⁷ The concept of independence within an authoritarian state such as Rwanda presents a paradox. The co-ops are autonomous under the law, and none of their operations or goals conflict with the law in any way. The general assemblies decide whether to accept the prices offered for their rice, how much of the surplus the co-op should retain, and how that surplus is to be spent. Neither co-op is outwardly political, as is quite ordinary for any such business unless they are drawn together by a common cause. Their goals, such as increased production, food security, and prosperity for members, align perfectly with government targets for the region. The only conflict of intentions arises from the political goals presupposed within my own research questions.

The co-ops are not viable vehicles of resistance against government policy, perhaps in part because no overt resistance movement is possible anywhere in the country, and certainly because resisting the government is not one of the goals of the members. Some or all farmers may participate in forms of everyday resistance (as described by Scott), such as “staying on the sidelines,” “irreverent compliance,” and “withdrawn muteness” (Thomson 2011: 440), but associating organized resistance with their use of marshland that is leased from the government could only bring them more problems. The rice co-ops' start-up and subsequent

¹⁷ The president and vice-president of Coproriz each made a comment suggesting that from 2006 to 2008 some government agencies tried to influence the functions of their co-op, but that Coproriz members successfully pushed back and retained their autonomy (Interviews, Coproriz Male Member 4, May 9, 2011 and Coproriz Male Member 5, May 11, 2011). None of the other members made similar remarks, however.

non-intervention by the government is analogous to the RPF practices described by Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2012): national policy created the businesses and put in place with tight regulations and enforcement (even which crops to grow where), after which government interventions are limited to enforcing regulations. Moreover, the features that seem the most indicative of intervention, the monocropping and the fact that the elected president of Coproriz was a former RPF soldier, are paradoxically some of the most dear to the members. The recent gains in local prosperity were largely attributed to both the productivity of the rice and the competence of the management. The president and vice-president were elected the same year that the co-op hired its first professional coordinator to monitor the organization's finances. When asked about monocropping rice, members said that their initial reluctance was misguided. When asked about the election of the president at Coproriz, they said the election was fair, as it was plain to see who lined up behind which candidate.¹⁸ Moreover, the president was closely associated with the coordinator, who had earned the gratitude and affection of members:

He tells us that we are free to say anything, and that the coop is ours. He tells us about family planning, and we love him a lot. And we have a plan one day to give him a gift. It is like he knows every member. And he tells us that we should be smart so nobody can misuse us like before. (Interview, Coproriz Female Member 5, 12 May 2011)

The administration was credited with turning around the fortunes of the once-struggling cooperative, and it was therefore very popular. In spite of this affection, the fact that the highest position at Coproriz is held by a former RPF soldier (now a relatively comfortable rice farmer), necessarily casts the doubt about the independence of the cooperative. Were he

¹⁸ Without a secret ballot, however, voters are certainly susceptible to vote coercion by others. Nevertheless, respondents to the study did not express any concern in about such things.

to have been placed there by the RPF, such a system of management by proxy would be analogous to the way that the RPF entrusted Tri-Star Investments (now CVL) to three of their members to manage independently (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012: 388). However, as the Coproriz president and many other members insisted, the general assemblies made all of the important decisions, and the elected administrators merely carried out the actions required. Thus the co-ops are functionally independent with three caveats. They have no conflict with the government because they are non-political and their interests are aligned with those of the government. They are subject to state regulations, which in Rwanda often go as far as to dictate such things as which crops must be grown at a given location. And third, the election of a former RPF soldier to the highest position at Coproriz suggests that the RPF had a hand in determining the candidates, as they are known to do in local elections (Burnet 2008: 365-366, Reyntjens 2006: 1107).

None of the farmers interviewed indicated that they felt threatened by government policies, even when prompted by hypothetical situations. Few seemed to share Ansoms' fears that government policies would leave them behind in a green revolution (2011: 245-246). The central question was how they viewed the prospects of the privatization and mechanization of rice farming in the marsh. According to UGAMA's Head of Research and Monitoring, the cooperatives' continued management of the marshland will depend upon their ability to demonstrate to the government that they are able to add value to the marsh. Otherwise, control of the marshes will eventually be given to private interests (Interview, UGAMA Staff 1, May 23, 2011). Of the 18 farmers asked about the prospects of such changes, 16 said that privatization would be negative, 1 that it would never happen, and 1, a non-member, that she was not familiar with the system (see Appendix D for the full sample).

Only one respondent, a member of a rice co-op neighbouring Coderika, suggested that privatization was something that many rice farmers feared:

We are always worried about the potential ownership of the marsh by private investors. [...] The Nyabarongo marsh was sold to private investors to grow sugar, but the government kept insisting that the sugar was more profitable than what was grown before. But the locals do not think the sugar cane is more beneficial because the price they paid for sugar kept going up. The government only benefitted from that, because of the taxes. *[Do you see the threat that the government may do that in other places?]* We think about it a lot. (Interview, Coderika Male Non-member 3, May 18, 2011)

While a minority view among those interviewed, such fears better reflect the nature of national policies as understood by Ansoms and UGAMA. Regarding mechanization, of the 17 asked, 15 responded that machines may benefit members, 2 that it would be negative for members, 6 that it would be negative for local employment, and 5 that any loss of employment could be made up elsewhere. Only one member expressed fears about losing employment to mechanization:

Modernization is always a good thing, but there would be less work for people. For a community, it is better when there are no machines. If we work ourselves, we can get health insurance and food to eat. [...] One time they brought a machine, but it got stuck in the mud. The people were scared of losing their jobs, and they say another one is coming. [...] I do not know everyone's opinion, but some are scared they are taking food out of our hands. (Interview, Male Member 3, May 5, 2011)

A more common view is that the loss of employment at planting and harvest would be made up elsewhere. One Coproriz member summarizes the general attitude of the respondents very well:

The marsh is much better being publicly owned, because the community makes much more than if it was owned by private investors. [...] For example, my employees, they earn money for me, but I spend it locally. But if I was a private investor, the money would leave. [...] If the government wants to implement any policies, it will do it in the interests of the people. And there are representatives in government, so they will not bring in policies that will hurt people. If the machines come and they were cheaper than human labour, then most people would agree with their use. (Interview, Coproriz Male Member 1, May 12, 2011)

Thus as long as the members retain ownership, the profits from mechanized farming would stay in the community. Those with land in the marsh have experienced recent gains in productivity, so they have every reason to be optimistic about future policies. Nevertheless, implicit within the members' optimistic compliance with government policies is that they have no alternative. As the same member said, if state policies ever threatened their livelihoods, "we would not do anything; we would just die inside" (ibid).

The absence of capacity for grassroots activism corresponds to larger trends in Rwandan civil society. Instead of enacting change, Rwandans are complying with it: the formation of the cooperatives was by government force, the antithesis of grassroots organization. The current rice cooperatives were created as part of the government's reorganization of land ownership to modernize agricultural output. Bureaucrats in Kigali dictate both what is grown in the marshes and how farmers are to be organized. The government has decided at present to collectivize the marshland smallholders only to the point of farmer-owned cooperative enterprises wherein individuals retain quasi-ownership of their own plots, and the farmer-members overwhelmingly support this arrangement. However, given the farmers' total submission to government policies, as well as An Ansoms' observation that most government officials interviewed "saw no significant role for smallholders in a green revolution within the agricultural sector," the security of the situation is questionable (2011: 245). As long as civil society has little or no capacity for resisting the government, their future will remain uncertain.

Despite the government's overall domination of civil society, however, Paul Gready maintains that there still exist some pockets of space for organizations to operate. As long as the government deems an NGO to be "with" and not "against" the objectives of the state, the

organization in question may in fact enjoy the small amount of freedom afforded them by the national decentralization policies. The mandate of UGAMA Cooperative Service Centre, to provide training and services to rural producers, corresponds perfectly with government objectives of rural cooperative development, and they therefore can expect to have very few problems complying with government policies and directives. Dependent as it is on international donors for its operating budget, UGAMA, like the state, depends on results from development projects to retain their aid funding. Thus government efforts to be the “donor darling” state and the international desire for success stories described by Zorbas (2011) have unquestionably benefitted UGAMA, whose successful projects have recently prompted the Canadian Cooperative Association (CCA) to greatly expand the project that provided Coproriz and Coderika members with services and training. UGAMA in fact mirrors the Rwandan state’s ability to assume donors’ political agendas, such as in their adoption of sexual equality and gender sensitization training: gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women have become core governmental and UGAMA programs, though it seems very likely that this reflects the desires of donors more closely than those of the local programmers themselves. With such complimentary goals and donor relations, UGAMA can expect both support and autonomy from the Rwandan state.

In addition, the RPF practice of arms-length business development described by David Booth and Frederick Golooba-Mutebi (2012) could potentially suit the interests of cooperative farming very well. In spite of the state campaign to rapidly reorder Rwandan society, the long-term orientation of economic policies could leave room for the slow establishment of community-owned enterprises of a scale that could potentially achieve the government objectives of professionalizing agriculture. Whereas past regimes in Rwanda have had highly interventionist policies toward cooperatives, the RPF prefers to coordinate

national development without taking direct political control of enterprises. Their goal to provide a clear regulatory environment and crack down on corruption has, for example, led to a vigorous campaign to prosecute theft and mismanagement of co-ops, as was the case in Coderika in 2011 and in Coproriz during the previous mandate. The legal support and corresponding policy framework of the Rwanda Cooperative Agency provide cooperative businesses with a clear set of rules in which to operate, as well as a system to adequately police the internal theft that has done such serious damage to the cooperatives. Thus, while the government's long-term vision for agriculture in the marshland remains unclear, in addition to fostering positive relations with donors and civil society organizations that help bring services to co-op members, the Rwandan state's current practices of arms-length support geared toward long-term national business development creates a positive environment for agricultural cooperatives. Although the current focus on cooperative development is no guarantee of future support, the current policies are cause for some cautious optimism, particularly in the marshland.

Thus the cooperatives' current disinterest in resisting government policies is currently of greater importance than their lack of capacity to do so. Members use the co-ops as a means to resist the adverse conditions that they face on a regular basis, and the government appears to share that goal with them. The prospect of privatization, while clearly undesirable to all and frightening to some, appears distant and unlikely to members. Recent gains in rice production have also given farmers cause for some optimism. Some acknowledge – and others fear – that future mechanization may come at the cost of local employment; however, the cooperative ownership of production would allow the profits to be spent locally, creating employment with other ventures. Taken together, these factors lead to the general sentiment that change is both inevitable and the cause for more cautious optimism. Instead of using

their cooperatives to try to resist government policies, members use the co-ops to adapt to them.

Almost achieving food security and poverty reduction

While answers to questions relating to resistance or social movement identity were overwhelmingly negative, more positive replies were recorded in terms of poverty reduction and improvements in food security. Coproriz and Coderika seem, for example, to be *almost* able to provide food security to their members. This is primarily a result of the high rice yield provided by a single block, which can be enough to feed a small family. Floods, droughts, and diseases threaten this yield, but the co-ops have mitigated these risks as best they can with irrigation systems and professional agronomists who treat crop diseases and introduce high-yield varieties of drought- and disease-resistant rice. In addition to the yields, the ability of the members of Coproriz and more recently Coderika to borrow money to get through difficult times is crucially important. As members of the co-op, the farmers have both the asset of the blocks and the guaranteed source of repayment to facilitate loans when they need them most.

Similarly, the co-op membership is often *almost* enough to lift members out of poverty. A single block for a large family, especially a family trying to pay high school fees on top of the mandatory medical insurance paid by all Rwandans, is certainly inadequate to nourish children and pay bills at the same time. For a smaller family, however, or one that has other blocks or plots on the hillsides, membership in one of the rice co-ops can bring earnings that surpass costs and allow for savings and investments. Some respondents proudly told their stories of modest success, such as this man:

[I]n my case, before I did not have a house or a block. I just managed to buy a block on my own, and from that block I got a loan from the bank, supported by the co-op, for 120,000 RWF [200 CAD], then I bought a cow, and then later sold the cow and bought a house. And now I have 5 goats. And I got all that from the co-op, including all the trainings. (Interview 29, Coderika Male Member 1, 16 May 2011)

While this member attributes his success partly to the loans to which the co-op provided him access, it was up to him to be able to save up enough money to buy his first block and to keep expanding his personal income. Thus while co-op membership can be an important step in overcoming poverty, it is nevertheless one of multiple necessary ones.

Possession of a block is an opportunity for increased income, which can lead to small but transformative surpluses. At the end of any productive season, families will often invest any profits in small livestock, such as goats, or rent additional land in order to save money to buy larger investments, such as a cow or a parcel of land. Several of those interviewed said that they regularly rent plots of farmland, despite the fact that the cost of renting was as likely to generate a loss as a profit at harvest time. A rice block in the marsh is also an investment with a related risk; however, rice production is particularly lucrative and has several additional benefits. A rice block is an asset like any other in that farmers who manage to acquire one often do so by hard work and positive conditions, but drought, floods, or disease may force its owner to sell the asset sometime later. However, with the provision of inputs to increase production, agronomists to help treat disease, and credit to get through difficult times, rice production is generally more profitable and less precarious than other crops. Despite the fact that many who already possess rice blocks have insufficient land to achieve total food security, several respondents indicated that the acquisition of their blocks was a major step towards having enough to eat and often the ability to save and to feel prosperous.

Thus membership in a rice co-op can be an effective tool for reducing poverty and increasing food security, but it is not a guaranteed means of success. Rice production is similar to other agriculture in that it requires the investment of capital and labour and as such entails a significant element of risk from weather, disease, and market volatility. However, rice is different in its productivity and in that the cooperative structure provides certain supports to mitigate the risks associated with smallholder production. These supports are the subject of the following sections.

Already mutually-owned and democratically-controlled local enterprises

With some qualifications, Coproriz and Coderika satisfy the internationally accepted definition and principles of cooperatives. The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) defines a cooperative as “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (ICA 2012). To understand the extent to which the two co-ops meet ICA standards, I asked several questions regarding the seven cooperative principles: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training, and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community (ibid). Generally speaking, and to the extent that their capacities allowed, both cooperatives were making efforts towards all of these principles. The first and perhaps greatest exception is that both cooperatives resulted from government-forced cooperativization; however, both co-ops now allow members to join or leave as they like, given the availability of blocks in the marsh. Such blocks and membership continue to be, in fact, highly sought-after. Members of both co-ops displayed a healthy understanding of their democratic decision-making power (see Table 4 and Appendix

E). While answers varied, members generally understood that members were elected to a steering committee or a board of directors to make minor decisions, propose courses of action, and enact the major decisions made by the general assemblies. Of the 19 members

	Daily Decisions	Proposals	Final Decisions
General Assembly			19
Steering Committee	1	2	
Board Committee	2	8	
Coordinator	2		1
President of co-op	4		1
Committees		1	
Zone councillors		1	
Chairperson	1		
Managers	2		

Table 4. Understandings of decision-making structures

asked where ultimate decision-making power lay, 18 responded the general assembly and 1 the coordinator. Of the two non-members asked the same question, one responded the general assembly and the other the co-op's president. While Coproriz retains a higher percentage of sales and at a scale of ten times that of Coderika, members of both co-ops responded that it was the general assemblies that decided how to spend surpluses, whether to accept the price found by the delegates, or whom to elect to the steering committees or boards of directors. Members of Coproriz appeared less content with the price they were getting for their rice, but they were simultaneously extremely happy with the projects that the co-op was able to do with the money that it retained.

The extent to which the cooperatives' elections are free and fair is beyond the scope of this study; however, both co-ops seemed to warrant at least marginally more optimism regarding local-level democracy than expressed in some of the academic literature. Bert Ingelaere recounts his observation of rural elections which were rigged in order for government sympathizers to infiltrate every tiny vein of rural society (2011: 68), and there is

no reason to believe that these co-ops should be any different. It seemed, for example, no small coincidence that the current Coproriz president, elected and well-liked as he was, was the only former RPF soldier that I encountered in the marshland. The former soldier had become a member of a farmers' association in the area while still living in Kigali in 1997, only actually moving at the official union of Coproriz in 2006. The interviewees saw no problem with how he had obtained his position, and he was very well liked by members, as he heads the administration that turned the financial situation of Coproriz from insolvency to savings and growth. He himself told me that he would run for a second term in November of 2011, the maximum allowed by the co-op, only if members asked him. The unpaid position entails considerable responsibility under a regime that holds even veterans like himself accountable: he had been jailed for three months after signing an expense cheque that a factory accountant had written fraudulently. All of the members involved were jailed until they proved their innocence, as he did at his own expense. Thus even if government agents had a major role in his election, as Ingelaere suggests occurs frequently (*ibid*: 72, see also Huggins 2010a: 40), he was nonetheless held accountable to the membership.

Sporadic state intervention does not preclude an otherwise functioning system: respondents in this study provide evidence of functioning democracy even amidst the heavy government presence. Members themselves seemed satisfied with the state of democracy within their co-ops, though Coderika members were slightly less enthusiastic about what it had brought them than were the members of Coproriz. Some insisted that there can be no fraud in the elections, as they lined up behind the candidate they wished to vote for, and anybody could count the number of people behind each candidate. None reported the

presence of soldiers at elections as described by Ingelaere in local politics.¹⁹ Elections at all levels of the co-ops see incumbents beaten by new candidates, suggesting both the functionality of the electoral process as well a need for improvements in leadership.

In spite of questions about government intervention in the selection of leadership, interviewees at both co-ops insisted that all major decisions, goals, and policies were made by their respective general assemblies. Members of both cooperatives displayed a clear sense of control of the activities and expenditures of their organizations, in spite of several instances of dissatisfaction with the price they could find for their rice. The competence of the leadership was very important to the members, with corruption and mismanagement having been such paralyzing problems. Nevertheless, the members of both co-ops saw the role of the leadership as simply enacting the wishes of the general assembly. Thus the members of both cooperatives felt very much in control of the organizations which they themselves owned.

Already providing members with access to important services

The principal way that the cooperatives make a difference in their members' lives is through the services that they provide. The primary purpose of a producer co-op is to find buyers for its members' crops. Farmers' cooperatives are always under pressure from members to provide services while still finding the members good prices for their products. At Coproriz, all but the wealthiest respondents complained that the price that the co-op found for their rice was far too low given the cost and difficulty of production. Importantly, however, not a

¹⁹ Even without the presence of soldiers, investigating the fairness of the co-ops' elections are beyond the scope of this study. The aim throughout has been to understand members' experiences and perceptions about their co-ops. Members of both co-ops have had serious problems with their elected leadership, yet none complained about the electoral process itself.

single member expressed unhappiness with the way the co-op was spending the money that it retained. The price of rice is typically very low at harvest, gradually climbing up to the seasonal high as supplies dwindle leading up to the next harvest. In 2011 Coproriz was selling all of its rice as quickly as it could at harvest, as it did not have the capacity to store the paddy, or the credit to pay farmers before the final sale.²⁰ The prices at Coproriz are set by a committee of members who seek out markets and report to the general assembly for approval. However, without storage and credit, members had no option but to take whatever price can be found. Members of both co-ops must keep a portion of their harvest for personal consumption, and I was told that some Coproriz members sell their personal quota in secret for a higher price to outside traders. At the last harvests, Coproriz members had received 160, 120, and 140 RWF [0.27, 0.20, and 0.23 CAD] per kilogram of paddy rice. Coderika, on the other hand, was able to pay closer to 200 RWF [0.33 CAD] per kilogram. Coderika members had chosen the price that they would accept at their post-harvest general assemblies, and they would not sell until their committee delegates had found that price. This was made possible by the single storage facility at Coderika, which was built with help from UGAMA. Coderika members proudly state that they are known for getting the best price in the region. Thus, interestingly, although Coderika was fragile and struggling as an organization, it nonetheless performed its primary function well, if not quickly. Simply being able to pool their products as a single seller ensures that members of both co-ops do not fall prey to exploitation by predatory traders.

Both co-ops are also able to provide their members with services and inputs, such as high-yield seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides on credit, all of which significantly increase

²⁰ Coproriz has since built more storage and found a bank that will lend to them seasonally, allowing them to sell their rice at the higher seasonal price. This is a major achievement for the co-op.

production (see Table 5 and Appendix F).²¹ Regarding services, Coproriz members are at a clear advantage over the members of Coderika. Coproriz had an arrangement with the Caf Isonga bank where it would guarantee members' loans by using their blocks as soft collateral, to a maximum of 20,000 RWF [33 CAD] per block. Coderika had also recently

	Coproriz	Coderika	Total
Respondents	11	21	32
Training	5	19	24
Loans	9	12	21
Inputs	3	10	13
Health insurance	1	11	12
Group problem-solving	1	3	4
Trees	2	0	2
Market access	2	1	3
Death benefits	2	0	2
Goats	2	0	2
Technical help	0	2	2
Tools	1	1	2
Dividends	0	1	1
Electricity installation (aid)	1	0	1
Mattresses	1	0	1
Outside partnerships	0	1	1
School supplies	1	0	1
Storage	0	1	1
Tontines	1	0	1
Wedding transportation	1	0	1

Table 5. Services named.

begun giving small loans to members in need, but from its own loans budget, which was easily exhausted. Such loans are crucial resources for members struggling to pay mandatory medical insurance, secondary school fees, or emergency medical costs, especially when adverse weather conditions can suddenly and dramatically reduce incomes. Coproriz had also been giving materials to members in need, including goats, mattresses, orange trees, and

²¹ None of the respondents were aware of any health risks from fertilizer or pesticide use. I found this alarming, but I regret that an examination of the products used and the possible health effects is beyond the scope of this study.

trees for firewood, though given the high degree of need, supplies were never fully adequate for all members. Without their co-ops, many members would be dependent upon family and friends for loans during emergencies and difficult times, or worse, be entirely without economic assistance.

Both co-ops also gave members access to services from outside organizations, such as trees to control erosion from the Rural Sector Support Project (RSSP) or ongoing training and technical support from the UGAMA Cooperative Service Centre in Gitarama. UGAMA's training sessions include cooperative management, conflict resolution, gender sensitization, various farming techniques, money management, savings and investments, small-scale projects, family planning, and abuse prevention, all of which the participants valued greatly, despite some clear resentment regarding which farmers receive the training. Lead farmers from both cooperatives are selected for training based on their performance on tests written at the general assemblies, and they are then expected to teach the other farmers in their groups (Interview, Coderika Male Member 2, 17 May 2011). The participants in the direct UGAMA training are awarded a per diem, whereas the rest of the farmers are not, which causes resentment. The opinions of those who receive training contrast greatly with those who do not. Of 10 respondents who were directly trained, 5 called the system good, 0 called it unfair, and 1 said it was necessary to train only delegates. Of 12 respondents who did not receive direct training, 8 called the system unfair, 0 called it good, 1 saw the need to train delegates, and 6 said all members should have access to some direct training. Thus there were no negative perceptions of training from the those who received it directly, and there were no positive assessments from those who did not receive direct training, including those who received it indirectly (see Table 6 and Appendix G). The leaders are, according to

UGAMA and members alike, chosen for their ability to teach others, and all the members interviewed did believe that they were too numerous to all receive training at UGAMA.

Training by delegates	Directly trained	Indirectly trained	Not trained	Total
Good	5	0	0	5
Necessary	1	1	0	2
Unfair	0	7	1	8
<i>Not discussed</i>	4	1	1	6
Total	10	9	2	21

Table 6. Training and fairness

Nevertheless, it seemed to many that the strongest farmers were being rewarded far more than those most in need.

Despite this apparent inequality, the benefits of such technical assistance were being realized in the marshes. Rice is not a traditional crop in Rwanda, the marshes being mostly uncultivated jungle until the arrival of the Chinese in the 1960s. As a result of this, farmers often do not have time-tested practices to maximize efficiency. In a somewhat unexpected answer to a question about the status of women, a Coderika lead farmer explains how she has benefitted from some basic training: “before joining, I used to use 8 kilograms of seeds in a block, and now I use 1 to 2 kilograms. Before, we put 20 grains in a hole, but now we put one” (Interview, Coderika Female Member 5, 16 May 2011). This illustrates the effectiveness that even basic technical training can have, as well as the tangible benefits to the recipients. The same member explains the extent to which she credits the training with the improvements she and her family have experienced:

I have one block at Coderika, and from the CCA training, I managed to get two others at another co-op. *[Which one?]* Coproriz, but in my husband’s name. I know a lot about gender from the trainings. *[Which training helped you get more blocks?]* Small-scale projects. From the trainings, I started saving money in my account. Then I bought a block, then a goat, then another block. I learned that, if

the floods do not take your blocks, you make a lot of money. (Coderika Female Member May 16 2011)

Such services, while offered by UGAMA and the co-ops themselves, are accessible exclusively to co-op members, and they illustrate the indirect benefits of membership in such organizations. While each co-op has yet to achieve the capacity to provide such services on its own, membership in farmers' associations and cooperatives often enable members to access governmental and NGO assistance.

An Ansoms maintains such services are exactly what Rwandan peasants lack the most. She argues that farmers' greatest impediments to overcoming adverse conditions are institutional ones, resulting from the scarcity of land, climate conditions, crop disease, lack of income-generating opportunities, lack of savings, and the absence of any kind of safety net (2011: 243). Ansoms further argues that farmer cooperatives make significant contributions to farmers' wellbeing by creating even the most basic of safety nets to mitigate against climate and market volatility (ibid: 248). The cooperatives' provision of credit or at least soft collateral becomes crucially important in the context of forced monocropping, because removing farmers' alternative crops effectively eliminates their informal crop insurance. The cultivators of rice are generally eager to concentrate on rice as their commercial crop, as it is more lucrative than other products, although most respondents also grew a variety of other crops on their hillside plots for their families' consumption.

Were the Rwandan government to continue to push for more reforms, the cooperatives could potentially become the farmers' only way of retaining ownership of their production. With the 2004 National Land Policy itself asserting that, given ongoing land fragmentation, "the Rwandan family farm unit is no longer viable" (RoR 2004: 16), it seems more than likely that many Rwandans will face increasing government pressure in the future. The co-

ops already mitigate some of the risks and barriers involved with the forced program of agricultural modernization by providing access to a series of commercial benefits otherwise unattainable to smallholders, such as markets and group bargaining power, loans and soft collateral, fertilizer, pesticides, training, and technical assistance. In addition, they may even provide a model for land management where the government would achieve its goal of larger farm units without causing as much disruption to rural life as it otherwise would. In the face of future pressure from being taken over by more capital-intensive forms of production, the co-ops could also provide small producers with their only hope of gathering the resources to compete with larger producers. The ongoing process of agricultural modernization in Rwanda may be against the wishes and even interests of most rural Rwandans, but they themselves have indicated that they can do little to resist government policies. In this context, the cooperative model at least gives them some ability to endure these new and potentially hazardous environments.

Already a source of community and empowerment for women

The status of women was one of the most interesting and encouraging topics discussed in the interviews. The traditional distribution of labour in rural Rwandan culture is typical of many African nations, with men rising early to do paid or heavy labour and having the rest of the day for business and leisure, and women toiling from dawn to dusk in domestic servitude. However, the Rwandan government has declared that the sexes are equal, and generations of Rwandans have learned not to resist heavy-handed governments such as their current one. I soon learned that if I asked “are men and women treated differently?” as originally intended, I would receive the mandatory response that they were equal. I soon learned to instead ask “how are men’s and women’s lives different?” as well as various follow-up questions to

develop a more nuanced description of gender relations inside and outside of the co-ops. Of the 26 people to whom I asked such questions, 19 indicated that gender relations have improved in recent years, 18 described a sense of gender equality, 11 mentioned the continuation of an unequal division of labour, and 6 made reference to other social inequalities (see Table 7 and Appendix H). One member indicated that there had been a reduction in violence against women, which will be discussed below.

Women and men are not equal in Rwanda. However, many women have experienced unprecedented gains in recent years. The law now states that men and women are to be equal, as do the rules of the cooperatives. As a result, many responses contain untenable claims of total equality. Some refused to elaborate on such terse and superficial accounts,

	Female	Male	Total
Respondents	16	10	26
Equality achieved	13	7	20
Equality improved	9	5	14
Equality at home	10	4	14
Equality in co-ops	4	3	7
Equality in decision-making	2	1	3
Equality in education	1	0	1
Tasks simply different	8	2	9
Men in women's roles ²²	7	2	9
Women in men's roles ²³	4	1	5
Unequal labour burden	5	2	7
Unequal socially	4	3	7

Table 7. Differences between men's and women's lives.

while others painted more nuanced and honest accounts of gender relations. While some men are intolerant of the new system, others have adapted more easily. Compliance with the new laws varies from one area to another, as well as within households. Women still work much

²² Examples usually referred to cooking, but also to sweeping and other domestic labour.

²³ Examples included working in construction and in hospitals, wearing boots, and speaking in public.

longer hours than men, and they are not elected to the highest positions within their organizations. However, women's ability to participate in public events and organizations has improved by no small measure:

Before, we were like tied in our homes, but now we can come out. Men are no longer tying their wives in their homes. The way these two women over there hugging, that would have been an abomination. Now, women can move about with no problem. I can even be invited to Kigali and go, and I will come home and find that the kids have been taken care of by my husband. Once I was invited to a training for one month as a health councillor, and I left without any problems. I came back to find everything with no problems, while before I could not go on my own to attend a church service. (Interview, Coderika Female Member 5, May 16, 2011)

Many respondents gave concrete examples of how their experiences have changed: women now participate in societies, co-ops, and schools, they can work in boots and coveralls, they can address crowds in public, and they earn income to support their families. "On gender issues," a Coderika member said, "the co-op can get ten out of ten because at the meetings, when we get three comments from men, we can expect four to five from women" (Interview, Coderika Female Member 12, May 20, 2011). At the same time, men have begun to participate in previously feminized labour. Respondents were able, even during the interviews, to point to men around us doing jobs that had until recently been considered women's work, such as sweeping, cooking, and even caring for children. One woman pointed out the significance of her being able to participate in my interview during a mealtime:

Men and women help each other. Unless the husband does not want to help, men can do whatever women do. Like right now, I will go home and find that my husband has cooked lunch for our kids. Not all husbands do, but most try. It is a recent thing. It started with the gender training from the government. (Interview, Coderika Female 7, May 17, 2011)

While admitting that some men have (quietly) resisted the ideas presented at the government and UGAMA gender training courses, many have also embraced them, greatly changing marriage dynamics:

Now, we can buy things on our own, like salt or other foodstuff, clothes, and things for children. And our husbands can invest in other things. And since the money is ours, we can withdraw it when we want, and we are not burdens to our husbands. (Interview, Coderika Female Member 6, 16 May 2011)

Not having been socially permitted to work for monetized labour made this respondent feel that she was a burden to her husband. Having implicitly accepted the social norm that women could not do paid labour, she felt she was a burden instead of an oppressed member of society. While sexual inequality clearly persists, a reduction in the rigidity of the sexual division of labour has had concrete benefits for many women.

One factor that led to the entry of women into formal labour was a demographic imperative. Burnet argues that violent conflicts such as the Rwandan genocide can disrupt gender relations and create opportunities for new debates and new ways of living (2008: 382-383). Such was the case at Coproriz and Coderika: over half of the members of both co-ops were women, many of their husbands killed or imprisoned. One man describes witnessing women's assumption men's duties, as well as other changes that followed:

Years ago, women had no voice in the community, but the trend has changed gradually. Before, women belonged to the man, but now they share everything. Now men recognize the importance of women because women also have profitable activities. The genocide had an impact on the relation, because many men were imprisoned. While they were away, many wives worked very hard to maintain the family. The women would bring food to the husbands, pay school fees, take care of the farm, and some even built houses. The government also played a big role in the emancipation of women. When you talk to your wife, you can get advice, if you are willing to listen. And you will find out she is right. (Interview, Coderika Male Non-Member 3, May 18, 2011)

This last comment about listening to a wife's wisdom adds the kind of personal touch that makes this member stand apart from those artificially reciting government policy. While

individuals of both sexes internalize the new system to varying degrees, the fact that women now participate in the formal economy allows them a functional independence that they had previously not attained.

After asking about the status of women in general, I next asked whether being a member of a cooperative affects a woman's status. Of the 28 asked, 24 said it did, and 4 said it did not. Within the 24 affirmative responses, 11 cited personal or social benefits, 10 the training that members received, 9 the increased income, and 2 the expansion of income-generating activities (see Table 8). Here again, one of the primary benefits is simply entry into the formal economy, and the increased prosperity resulting from the income. In addition

	Female	Male	Total
Respondents	15	13	28
Status affected	14	10	24
Status not affected	1	3	4
Personal or social benefits	9	2	11
Benefits from training	5	5	10
Benefits from income	3	6	9
Benefits from new activities	0	2	4

Table 8. Effects of membership on the status of women.

to being the most profitable crop in the region, rice is also advantageous for women in that it is a non-traditional crop and therefore outside of the historical division of labour. Men and women alike cultivate rice, and neither sex is taking a traditional activity from the other.

Rice is advantageous as well in that all production is organized through co-ops which promote gender mainstreaming and equal participation of women and men in the organizations themselves. Burnet argues that farming cooperatives were, along with women's grassroots organizations, early sites for women's participation and capacity building in the national women's movement, which predates the genocide by nearly a decade

(2008: 372). Then as now, the co-ops create a setting for public participation. This member credits such participation with a series of improvements in her life:

In my case, when I got married, before having graduated, I used to stay home. But once I joined, I started coming out for meetings. And my husband let me come out for co-op activities like trainings, and some we attended together. Afterwards, my husband even let me go back to school and have a personal tutor, and I passed the national exam. And in general, all these achievements are due to the fact that I joined the co-op. (Interview, Coderika Female Member 3, May 16, 2011)

The phrasing of this story is highly telling of the inequality that still exists. Emancipation here is discussed in terms of what her husband has allowed her to do. Nevertheless, such clear evidence of women's continued subordination is not reason to dismiss recent gains in equality: while the frequent claims of total equality are patently false, change is occurring rapidly at these locations. While current levels of equality are still far from satisfactory, one must not forget that women are starting from a state of extreme marginalization:

Before, you were left behind, but now we are trained and educated. Before, women were not allowed to speak to a crowd or lead a meeting. But now we are in committees, and men are not complaining, while before it was an abomination. [*Would you like a woman president of Coderika?*] That would be great. [*Could a woman be president?*] A woman can. (Interview, Coderika Female Member 10, May 20, 2011).

Although women have not yet begun to hold the highest positions in their organizations, current trends suggest that they will in time. Men and women cultivate side by side in the marsh, and they participate together in their organizations. The gains that women have made in this regard are modest but significant.

There was some evidence to indicate that being organized together has had some success in reducing domestic abuse, although no firm conclusions can be drawn in this regard. This Coproriz member argues that there have been great changes in both law enforcement and local culture:

Women know how to act in attempted sexual abuse or rape, and now even young girls know how to react. In the case of one girl who went to fetch water, a man raped her. And the local women knew it. When she sits, it is painful. Before, she could not report it. But nowadays, they catch everyone. And if the government finds out that you did not report it, the parents are seriously punished. Before, a rapist might bribe parents, but now it can not happen. (Interview, Coproriz Female Member 5, May 12, 2011)

When asked whether such government policies could frighten victims and parents in addition to the perpetrators, she responded that no, the government forcefulness “has been a very good thing for the country, because the culture of impunity is the worst thing that can happen in a country” (ibid). However, another respondent explained that reductions in physical violence did not ensure an end to spousal abuse:

Men strike their wives when they see them getting old, and they go find a new wife. Drinking is the main hobby of men. But the government has helped women to stop being beaten, because a man knows if he beats his wife, he will be in trouble. But he finds other ways of killing her slowly, like making her do all the work while he goes to the bar and takes in other women. (Interview, Coderika Female Member 12, May 20, 2011)

It would thus be naïve to suggest that a crackdown on physical violence could miraculously create harmonious gender relations. Nevertheless, the perceived reduction in physical violence is a source of great hope and pride for some, as suggested by the previous quotation. In addition, it is no small victory for survivors of sexual violence to be able to seek justice through the state in a region where impunity for perpetrators and the stigmatization of victims can be all too common.

Membership in the two co-ops appears to increase citizens’ exposure to these trends. The enthusiasm of some members at times led them to overstate such distinctions: “now if a woman is beaten, people tell the men it is bad. Now only non-members are beaten” (Interview, Coderika Female Member 2, May 16, 2011). One respondent suggested that

CoprORIZ' zone leaders²⁴ were both involved in and very much accountable for the actions of zone members:

When the farmers are paid for their rice, one of the zone leaders' tasks is to see what the money is spent on. They want to know if people are drinking away their money, and if their kids are clean. And if the zone leaders are not checking on things, they are punished. When the husbands spend the money on themselves, sometimes the wives complain to the coordinator. Then he brings it up at the general assembly so that the husband can learn a better way. The coordinator will tell the wife that if the husband does it again, the general assembly will take actions against him. And that goes for things at home, not just things related to the co-op. (Interview, Coproriz Female Member 5, 12 May 2011)

Because the themes of accountability and discipline are so very prevalent in Rwanda today, it is perhaps not surprising that a zone leader may be punished for the behaviour of zone members. However, while Rwandans may be somewhat accustomed to being monitored by different levels of authority, the addition of certain norms, such as ending the mistreatment of women, is a more recent phenomenon. The president of the steering committee at Coderika indicated that the changes had happened rapidly, after the gender training they had received in the previous year. Her claim that now only non-members are beaten is implausible, but it highlights a difference in the experiences of members and non-members. Another group president confirmed her involvement in members' home lives, saying that it was her responsibility to ensure, for example, that female members' incomes were not taken from them by violence (Interview, Coderika Female Member 4, 16 May 2011). While these members may be overstating the extent and success of their community involvement, the change in the treatment of women is one of the few unambiguously positive effects of the ambitious government policies being introduced and facilitated by community-level

²⁴ In Coproriz blocks are grouped into zones with elected zone leaders, and at Coderika they have groups with group presidents. Coderika's groups are based on the associations that predate the co-op.

networks such as cooperatives and local governments. The tremendous efficiency of the system is perhaps due to the fact that these organizations need only notify people about new laws and perhaps explain them; that citizens will comply is already understood. While the rapid pace of the changes leaves women vulnerable to future reactionary actions, the current culture of compliance with the state seems for now to preclude such actions. In spite this potential harm and the reality of continued inequality, current trends have to date improved the treatment and opportunities available to women, particularly those who are members of cooperatives.

Given these larger trends, it appears that participation in cooperatives is both a result and a source of the modest gains in the empowerment of women. The large-scale loss of men during and after the genocide forced women to assume men's roles as providers for their families, and government policies have dictated that women and men will have equal rights. The cooperatives have provided means of doing both of these things. In addition, the cooperatives provide a setting for local democratic participation in the management of the marshland. The organizations increase members' exposure to campaigns and training from government and NGO sources alike. They also create a forum for women to come together and share their experiences and to reduce the isolation and loneliness of farming alone, the importance of which should not be underestimated. While the permanence and momentum of the recent changes in the status of women remain unclear, access to a lucrative non-traditional crop, government policies of sexual equality, services accessed through the co-ops, and the democratic co-op structure have allowed women to make unprecedented steps toward gender equality in a traditionally male-dominated society.

Already replacing isolation with friendship, community, and solidarity

The social benefits of cooperation, while particularly noticeable among women, are being felt by women and men alike. While the poverty and marginalization of women may be more extreme and widespread than that of men, the daily struggles related to poverty and isolation are common to members of both sexes. A portion of each interview was dedicated to examining whether or in what ways the co-ops fulfilled non-material, social needs of members. Direct questions about social benefits were not always immediately fruitful: when asked about concrete social benefits, members often responded that group selling and external training were all that they gained. However, members indirectly answered such questions at other times. An examination of responses throughout the broader interview process reveals that members frequently show their collective businesses to be great sources of pride, friendship, community, and solidarity.

For members of Coproriz, the organization itself was a source of great pride. The ongoing construction and other recent changes at Coproriz were a clear source of satisfaction for its members, giving them a more general sense of improvement in their community:

We used to hold our general assembly under that tree, and when it rained we had to find shelter. And now we have a meeting hall where we can feel the benefit of our work. And at the end we always dance and have a party. (Interview, Coproriz Female Member 5, May 12, 2011)

With a smile, this woman explains that the building gave them both a place and a reason to celebrate. Membership in a co-op contributes to feelings of prosperity from increased personal income, but also from collective ownership of growing infrastructure, as indicated by a member of a cassava co-op near Coproriz: “The dividends from profits also help. All the construction you can see here, and other activities, it feels like they are yours” (Interview, Coproriz Non-member 1, May 7, 2011). Regarding the decision to build as well as the

construction itself, another member said “you see yourself as part of it” (Interview, Coproriz Female Member 2, May 9, 2011). The management problems at Coderika did not allow for similar organizational growth and resulting member pride. At the same time, its members were proud to state that they received the highest price for their rice, a fact which they owed in part to their storage facility at the marsh. In cases such as these, the shared ownership and basic services of the cooperative organizations leave members of modest or precarious personal means feeling proud and even “full of joy” (Interview, Coderika Female Member 10, May 18, 2011).

Concern for community, the seventh of the International Co-operative Alliance’s principles, also posed some initial challenges as a topic of discussion. Although my interpreter would frequently use the word “community” when translating from Kinyarwanda to English, he explained that the reverse translation required more specificity. Realizing that I, like the English literature on Rwanda, use the word to mean the people one interacts with, the groups with which one identifies, or the locations to which one is near, I decided that “the people who live in your area or work where you work” best captured the broadness intended within the questions.²⁵ The quirk of translation seemed to reinforce the reality of both the geographical fact that houses have traditionally been spread out throughout the hills instead of clustered together in villages, as well as the tenuous nature of the post-conflict social fabric. The inevitable result of long periods of ethnic conflict, massive death, relocation, and government surveillance is an incredible amount of pain, isolation, mistrust, and loneliness (Thomson 2011: 453, Burnet 2008: 385).

²⁵ Unfortunately, this conversation occurred well into the interview process, and I was not able to incorporate a precise use and analysis of the existing options in Kinyarwanda.

Respondents often referred to the co-ops as ending loneliness or building friendships. It was cited as a reason to join: “I did not want to be alone, and I wanted to improve life through co-ops” (Interview, Coderika Male Member 6, May 21, 2011). Another member joined because he “[w]anted training, to learn more skills about farming, access to projects, and to be with others in the community” (Interview, Coderika Male Member 2, May 17, 2011). The word “loneliness” was also used to describe a state of isolation or alienation from others: “Because of loneliness and ignorance, women used to stay in their homes and not attend meetings or public functions. But when we started joining cooperatives, we were elected to local government institutions” (Interview, Coproriz Female Member 5, May 12, 2011). Describing how membership affects a woman’s status, the vice-president of Coderika said “it takes her out of loneliness, she gets community,²⁶ and she becomes smarter” (Interview, Coderika Female Member 1, May 10, 2011). Ending lonesomeness was also an answer to direct questions about social benefits of cooperation:

There are so many. It is a very good thing to be part of. You are out of loneliness, you get smarter, and though not all the farmers can go to school, you would think they had gone to school. In my case, I have learned though different training good farming techniques, production costs, losses or earning money. Even if I have only got a primary education, I can lead university graduates. I have even been chair of a school committee. (Interview, Coproriz Male Member 5, May 11, 2011)

Within the cooperatives, members have found friendship: “There are benefits, good ones like having friends on this hill, too, because of the co-op” (Interview, Coderika Female Member 6, May 16, 2011). One member described a social benefit of cooperative farming as “[c]oming together with friends to solve our problems” (Interview, Coderika Female Member 10, May 18, 2011), and another said “[w]e can meet new people, learn from

²⁶ When asked for a more literal translation of such uses of “community” in Kinyarwanda, my interpreter specified the term as “a group of trustworthy friends/people they can rely [upon] any time in the neighbourhood” (Email, Interpreter, October 10, 2013).

trainings, and become intelligent” (Interview, Coderika Female Member 12, May 20, 2011). “It helps to be with others,” one woman simply said (Interview, Female Member 7, May 17, 2011). The professional manager of Coproriz expresses these sentiments using more mainstream international terminology:

Being part of a co-op makes people into a community where they help each other. For example, today a sick woman came. She needed a loan although she already had one. And so social benefits are more than economic ones. And these other benefits, when the co-op helps them with inputs, given on credit. These are the most important. (Interview, Coproriz Coordinator, May 13, 2011)

While an emergency loan is at least as much an economic as a social benefit of cooperation, the coordinator nonetheless describes the sense of mutual help which membership provides. Both co-ops were making efforts to help members in the most need, although Coproriz had far more capacity to do so. All of the preceding quotations include, in one form or another, a description of replacing loneliness and isolation with friendship and mutual help, of bringing small farmers together into communities of friendship and solidarity that had previously not existed. While none of the above quotations necessarily demonstrates any large-scale social cohesion among members, they nevertheless indicate several instances of personal isolation being replaced by a local friendship network and a very general sense of a wider community of members. In a country where peasants often experience “extreme poverty, emotional pain, continual fear, and constant isolation” (Thomson 2011: 453), even small-scale friendship and mutual trust can be tremendously valuable. Similarly to the their provision of basic financial services, the social networks formed within the cooperatives constitute a basic safety net which members may have completely lacked before joining.

Despite some initiatives from UGAMA, the creation of a wider community of cooperatives did not show the same modest signs of growth. Cooperation among cooperatives is the sixth ICA principle, but it is clearly not a priority of the membership of

either co-op. Some links have been made between Coproriz and Coderika through UGAMA: the members receive their training together, and the proposed factory project would serve both co-ops. Both co-ops were also stakeholders in the company that provided them with their inputs, Apisco (Interview, Coderika Female Member 12, May 20, 2011). These early forms of inter-organizational cooperation are extremely modest, however. The fact that there is a strong national regulator, the Rwanda Co-operative Authority, and extremely weak regional and national co-op federations indicates that the co-ops are a creation of government, not civil society (Interview, UGAMA Staff 1, May 23, 2011). The national rice cooperative union, UCORIRWA (Union des Coopératives Rizicoles au Rwanda), has a very limited presence at both co-ops, many members being unaware of its existence. The weakness of the national union is a symptom of the fact that the cooperative “movement” in Rwanda is a top-down government construct, not the joining together of bottom-up grassroots initiatives.

Thus the communities formed by the cooperatives are small-scale. At the co-op level, pride in the organizations and the idea of mutual help may result in a vague conception of a community of all members, but respondents put greater emphasis on the friendships that membership helped them build. Difficult conditions, unbelievable tragedy, and the loss of family and friends have led to large amounts of pain and isolation. Even at such a modest scale, the communities of friendship and mutual help are clearly important to the members of both cooperatives. In this way, the co-ops undoubtedly fulfill certain essential social needs of their members.

Conclusion

Returning once again to my questions ranging from the practical to the political, social, and theoretical, my answers are again no, almost, and yes: while the co-ops themselves are a far cry from grassroots activist movements capable of political resistance, and while they are not effective vehicles to directly address material inequality, they have been used successfully by many individuals to reduce their own poverty and increase their food security. The cooperatives already provide essential bargaining power, infrastructure, and services to members, and they are working hard to develop these capacities. While Coproriz has made dramatic increases in its ability to expand its infrastructure and services to members, it was in a similar position to Coderika just three years earlier. Finally, in the same way that the training and financial services provided by the cooperatives constitute a basic safety net to many farmers who would otherwise have none, the co-ops also facilitate the growth of social networks of farmers who may otherwise be living in a state of isolation. Nowhere is this more apparent than within the co-ops' female majorities, where the organizations have increased women's exposure to state equality policies and training, given women a gainful source of income, and presented them with opportunities for public participation and elected positions. Despite very modest means, both cooperatives make significant contributions to the achievement of members' economic and social needs.

V. COOPERATIVES AND (POST)DEVELOPMENT

What, then, is a proponent of post-development to make of the situation in Rwanda? As stated in the first chapter, this thesis aims to maintain a sceptical post-development perspective by avoiding essentializations and normative prescriptions and looking to local communities' own aspirations for appropriate development models (Ziai 2007d: 120-121). In this chapter, I discuss my findings at Coproriz and Coderika in terms of the two variants of post-development identified by Ziai, the sceptical and neo-populist perspectives. I argue that, while government domination in Rwanda is perhaps antithetical to the values held by individuals of both perspectives, the sceptical post-development variant is able to contribute productively to the national discussion where a neo-populist stance cannot. A true commitment to a community's right to self-determination does not preclude modernist development, even socially disruptive forms such as that which is ongoing in Rwanda. As for the cooperatives themselves, while any proponent of grassroots social movement development should be greatly dispirited by the farmers' passive role in the initial organization of their cooperatives, as well as the total absence of political mobilization within them, one may also note the potential seeds of community empowerment via these local democratic institutions. The value of the cooperatives to their members is undeniable, given the material and social benefits they receive. However, given the uncertainty of the government's long-term commitment to cooperative development, even those with sceptical post-development perspectives would nevertheless be extremely wary of government campaigns to alter traditional modes of production in rural Rwanda.

Common to both post-development camps is the rejection of the assumptions of the development discourse, such as the appropriateness of modern capitalist development in all

situations. Albeit to varying degrees, any author who identifies with post-development identifies with Escobar's assertion that we need to look not for alternative development, but alternatives *to* development (1995a: 215). A typical unit of analysis in post-development may involve a community or class of people, large or small, that has been disrupted by the neo-liberal development model, and the promotion of whatever non-conventional course of action the community may have chosen as a result. Esteva and Prakash (1998) focus much of their analysis on the *Zapatista* movement in southern Mexico, Shiva (2002) reasserts the logical efficiency and sustainability of India's traditional agricultural practices in opposition to modern ones, and, in the same country, K. Ravi Rahman (2007) celebrates the public rejection of American soft drinks. There often exists a clear dichotomy between the Western capitalist development model and local communities' desired forms of production and consumption. In these cases, the neo-populist and sceptical post-development perspectives may lead to very similar conclusions. However, in cases such as Rwanda, no such clear distinction can be made between indigenous and exogenous ideas and aspirations. In cases such as this, where a rural community expresses desires for the kind of development that proponents of post-development habitually reject, the differences between neo-populist and sceptical post-development perspectives become clear. Those who take seriously the sceptical post-development commitment to a community's right to self determination may be required to take positions that run counter to their own personal ideals regarding local development. Thus while Esteva and Prakash display neo-populism in asserting that "the plague of economic thinking and living, like AIDS, is contaminating the non-economic cultures" (1998: 10), Rist instead maintains a sceptical stance, saying that the goal is rather to invent new ways of living that exist between modernization, which has both problems and advantages, and tradition, which is acts as our guide but not our final goal (1997: 244). Even

if Rist himself may not share the rice farmers' enthusiasm for modernization, his sceptical post-development perspective allows him to understand or promote whatever path Rwandans choose.

Promoting communities' autonomy and choices requires listening closely to the desires and aspirations of the groups in question. To this end, the following section examines interviewee responses to questions about their visions of positive change, development, and cooperatives. Subsequent sections include sceptical and neo-populist examinations of the Rwandan case and cooperatives more generally. I conclude that, while local desires for non-traditional development in rural Rwanda are irreconcilable with neo-populist post-development perspectives, a sceptical post-development perspective allows an observer to promote the communities in their aspirations and engage productively in the national development debate. Despite its shortcomings and potential vulnerability, the current rice cooperative model appears highly appropriate for Rwandan cultivators. While the general suitability of cooperatives in post-development is certainly not universal, communities that choose the cooperative model benefit from local labour's ownership of production, economic democratization, and community reinvestment.

Local definitions and aspirations of development

Before asking respondents to define the word development, I asked them what they would consider to be positive change in the future, be it in five years, ten years, or when their

children were raising their own children²⁷ (see Table 9). Within the 34 responses to this question, the most common answers were to have electricity (15), schools nearby (14),

Co-op	Respondent	Positive change for the future
CoprORIZ	MM1 ²⁸	Access to credit, modern farming techniques, government investments in fertilizer and machines, non-agricultural jobs like handicrafts, and other technologies for local industry.
CoprORIZ	MM2	Water and electricity. Water available to all members.
CoprORIZ	MM3	Another dam, cows and mattresses as dividends not loans, every member to have a truck or car, all the households to be sustainable, having chairs in their houses, and to have saved for my children.
CoprORIZ	MNM1	Electricity, water, roads, modern farming, schools, everyone having a means of transport, and good houses.
CoprORIZ	FM1	Water, electricity, schools. The president and government, how he's doing it, it will not take too long for the kids to live that life.
CoprORIZ	FM2	I just want development, and for the country to be developed. Except for the school fees: if we die, we want our children to survive.
CoprORIZ	MM4 (Pres.)	By September, we want to expand the canteen. By 2012, we want a secondary school. By 2014 it will be completed. And we want an MFI and a clinic in the next strategic plan after 2014. By July we want a pickup truck. I visited Muiwata in Tanzania, and I found that the farmer organizations have a university and hotel. And we want 4-storey offices.
CoprORIZ	MM5	Education with English training starting in nursery school, increased rice yields for more food and more cash. That's what development means to me.
CoprORIZ	FM3	A nursery school nearby. Now we have to cross a river, and some kids die crossing.
CoprORIZ	FM4	A secondary school because lots of kids drop out.
CoprORIZ	FM5	Electricity and to leave my kids in good conditions.
CoprORIZ	Coordinator	After the factory, a school, a SACCO [savings and credit cooperative] to help wait out the low seasonal prices. We also want to keep increasing production.
CoprORIZ	MM7	Development, access to water, electricity, and factories.
CoprORIZ	FNM1	A hospital and school that are nearby, and the school to always have food. And if the factory is here, we may get jobs and something to eat for our children.
Coderika	FM1 (Vice-Pres.)	More rice varieties. In the community, the main problem is not infrastructure; it is that we are all spread out. We would be better in villages together.
Coderika	FM2 (Steering C.)	Electricity, a maintained road, good houses, and good milking cows. These are not houses; they are like kitchens.
Coderika	FM3 (Sec.)	Electricity, a hospital, and a school.
Coderika	FM4	Development: roads, electricity, a secondary school, and for this area to be clean. It is just marsh and mosquitos. There is even a very dirty river can see below. You can cross the marsh, but it will take you an hour.
Coderika	MM1	electricity, high schools, paved road, and more income-generating activities.
Coderika	FM5	Paved road, electricity, public lights. And we can not even believe that the road has grown to the size and quality that it has this year. It is from the <i>travaux d'intérêt général</i> [community service]. We do not get paid.
Coderika	FM6	Electricity, a paved road, and taxis with passengers
Coderika	MM2	Electricity, markets, buyers for rice.
Coderika	MNM1	Income-generating projects, and the capacity to invest for our kids.
Coderika	FM7	Schools, hospitals, other infrastructure to provide jobs to people in rural areas.
Coderika	MM 3	A rice factory, better prices. The factory here is not satisfactory. Also to live in towns instead of spread out, so we can get infrastructure.
Coderika	FM8	Roads and public lights.
Coderika	MNM3	if we could modernize, as to make the work less tiring, that would be enough development for this area in general, because we have been lagging behind in development. Also factories for rice and maize. With fertilizer we can cultivate small areas and have high yields. That would also help with other local businesses.

²⁷ While I had intended to ask about each time period individually, it became clear that it was difficult to assign deadlines for optimism. As a result, I asked about all three time periods together, and only some participants chose to include the time periods in their responses

²⁸ "MM" denotes "Male Member," "FM" "Female Member," and "NM" "Non-Member."

Coderika	MM4	Improved infrastructure: roads, electricity, hospitals, schools, factories, modern agriculture, improved animal husbandry, well-planned trading centres, improved day-to-day life.
Coderika	FM10	Factories for rice, cassava, maize, a paved road, electricity, and a university.
Coderika	FM12	A rice factory, a truck for transport, machines to reduce time and production costs, and more training and study tours in Rwanda and in developed countries.
Coderika	MM6	Enough food, electricity, bikes for poor families, and motorcycles for the middle class, a hospital, and factories. And these last two are on the way, with the Kinazi hospital and cassava factory here.
Coderika	MM8	Development is already coming with this cassava factory. I would like many factories.

Table 9. Positive change for the future.

factories for processing their production (10), paved roads (9), medical facilities nearby (6), and diversification of the local economy (6). In more general terms, 25 of 34 responses included improved infrastructure (electricity, schools, roads, hospitals), 13 the modernization of production (factories, mechanization, fertilizer, increased yields), 10 general household prosperity (food security, savings, “development”), 8 additions to the local economy (diversification, markets), 4 increased possessions for members (animals, vehicles, bicycles, furniture), and 2 increased access to services (training, credit). Despite some variation in their responses a unified message was clear: life was difficult due to low incomes and a lack of infrastructure and services, and local farmers would like to participate in the kinds of improvements they have witnessed in other places around the country.

Next I asked each person to define the word development. Nearly every respondent had a different way of phrasing a definition that meant going from a negative state to a positive one: from ignorance to intelligence, from darkness to light, from poverty to comfort, from sadness to happiness, or just to have health insurance (see Table 10). I also asked about several different actors in the development process, such as the actual and ideal role of co-ops, professionals, the government, and international donors. Generally speaking, the respondents were quite resigned in answering that they expected little from any of them,

though they appreciated what training and support they already received. The government should provide a more infrastructure, several added. The participants' responses typically

Co-op	Respondent	Definition of development
CoprORIZ	MM1	An improvement in all the facets of life. Like turning from drinking dirty to clean water, from old shoes to new ones, from a poor house to a better one.
CoprORIZ	MM2	An improvement in one's life. Getting out of poverty means immediately that you are in development.
CoprORIZ	MM3	Development is a good thing. When someone is in development, it means he has the things he needs, like electricity, because you can have a fridge and weld and work timber.
CoprORIZ	MNM1	Taking people from poverty. Looking sharp, good houses, and eating well.
CoprORIZ	FM1	The availability of electricity. Having a hospital, because it is always challenging to travel. We are working for the kids, because we will soon pass away.
CoprORIZ	FM2	Getting out of poverty and having health insurance.
CoprORIZ	MM4	Coming out of ignorance and poverty, lifting livings standards. Darkness to light.
CoprORIZ	FM3	Change or improvement of the way you live to a better life. The first development would be the factory and electricity.
CoprORIZ	Coordinator	Going from one position to a higher position mentally and by living standards. For example, if you stay in a low class, those without mattresses or water, you are not developed. If you get better, you are developed. Or the rise in production from 3 to 7 tonnes per hectare of paddy. This is development. But it is never fully attained because all the needs are unlimited.
CoprORIZ	MM7	If the factory is here, it will be very good for the farmers, and they will not have to pound the paddy in the traditional way.
CoprORIZ	FNM1	Coming from bad things to good things. Today I am a widow, but tomorrow I may have a better life. Or it could be worse.
Coderika	FM2	Like from a bike to a motorcycle. From a mud house to one with a roof that saves water. It costs thousands.
Coderika	FM3	Going forward. Your activities go from a low level to a high level in what you do.
Coderika	FM4	Coming from one point and changing categorically to another point that is higher. There is electricity. A paved road from here to Nyanatra, and public lights, and making it easier for our phases to change.
Coderika	MM1	Coming from one level to another one.
Coderika	FM5	Going from one level to a higher one. Higher and better.
Coderika	FM6	An improvement in someone's life; going from one point to another.
Coderika	FM8	Coming from one position or point to another that is better or improved.
Coderika	MNM3	Development is like climbing a ladder, from where you are to another step forward. Like for example, in this area, if we got a hospital, and communications like telephones, and paved roads where we can get taxis. And schools, too.
Coderika	MM4	Development is when people in a community are well informed, attend school, are aware of their environment. They can get an easy life and other social awareness.
Coderika	FM10	Kids did not wear shoes before, but they do now. And towers to have cell phones.
Coderika	MM6	From where you are to a higher category.

Table 10. Definitions of development.

showed hopefulness for some small improvements, but no more. In spite of the many ongoing changes in the country and in their co-op (in the case of Coproriz), few members expressed any great enthusiasm or hope for major changes to their communities in the foreseeable future. They did not see their cooperatives as a means of seizing control of their own path to development.

My final questions asked what were the most important issues facing local farmers and whether anything important had been missed. Of the 28 farmers asked, 18 answered weather conditions (drought, floods, or both), 11 a lack of infrastructure (irrigation, dams, or processing facilities), 5 poverty, 5 prices, 4 lack of training, 3 lack of transport, 3 sickness or lack of medical facilities, 2 crop disease, 2 mismanagement, 1 low yield, 1 access to credit, and 1 safe drinking water (see Table 11). The interviewees presented a clear picture of the

Co-op	Respondent	The most important problems facing their communities
Coproriz	MM1	Weather problems, and not enough precipitation. And the prices are not fair. Traders have more money than the farmers. Because of the poverty, people sell everything at harvest, and then the price rises later.
Coproriz	MM2	The biggest issue is the floods.
Coproriz	MM3	Floods. R SSP [Rwandan Rural Sector Support Project] built a dam, though there are still small floods. They said that if we manage ours well, we will get another one.
Coproriz	MNM1	Weather conditions bring hunger, and the harvest gets damaged when there is too much sun. Or disease. We do not have the ability to irrigate on hillsides. Too much rain is always a surprise. And pesticides for disease try to help.
Coproriz	FM1	Low yield. This year we worked hard, and production will be very low.
Coproriz	FM2	Poverty. We are always poor. Those with 10–20 blocks will never be equal. I will always be in debt from my loans and insurance.
Coproriz	FM3	Poverty in general.
Coproriz	FM4	Loans do not help if you can not pay them back.
Coproriz	MM7	Dikes and erosion control have controlled the floods in some areas, but there are places on the upper side of the marsh that still cannot grow rice.
Coproriz	FNM1	Weather. In drought we really suffer, and the floods are almost as bad.
Coderika	FM2	Weather. The marsh, especially, because of drought. Even in the hills. It is hard for farms. Waiting for higher prices is impossible, because you can not keep your beans in your house when your stomach is empty.
Coderika	FM3	Drought and sickness. Malaria. We have mosquito nets, but you can not move.
Coderika	FM4	Heat, sun, drought. We need dikes to have the water run all year.
Coderika	FM5	Lack of precipitation.
Coderika	FM6	Lack of water and training.
Coderika	MM2	Drought and rice processing.
Coderika	MNM1	The transport of the harvest. Poverty in general.
Coderika	FM7	We used to lack markets, especially for cassava. But with the new factory, It should be resolved. And it is far to the hospital from here.
Coderika	MM 3	The marsh it not well irrigated, so drought can seriously affect our yield. We also need more training to increase profitability and reduce our population growth.
Coderika	FM8	Because everyone is a farmer, when production is high we do not get a market.
Coderika	MNM3	The price of our harvest. The traders make profits while the farmers remain poor.
Coderika	MM4	Transportation. Loans. Medical facilities. Lack of training in all sectors of life.
Coderika	FM10	The lack of rice processing machinery.
Coderika	FM11	Access to market, prices, and drought. We can not irrigate the hills.
Coderika	FM12	Lack of training, long distance to development infrastructures (though we will have a cassava factory here soon), and weather, for which we have no solution.
Coderika	MM6	Drought, though we do not have any control of that. I heard that in some areas, they irrigate even hillsides. And the same problem in the marsh: not enough water when you need it. Also too much rain may wash away your blocks.
Coderika	MM7	This marsh always has water problems, and it is even worse than the managers. If we had two dams, it would be better. If we had two tanks available, then we could service these areas in the dry seasons.
Coderika	MM8	Drought. But we have some hope that it will not be so bad. Sometimes it ruins the crops right now, but good and bad come together. But there is more good.

Table 11. The most important problems.

problems that they faced on a daily basis, and they were also able to identify several potential solutions to them. The need for investments for water control stands out as a major solution to weather-related problems. While medical facilities are the state's to provide, the co-ops must secure storage and credit to secure higher prices. The infrastructure needed for certain goals may also fall within both the domain of the state and of the co-ops: cost-effective transportation requires co-op investment in a transport truck (which Coproriz has made), as well as state investment in adequate roads and bridges. However, few respondents anticipated increases in government investment. Thus, in the absence of more government programs to address these subsistence-level obstacles to the well-being of farming families, producers must rely upon NGO and cooperative campaigns to develop infrastructure and income-generating activities.

Not a model for post-development?

The present case appears to differ greatly from the kinds of movements from which the proponents of post-development take inspiration. The cooperative members' lack of activism or leading role in the creation of their organizations is the first and most striking divergence from the norm. The members control the activities of the co-ops, and they are free to leave at any time, but the marshlands will nevertheless be farmed as organized by the government. While those adopting sceptical post-development perspectives do not make normative statements about a community's decisions for its chosen path of development, they nonetheless defend a community's right to define its own aspirations (Ziai: 2007d: 118). One may suggest that both communities have chosen compliance with government policies in hopes of achieving future prosperity, and this may indeed be the case. The present generation

of farmers has experienced unthinkable destruction and tragedy, and they now generally live in security from physical violence. Although government policies are enforced with the threat of coercive power, the marshland policies themselves have not yet proven to be destructive to the peasant way of life in the two communities studied. In fact, for rice farmers in particular, the cooperative policies seem to have been quite beneficial. Thus while Rwandan rice farmers lack the capacity to resist the coercive state, so too do they lack any immediate reason to want to. As indicated above, those interviewed wanted improvements in production and living standards, and they were willing to make certain sacrifices to achieve them. More precisely, once they began to benefit from certain policies, the disruptions that had been forced on the farmers appeared worthwhile. Whereas the peasants' actions may appear logical to both post-development perspectives, the forcefulness of the state is clearly problematic: to proponents of communities' own self-determination, understanding the farmers' reasons for compliance makes their powerlessness no less of an outrage.

To the government's actual ambitions for reshaping Rwandan society, however, the neo-populist and sceptical post-development perspectives generate markedly different responses. From the neo-populist perspective, the government campaign to diverge from traditional production is an intolerable aberration which should be opposed. Shiva argues compellingly that industrial beef production disrupts the Indian food, energy, employment, and ecological systems, characterizing the situation as "mad cow culture replacing the sacred cow culture" (2002: 192), in which she also includes the Westernization of cultural preferences, such as guests being served soft drinks and chips instead of more natural and traditional snacks (ibid: 194). The modernist, top-down nature of Rwandan policies makes current trends particularly egregious violations of the principles of local, traditional, and ecological production and consumption. In addition, such state control would be intolerable

for Esteva and Prakash, who go so far as to call the 1995 French protests counter-productive to their own cause because state-focused protests acknowledge and thus reinforce state power (1998: 29). From a sceptical post-development perspective, on the other hand, a more important question is whether the state has the consent of the populations concerned. Cultures and societies may change over time through irregular and even tumultuous processes of internal and external interaction, and such processes of renewal keep cultures alive. A sceptical post-development author is most concerned with respecting cultural autonomy: according to Max-Neef, within a given culture, “the way in which needs are understood, and the role and attributes ascribed to the possible satisfiers, *are absolutely definitive*, in determining a development strategy” (1992: 212, emphasis in original). Thus the desires of the people affected are of paramount importance. That said, it is difficult to estimate to what extent the highly-centralized government program of social change has the consent of the people it affects. Presumably there is more disagreement with state policies than the currently low levels public dissent would otherwise indicate: in a country where election results are questionable, opposition leaders are jailed, and unwanted civil society organizations are expelled, the government’s legitimacy in speaking on behalf of its population is extremely low (Reyntjens 2011: 15-16, Thomson 2011: 442). Were the Rwandan society embarking on this great transformation voluntarily, sceptical post-development authors would consider the choice legitimate, if not necessarily optimal. However, this is simply not the case: the Rwandan state has chosen a new and surely difficult path for the country without seeking the consent of those affected.

In addition to the apparent lack of government legitimacy, the movement toward modern industrial agriculture conflicts with the values typical of post-development. For example, both post-development perspectives may be concerned with the perils of

monocropping, such as increased vulnerability to crop failures, soil depletion, and dependence on fertilizers. Indeed, Ansoms notes at least one case where farmers were forced to monocrop their lands and later suffered from malnutrition when the crops failed (2011: 247). In addition, cooperativization could ultimately be little more than a stage in a larger campaign to eventually eliminate small farmers, as Ansoms suggests the government may intend to do. The way rice is farmed certainly seems to be a step toward modern industrial agriculture: here a non-indigenous crop is intensively monocropped with chemical fertilizers and pesticides, transported increasing distances via fossil fuels, processed into a refined and less nutritious form, and finally sold in international capitalist markets. On the other hand, they are also using natural fertilizers, constructing local processing facilities, and producing a staple food in an attempt catch up with national consumption. Nevertheless, the intensification, industrialization, and monetization elements are undeniably significant new changes with potential risks to the producers' way of life. The growth of an organized cooperative agriculture sector is undeniably a step from tradition towards a kind of modernization, about which any post-development thinker may have serious misgivings.

Here again there emerges a clear distinction between the neo-populist and sceptical perspectives. A neo-populist post-development author may object to any divergence from traditional production and consumption for the sake of preserving traditional methods or cultures as they have previously been. Rahnema, for example, calls development a disease characterized by addiction to endless wants, where "the contaminated tend to perceive their addiction as a universal model of life, good for all the non-addicted" (1997: 124). Thus even if individuals think that they want to break from tradition, they are "contaminated" and their desires are unauthentic or false. Conversely, a sceptical post-development author such as Escobar (2007), applying a more constructivist understanding of culture, understands that a

local culture may slowly change on its own or in response to changing conditions. The environmental and health-related arguments against more industrial forms of agriculture and food processing are difficult to dismiss even from a sceptical post-development perspective, as many hold health and environmental sustainability to be universal human goods, but again, the sceptical post-development writers are those who refrain from making normative statements on behalf of others even when discussing the values about which they feel strongly. It may be difficult, for example, for a Westerner who identifies with a voluntary movement towards whole foods to come to terms with the farmers' seemingly universal desire to have a local factory so that they can eat milled white rice instead of the more nutritious husked form they currently create from pounding it by hand. Yet any sceptical post-development author who is serious about a community's right to culturally-relevant self-determination must withhold judgement instead of trying to withhold modern conveniences to those who want them. Those with greater familiarity with the disadvantages of modern lifestyles may indeed have an additional moral obligation to share their knowledge, but they have no right to attempt to make others' choices for them.

Withholding judgement on the more problematic elements allows a sceptical post-development author to examine the benefits of imperfect situations. As a result, one may acknowledge the dilemmas inherent in development, as Corbridge insists one must (1998: 145). In this case, a cooperative structure allows smallholder farmers to retain their land, labour, and lifestyles while receiving certain benefits associated with being a large organization, such as bargaining power, service provision, and the potential for investment in future community projects. A recurring theme in the post-development literature is the search for more appropriate forms of development, and the use of the cooperative model has some potential for achieving this. Community ownership and control allows for people to put their

small profits to use locally for mutual benefit. Ideally, communities themselves choose or design the model that best suits their own needs, instead of having an outside governing body impose one on them, cooperative or otherwise (Hyden 1993). However, despite the imposition of a single model on these rural communities, the model is one that gives the producers themselves ownership of their production and their organizations. It creates space for mutual help, as well as access to help from outside organizations, including the large amount of capacity-building that these producers want and need in order to manage and expand their organizations. The imperfection of the situation requires a sceptical post-development observer to be able to engage with these theoretically messy situations wherein a neo-populist author cannot.

Corbridge (1998) asserts that the post-development literature creates unhelpful dichotomies regarding culture and development. While the neo-populist post-development perspectives often assume timeless, healthy, personally fulfilling traditional cultures under siege by destructive, empty, modern ones, the sceptical perspectives leave room for shades of grey in both the analysis and the categories themselves. Cultures engage in constant renewal, and societies engage in internal debates in struggles to improve on shortcomings while holding on to what they value. In the Rwandan context, the categories are particularly muddled in the context of a countryside whose economy and social fabric are slowly being rebuilt after total devastation almost two decades ago, but which are again threatened by acute scarcity of land. The availability of land seems to determine which of Wolfgang Sachs' three categories of poverty many rural Rwandan's fall into: some live frugally with their basic needs met, others live with the constant stress of scarcity, and those deprived of resources may live in a state of total destitution (1992b: 164). The frugal Rwandan peasantry has endured historical conflicts, the trauma of colonization, and population pressures before

the genocide, but the genocide itself brought total destruction to the society of subsistence agriculture and pastoralism that existed before. In addition, the government has not permitted that same society to rebuild itself: cattle are prohibited from roaming, and farmers must sell their production through cooperatives. Such a transformation requires state control on a very large scale, and even the most open-minded sceptical post-development perspective could not accept such force without the consent of those affected. At the same time, all of those interviewed wanted the development which was promised by the government, including growing local economies, purchasing power, and modern comforts. Some admitted that they resisted or resented the government policies at first, but they insist that they see the benefits of them now. As with so much of what is said in Rwanda, these expressions of agreement surely cannot be relied upon for total sincerity. However, within all the contradictions and obscurity, two things are clear: the government uses troubling amounts of oppression and violence in pursuing its ambitious policies, and rural Rwandans want to experience this variously-defined phenomenon called development. While the situation is at times the antithesis of what any post-development proponent may hope to see, a sceptical post-development author is nonetheless forced to engage with the messy details to understand the complexities of the situation without condemning the entire process altogether.

At this stage, the potential for these cooperatives is far from clear, though many members remain optimistic. If the cooperativization of the Rwandan countryside is merely a stage in a forced transformation of agriculture into large commercial units with the final goal of eliminating small farmers completely, then they would represent an extremely troubling degree of state violence and destruction of the way of life of millions of Rwandans. However, there is minimal evidence to suggest that such an extreme scenario is the most likely one. It is worth noting that the current process of cooperativization is filling the

Rwandan countryside with member-owned democratic organizations that have the potential to continue to grow and entrench themselves as the voices of their communities. Were the present model of agriculture to continue to develop, by creating sectorial, regional, and national bodies uniting cooperative producers, they may eventually become significant political forces capable of representing their own interests very well against possible threats from centrally-planned economic transformations. At the very least, the co-ops can express and develop members' democratic preferences (Borzaga et al. 2011: 27). Above all, it is important to note the role that the cooperatives are currently playing in the lives of their members: the co-ops are currently the sources of much-needed services, empowerment, pride, community, and solidarity for their members, particularly the female majorities. Overall, despite the uncertainty and even uneasiness created by such dependence upon an entirely unclear national policy agenda, the current material benefits, personal meaning, and future potential of the co-ops to their members necessarily compels a sceptical post-development thinker to acknowledge the overall positive impact of the organizations for their members.

The present case is both unusual and illustrative for post-development studies. The co-ops are not the results of peasant social movements, and the communities involved are not trying to resist development. Even the source of the pressures toward Western-style capitalist development is the national state, not Western institutions. However, it is a difficult case for sceptical post-development analysis, and it clearly illustrates the differences between the sceptical and neo-populist variants as described by Ziai (2007d). From a neo-populist perspective, the ongoing changes in Rwanda are indefensible due to both the state's methods and goals alike: the state is forcing the countryside into new lifestyles and production methods that endanger the environment and local traditions. However, from a sceptical

perspective, the situation is much less straightforward. While the methods of the state are of great concern, the communities have the right to define their own goals and aspirations. Those interviewed expressed a clear desire for the modernization of their production and living standards, and they gave *post hoc* endorsement to the policies that had increased their bargaining power, production, access to services, and mutual aid. The sceptical post-development perspective is able to engage with these issues in spite of any personal misgivings about the modernization of agriculture, the heavy-handed role of the state, or the uncertain direction of future policies. Thus while the present case is certainly not an ideal model for post-development, its difficulty and ambiguity effectively illustrate the ability of sceptical post-development to productively engage with real-world situations where sceptical post-development cannot.

The case for co-ops

The current study suggests several reasons why the cooperative model itself has considerable potential for smallholders to come together and receive the benefits of large organizations. Organized cooperation is no easy task anywhere in the world, but it is particularly difficult in areas where producers have had little or no education in financial and organizational management. Despite Rwanda's historical experience with both formal and informal agricultural cooperation, institutional viability and managerial proficiency are far from sure outcomes. In addition, the cooperative experience throughout East Africa has been fraught with political domination (Develtere and Pollet 2008: 38). Nonetheless, the success of Coproriz in particular shows that the government-mandated cooperation and prosecution of managerial theft combined with NGO capacity development and incredible farmer perseverance can create structures that can begin to provide great benefits to rural producers.

The large size of Coproriz has allowed them to pool their resources and hire professional agronomists, accountants, and a professional manager, the latter representing a major step in ensuring that their hard-earned surpluses are spent in accordance with the will of the General Assembly.

The cooperative model works not just to establish capitalist development, but also a form of cooperative capitalism, which creates community, stability, and democracy. Cooperatives can eliminate the division between private capital and labour, those who own production, and those whose labour creates it. In cooperatives such as these, the categories are intermixed: while there are wage labourers and owners who do not themselves work the land, most member-owners are themselves labourers. Authors who focus on the cooperative model itself emphasize that cooperatives are collective businesses with several benefits, one of which is the creation of community (Birchall and Ketilson 2009, Chevalier 2011, Baviskar and Attwood 1993 and 1995, Borzaga et al. 2011). Birchall and Ketilson maintain that such aggregate effects are the natural by-products of cooperatives, though they must be clearly distinguished from the primary aims of co-ops, which are to address specific material or community needs of members (2009: 12). Member-owned enterprises also have the ability to create internal norms within a given community, which strengthens both the communities and their commitment to their organizations (Chevallier 2011: 37). Cooperative development generally takes longer to establish than other forms, but once co-ops are established, they are more stable in the face of volatility than other organizations. As the organizations themselves grow, they create “invisible” shares from which members get various kinds of dividends but which they cannot divest, creating the possibility for new activities and services (ibid: 35).

The spread of the cooperative model has also been called economic democratization (Baviskar and Attwood 1995: 3). Instead of democracy simply referring to sporadic elections

representing little or no real choice in determining policies, democratic participation becomes embedded in the places people live and work, which enables more meaningful engagement:

There thus emerges a new understanding of democracy in general which also comprises forms of economic democracy, while re-valuing the role of democratically created and managed enterprises. These become places not only of production, but also of the expression and formation of social preferences. For example, the bottom-up formation of development objectives by the same actors that will benefit from the results of development patterns becomes possible when cooperative and social enterprises are locally embedded. (Borzaga et al. 2011: 27)

Being able to establish their objectives together means that these communities can potentially begin to shape their own futures. Such control is the result of ownership: cooperatives are quasi-capitalist organizations wherein the members are often both the owners and the labourers in production, unified by shared interests and mutual help. They intermix or eliminate the regular boundary between capital and labour. In the case of rice cooperative members in Rwanda, each member is effectively a small business owner with her or his own employees, and the vast majority of farmer-members are themselves labouring cultivators. Cooperative businesses expand the principle of working for oneself to working with one's community, and it allows member-owned business to grow and compete at the scale that is required in many market environments. This replacement of capitalist labour relations with community, democracy, and stability make cooperative development – when it is desired by the communities themselves – a more appropriate form of local development from a post-development perspective.

The Rwandan peasantry, having been called “no longer viable,” is being pushed by its government into capitalist food production whether they like it or not (RoR 2004: 15), and cooperative organization can help protect them against some of the worst volatility and

adversity that market-based production often entails. Group selling shields members from exploitation by low-paying traders, but wider market prices themselves fluctuate constantly with the weather and the resultant yields in neighbouring regions and countries. As producers are also encouraged or forced to rely on fewer and fewer crops, they lose the diversity that traditionally acted as their own crop insurance. Thus in addition to exposure to market volatility, Rwandan farmers have increased exposure to weather- and disease-related risks. In such an environment, the cooperatives' provision of credit, crop insurance, market information, and various other training and services become absolutely crucial for their members' well-being. The cooperative model also allows peasants to comply with the government campaigns to collectivize, specialize, and professionalize agriculture without dramatically altering existing land ownership or production methods. Whatever rural Rwanda's uncertain future may bring, those producers who are members of more robust co-ops will at the very least have access to a basic safety net and community organization. As one member put it, "[s]omeone who is not a member, they seem to have problems" (Interview, Coderika Male Member 2, 15 May 2011). As another said, "these days, it is like if you are not a member, you are standing nowhere" (Interview, Coderika Male Member 7, 20 May 2011).

The viability of the co-ops and their capacity for growth will also be the most effective way to prevent bureaucrats in Kigali from creating policies that will threaten peasants' livelihoods. Even if the co-ops do not currently have the capacity to resist government policies, by developing into viable self-sufficient businesses, they could potentially convince sceptics within the government in Kigali that they can achieve the kinds of increased production targets set out in the Vision 2020 document. Moreover, by institutionalizing local democratic organizations, they could potentially create the foundation for a future civil

society capable of representing their interests in the face of future policies that may threaten members' interests. Even in a society that is entirely resigned to compliance with government policies, the simple act of meeting twice a year to share ideas and make decisions democratically concerning various community issues slowly creates a culture where such communication and decision-making become normalized (Borzaga et al. 2011: 27). In a country where the social fabric needs to be rebuilt slowly after incredible mass trauma, local organizations of all kinds create the opportunity to work together and gradually do so. Civil society and community development both assume the existence of community.

If Coproriz is able to continue to pool and reinvest member funds into infrastructure which continues to increase the members' capacities for production, the profitability of their harvests, and the services available to them without the aid of UGAMA and other NGOs, then its members will be the owners of a self-sufficient community organization that can continue to develop their local economy and expand services, responding to members' needs and further taking development into their own hands. Working together cooperatively means that the greatest possible amount of the profits from local production stay within the communities, and that those small amounts of local profits can be pooled and reinvested. The process of reinvesting in the community has led to an expansion of activities at both co-ops. All of the interviewees wanted to see such community development, and they did not expect additional external aid. The co-ops at least give members the opportunity to share ideas and pool resources to create even a small amount of change on their own. Often producer co-ops are partnered with savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) in order to turn community savings into productive loans to local entrepreneurs. Coproriz did not have access to a partner SACCO, but it instead had a local branch of Caf Isonga by which to carry out all its transactions. Coderika similarly had a partnership with a bank, though its management had

the misfortune of learning the perils of dealing in cash. The members had received external aid in the creation of a canteen and farmer supply warehouse, but their storage facilities, which directly affected the price that they were able to get from their rice, was financed by the small surplus generated by nearly three thousand smallholder farmers. The unification of so many producers can therefore turn the tiniest savings into productive investment. The gradual development of such community institutions and cooperative culture has the potential to allow rural residents to develop their local economies in such a way that the ownership of production, profits, and fruits of reinvestment will remain in their communities.

Conclusion

In the end, the situation of the members of Coproriz Abahuzabikorwa and Coderika is still cause for ambivalence from a sceptical post-development perspective. The lack of capacity to resist any potentially harmful policies of the government means that they occupy a vulnerable position in the broader transformation of agriculture. Moreover, the imposition of potentially hazardous techniques, such as monocropping and the dependence on industrial inputs and outside markets, exposes the farmers to an even greater amount of risk and pushes them away from more traditional practices without their prior consent. At the same time, the farmers seem to be genuinely embracing the changes in hopes of achieving the promised future prosperity. Moreover, the current cooperative organization of the farmers mitigates the risk associated with the modernist production methods, and participation in the co-ops has brought concrete benefits to members both directly, in the generation of income, and indirectly, with participation in activities that build capacity and community alike. Finally, the cooperative model itself allows for community economic development that permits communities to reinvest their earnings in themselves and their communities, retaining

ownership and control of their activities as they grow. These clear benefits, set as they are within the greater stress of the uncertain national context, necessarily create a great dilemma for a proponent of post-development. At present the cooperative members' ability to control their organizations and achieve their chosen path of development seems to be increasing, and as long as that trend continues, a sceptical post-development observer is forced to commend the successes while calling for caution towards the rest.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with a series of questions regarding development, post-development, and the material and non-material needs of Rwandan rice farmers. To the impasse between development and post-development, Aram Ziai shows that the concerns of Stuart Corbridge are valid, but effectively overcome by more recent post-development literature. Sceptical post-development authors, by acknowledging the dynamic nature of culture and above all the right of any given society to choose whatever path they may, allow for a selective adoption of appropriate technology and societal re-invention within existing tradition. In the rice fields of Rwanda, local communities are not asserting their own local vision of development, but many are optimistic about coping with and benefitting from their current path. For a proponent of post-development, the case is ambiguous and unorthodox. While the case certainly illustrated the way in which a sceptical post-development stance may allow for serious engagement with ambiguous and imperfect circumstances, the total domination of rural society by the Rwandan government clearly undermines the communities' capacity for true self-determination. The members' apparent *post hoc* consent and their hopefulness for the success of the government's coercive policies are a further source of ambivalence in an already uncertain situation.

Regarding the initial questions about the role of the co-ops in meeting their members' own perceived material and non-material needs, many answers were more positive. The primary function of the co-ops is group marketing of production. The secondary direct benefits are many, including providing the members with inputs, loans, storage, and training. The indirect benefits are also many, including the empowerment of women, creation of community, institutionalization of local democratic organizations, and access to training by

outside organizations. Having access to such rice production has been a crucial step for many families in achieving food security and small surpluses, and it has enabled many women to become active members of society. With the ongoing capacity development of members and infrastructure development of the organizations themselves, the modest sense of hope and pride continues to grow. To date, the government policies have, despite giving those affected no choice in the matter, nonetheless seemed to have had a net benefit on these communities. Whether this will continue into the future is unclear. For now, however, farmers' cooperatives in rural Rwanda seem to represent an appropriate model for community economic development, despite falling short of the social-movement ideal put forth by post-development. Members use their cooperatives to participate in development, not to find alternatives to it. Being largely untouched by development to date, they have every reason to be hopeful about it and not wary of it.

Results would perhaps be different a short distance away or a short time in the future. The management of the marshland is among the most successful agricultural reforms being enacted in Rwanda today, and therefore farmers' *post-hoc* consent is more than understandable. In other cases, such as in the banana tree policies examined by Van Damme, Ansoms, and Baret (2013), many producers felt compelled to resist the potentially damaging policies, be it discretely or overtly. Thus the more successful rice cooperatives are not the most but rather the least likely place to find peasant resistance. Moreover, the timing may have been premature to discuss the costs and benefits of changes that still appeared quite hypothetical. While rice farmers have already been exposed to market volatility and are already dependent upon commercial inputs, drought, floods, and disease remain the greatest threats to their livelihoods. The possibility that the co-ops are merely a stage in the government's plan to modernize and commercialize agriculture exists today as conjecture

alone, and it is far from clear how smallholders will be affected by future transformations. This study represents but a tiny glimpse into the vast array of changes happening today in Rwanda. The immensely divergent experiences of the millions of small farmers already defy generalization, and they continue to change. In this context of great uncertainty, one thing at least is certain: as the government reforms continue and expand, the importance of research that focuses on the unheard voices of those affected can only increase.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Title of the Study: Alternative Development in a Postcolonial State: The Case of Rwandan Rice Growers' Cooperatives

Researcher: Joel Ratcliffe

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Supervisor: Rita Abrahamsen

1. Information about farm, farming

1.1 [do you grow rice, and other food, too?]

a) how big is your farm? [how many blocks do you have?]

b) how many people live there?

c) what crops do you grow? [what else do you grow?]

d) do you like to eat what you produce?

e) [where is your house?] how long have you lived there?

2. Information about co-op membership

a) are you a member of the cooperative?

b) if so for how long?

c) why are you (not) a member?

d) are the other members of your family members?

-[do you have a title at the cooperative?]

-what is your title at the cooperative? [what is it?]

-and what are your responsibilities?

-have you done any other jobs here?

-would you organize the management differently, if you could?

-do you live near to the cooperative?

-would you or your family ever want to be a member?

-why or why not?

3. Prices and services from co-op

- a) *what price does the co-op pay for rice?*
- b) *does this price change often?*
- c) *do the prices always seem fair?*
- d) *can you/members get a better price elsewhere?*
- e) *how much do you/members usually sell?*
- f) *does this change often?*
- g) *do you/members get other services from the cooperative?*
- h) *does it help with inputs?*
- i) *loans when harvest is poor?*
- j) *do you/members own or rent your/their land?*
- k) *is land expensive to rent?*
- l) *has this system changed over time?*

4. Regarding the Seven Co-op Principles

i) voluntary open membership

- a) *can anybody be a member?*
- b) *can you/members leave the cooperative whenever you/they want?*

ii) democratic member control

- a) *where are decisions made?*
- b) *who makes the decisions?*

iii) economic participation

- a) *who controls the money?*
- b) *what does the money buy?*

iv) autonomy and independence

- a) *do other organizations influence the cooperative's actions?*

v) education, training, and information

- a) does the co-op provide education or training?*
- b) do the you/members receive information from the cooperative?*

vi) cooperation among cooperatives

- a) is your cooperative connected to other cooperatives?*

vii) concern for community

- a) is the cooperative involved in your/members' community?*

5. Social benefits of cooperation

- a) are there other benefits of being part of a cooperative?*
- b) do members of your cooperative work together to solve problems?*
- c) do you use your cooperative to help the government hear your voices?*
- d) are you able to use your cooperative to help your community hear your voice?*

6. Women in the cooperative

- a) how many men and how many women participate in your cooperative?*
- b) are men and women treated differently? [how are men's and women's lives different?]*
- c) does being a member of the cooperative affect a woman's status?*

7. Threats

- a) how do you view the prospect of privatization and modernization?*
- b) do you see your co-op as part of a larger political group?*

8. Other questions

- a) how do you feel towards the co-op's expansion?*
- b) are you happy with the creation and expansion of the store?*
- c) are you happy with the proposed creation of the factory?*
- d) does your house have electricity?*
- e) does your house have running water?*

f) are you happy with the co-op's attempts to expand these services?

g) is this how you would like ~~the managers~~ to spend the surpluses?

9. Positive Change

a) what would you consider to be positive change 5 years from now?

b) what would you consider to be positive change 10 years from now?

c) what would you consider to be positive change a generation from now?

a,b,c)

10. Development

a) how would you define the word development?

b) is it a good thing?

c) what role do cooperatives like yours play in development?

d) what role should they play? / Is this the role they should play?

e) what role do the cooperative managers play in development?

f) what role should they play? / Is this the role they should play?

g) what role does the government play in development?

h) what role should they play? / Is this the role they should play?

i) what role do agronomists play in development?

j) what role should they play?

k) what role does UGAMA play in development?

l) what role should it play?

m) what role do international donors play in development?

n) what role should they play?

11. More questions

a) have you/members changed to new varieties of rice?

b) how did you/they make that decision?

c) what has been the effect?

d) how is water managed and shared with neighbours on your farm?

- e) have you had or seen any conflicts with the cooperative, other members, or people outside the co-op?*
- f) how were these conflicts resolved?*
- g) have you/members received any training from the cooperative?*
- h) was it helpful?*
- i) what is your relationship with the trainers?*
- j) do you know how they could improve the training?*
- k) have you participated in the management of the cooperative, such as a special committee?*
- l) what was your role?*
- m) would you like to participate again?*
- n) do you/members use fertilizer?*
- o) what is the effect of using it?*
- p) do you think that farmers should use less or more fertilizer?*
- q) do you feel the co-op is doing enough to help farmer's access fertilizer?*
- r) does your co-op store grain for emergencies?*
- s) what are the most important problems facing farmers in your community?*
- t) do you/members face other issues that I have not asked about?*

Appendix B: Land holdings, crops grown

Co-op	Resp. ²⁹	Title	Blocks	Land (ha)	Other crops	Family
CoprORIZ	MM1 ³⁰	Member	6	none	Vegetables (sometimes).	None.
CoprORIZ	MM2	Member	1.5	minimal	Cassava, beans, sorghum.	4 kids, wife.
CoprORIZ	MM3	Member	3	0.1 ³¹	potatoes, cassava, peanuts.	1 kid, wife.
CoprORIZ	MNM1	Non-member	0	4	Cassava, coffee, trees, sorghum, beans, potatoes, peanuts.	7 kids, wife.
CoprORIZ	FM1	Member	3	unsure	Sorghum, beans, cassava, peanuts.	5 kids, husband, 1 employee.
CoprORIZ	FM2	Member	2	2	Cassava, beans.	4 kids.
CoprORIZ	MM4	President	20	1	Cassava.	4 kids, wife, 1 employee with 2 kids
CoprORIZ	MM5	Vice-president	6	1.5	Cassava, beans, soya, and peanuts.	5 kids, wife, 2 employees
CoprORIZ	FM3	Member	1	0.3	Beans, cassava, peanuts, potatoes, soya.	1 kid, husband, mother
CoprORIZ	FM4	Member	2	0.1	Beans, cassava.	1 kid, husband
CoprORIZ	FM5	Zone councillor	3	0.2	Cassava, peanuts, beans, and potatoes.	3 kids
CoprORIZ	MM6	Member	5	2	Trees, pineapples, beans, cassava.	10 kids, wife
CoprORIZ		Coordinator	0	0	-	-
CoprORIZ	MM7	Member	1	0.3	Hot peppers, tomatoes, oranges, passion fruit, beans, cassava.	7 kids, wife.
CoprORIZ	MM8	President of zone committee	10	0.5	Cassava, maize.	9 kids, wife.
CoprORIZ	FNM1	Non-member	0	minimal	Beans, cassava, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and soybeans.	3 kids.
Coderika	FM1	Vice-president	3	1	Cassava.	5 kids, husband, 1 employee.
Coderika	FM2	Vice-president of steering committee	1	0.8	Maize, sorghum, beans, peanuts, plantains, coffee, and cassava.	5 kids, husband.
Coderika	FM3	Secretary (of Coproriz)	7	1	Beans, cassava, soy beans, maize, peanuts, sorghum, coffee, plantains.	2 kids, husband.
Coderika	FM4	Lead farmer and group president	2	0.1 rented	Fruit.	4 kids, husband.
Coderika	MM1	President of lead farmers	4	1	Cassava, potatoes, beans, ground nuts, sorghum, plantains, and tomatoes.	2 kids, wife.
Coderika	FM5	Lead farmer	3	0.1	Beans, peanuts, tomatoes.	4 kids, husband.
Coderika	FM6	Lead farmer	2	0.1	Tomatoes, beans, maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes, soy beans, cassava, and sorghum.	5 kids, husband.
Coderika	MM2	Lead farmer	2	1	Cassava, potatoes, sweet potatoes, vegetables, beans, sorghum, peanuts, maize, bananas.	2 kids, wife.
Coderika	MNM1	Non-member (Member elsewhere)	2	0.1	Maize, beans.	2 kids, wife.

²⁹ Appendix B includes all respondents except the two UGAMA staff interviewed.

³⁰ “MM” denotes “Male Member,” “FM” “Female Member,” and “NM” “Non-Member.”

³¹ Few respondents had land holdings equal to or exceeding 1 hectare, the new minimum size for lot divisions. These smaller parcels are therefore the results of official divisions that predate the land law or unofficial divisions within a larger official lot.

Coderika	FM7	Lead farmer	1	0.1	Beans, cassava, potatoes, maize.	2 kids, husband.
Coderika	FNM1	Non-member (Member elsewhere)	5	0.1	Beans, maize, sorghum, soy beans.	5 kids, employee.
Coderika	MNM2	Non-member	5	0.1	Cassava, sweet potatoes, maize, tomatoes, onions.	None.
Coderika	MM 3	Lead farmer	1	0.5	Cassava, tomatoes, beans, sorghum, coffee.	2 kids, wife
Coderika	FM8	Lead farmer	1	0.1 rented	Peanuts, cassava, sweet potatoes.	3 kids, husband
Coderika	MNM3	Non-member (Member elsewhere)	1	0.5	Cassava, sweet potatoes, beans, peanuts, peas, cabbage, potatoes.	None.
Coderika	MM4	Member	2	0.5	Soya, beans, cassava, sorghum, maize, other vegetables.	4 kids, wife
Coderika	FM9	Member	1	0.3	Cassava.	9 kids, husband
Coderika	FM10	Member	2	0.5 rents	Cassava, beans, coffee.	3 kids, husband, 3 orphans
Coderika	FM11	Member	10	0.8	Cassava, beans, peanuts, sorghum, potatoes, plantains.	5 kids, 2 relatives, 2 employees
Coderika	MM5	Member	4	rents	Cassava, peanuts, maize, tomatoes.	Wife, brother
Coderika	FM12	Member	1	0.02	Cassava, peanuts, beans.	3 brothers, 2 nieces, mother
Coderika	MM6	Member	5	0.03	Beans, cassava, peanuts, vegetables.	3 kids, wife, 2 relatives
Coderika	MM7	Member	2	0	None.	4 kids, wife
Coderika	MM8	Member	2.5	0.8	Cassava, beans, sorghum.	none

Appendix C: Detailed reasons for joining a rice cooperative

Co-op	Respondent	Reasons for joining a rice-co-op ³²
Coprporiz	MM1	To receive mutual help, credit, and inputs.
Coprporiz	MM2	To receive mutual help, increased profits and bargaining power, new rice varieties, loans, and to be paid all at once.
Coprporiz	MM3	To reproduce my neighbour's success.
Coprporiz	MNM1	To increase income and access to satisfying food.
Coprporiz	FM1	To receive mutual support, school fees, and food.
Coprporiz	FM2	To "join forces with others and get out of poverty."
Coprporiz	MM4 (President)	To unite for group bargaining power.
Coprporiz	FM3	To retain marshland.
Coprporiz	FM4	To retain marshland.
Coprporiz	FM5	To give my children a better life.
Coprporiz	MM7	Told that rice was the most profitable.
Coprporiz	MM8	To have a common voice and help each other.
Coprporiz	FNM1	To increase income.
Coderika	FM1 (Vice-Pres.)	To follow advice of UGAMA and to receive benefits.
Coderika	FM2 (Steering C.)	To meet others, receive training, and increase activities.
Coderika	FM3 (Secretary)	To retain marshland and to receive benefits.
Coderika	FM4	To retain marshland and were told to work together.
Coderika	MM1	To earn extra income.
Coderika	FM5	To increase income and access to satisfying food for children.
Coderika	FM6	To unite to solve problems and succeed.
Coderika	MM2	To receive training, to have access to projects, and to be with others in the community.
Coderika	MNM 1	To feed my family very well.
Coderika	FM7	To work together and follow the organized system.
Coderika	FNM1	To feed and clothe my children and improve living standards.
Coderika	MNM2	To increase income.
Coderika	MM 3	To unite with a co-op for common development.
Coderika	FM8	To retain marshland and "it is the only way to find any money."
Coderika	MNM3	To have a place to work from and to learn from others.
Coderika	MM4	To boost my home economy.
Coderika	FM9	To come together with others and also get a block.
Coderika	FM10	To work together, to make more money, and to follow national policy.
Coderika	FM11	To be able to raise my kids and to follow national policy.
Coderika	MM6	To not be alone, and to improve my life.
Coderika	MM7	Required to retain marshland. "These days if you are not a member, it is like you are standing nowhere."
Coderika	MM8	To improve our lives. "In this area, it is the only way we can get development easily."

³² Responses in tables have been abridged or paraphrased to economize space.

Appendix D: Opinions regarding mechanization and privatization

Co-op	Resp.	Regarding privatization of the marsh	Regarding the mechanization of rice cultivation
Coprорiz	MM1	Public ownership is better because the members spend the profits locally.	If the machines were cheaper than human labour, then most people would agree with their use
Coprорiz	MM2	It is better for the co-op to keep the marsh than to privatize it.	Members usually pay employees to work, so if there are machines, they would have to see which would be more profitable. It will not affect employment because we will always need people to help with other activities.
Coprорiz	MM3	I am happy with the government owning everything. Public management is better.	Modernization is good, but there would be less employment. Some fear mechanization.
Coprорiz	MNM1	I do not really know about the management of the marsh.	It would be better with machines. People will find other jobs. Machines can not do everything.
Coprорiz	FM1	It is better for the government to keep the land and for the people to keep working.	If the machines come and the land is still owned by the government and leased by farmers, it would be good. Some would lose their jobs, but if it is cheaper for the farms, then it would be good.
Coprорiz	FM2	We want the government to keep control of the lands, because we don't have the capacity to manage it ourselves. If the land was privatized, maybe an investor could come and plant sugar, which would be worthless for the locals.	We are okay with modernization, but we do not have money to pay the machines. All we want is a factory.
Coprорiz	MM4	Privatization is impossible because the marsh belongs to the government. The co-op's lease is for 39 years starting in 2006.	Modernization by mechanization has been attempted, but the tractors got stuck. There is another study ongoing to see if they can seed with lighter machines. It would be better if we could find machines. It will not affect employment, but it will give people enough time to work on their own hillsides.
Coprорiz	MM5	We would have employment but no profits if it were all owned privately. This way we have food security and profits, too. And the government gets taxes.	Modernization will be part of development. Some members do not dig their own fields; they hire others to do it for them. It would be better if it was faster with a machine. Though some may lose their jobs, that is development, and people will always be needed.
Coprорiz	FM3	The government should keep the marsh.	The mechanization would be good if it eased the hard labour without changing the ownership.
Coprорiz	FM4	The current system is best.	Machines would be positive if members owned them.
Coprорiz	FM5	Investors can be helpful, too, because they can help in our activities. But selling the marsh would put us back into poverty.	When they brought a machine, it sunk. So we are secure.
Coprорiz	MM7	It is better in the hands of the government, because it helps the community. It is the national policy for people to work in co-ops. Even the president says that people should be in co-ops. He does not want the population to beg outside; he wants them to stay and have livelihoods.	-
Coderika	FM1	Privatization would be bad for locals. Our system is better.	Machines would be great. Machines can not do everything, so people will always be needed. It would be a problem if they could do everything.
Coderika	FM3	With the private investors, they take all the profits. It would be a problem for the community. And though it is supposed to belong to the government, it belongs to the people, and the government does not get any of the profits.	-

Coderika	FM4	It would be better for the government to keep the land as it is, because the co-op is closest to the people.	Machines would be a very good thing, because it would reduce the hard work. For employment, there will be a cut, but the real problem is that people would have to pay the machines, when they could work themselves at no charge.
Coderika	MM1	It is better with the government owning the land and giving it to the farmers as it is now.	If the machines were here and being used by members and not investors, that would be a good development. The machines would be better because they are faster.
Coderika	MNM3	We often worry about privatization.	It would be good development if it was done for the co-op, not outside investors.
Coderika	MM4	-	It would depend on how it would be farmed. Not everyone would be happy, but it would be better to be modernized. Harvests would be boosted, but many would be jobless.
Coderika	FM9	Privatization would be a tough problem for farmers.	Machines will be okay, as long as the farmers can pay for them. It will not cost people jobs, because there are still hillsides to cultivate.

Appendix E: Detailed understandings of decision-making structures

Co-op	Resp.	Title	Daily decisions	Proposals	Final decisions
CoprORIZ	MM1	Member	Board committee, steering committee	-	General assembly
CoprORIZ	MM2	Member	Coordinator, chair, president.	Steering committee	General assembly
CoprORIZ	MM3	Member	President and coordinator	-	Coordinator
CoprORIZ	FM1	Member	Coordinator, managers	-	General assembly
CoprORIZ	FM2	Member	-	-	General assembly
CoprORIZ	MM4	President	-	Committees	General assembly
CoprORIZ	MM5	Vice-president	-	Board committee	General assembly
CoprORIZ	FM3	Member	-	Board committee	General assembly
CoprORIZ	FM4	Member	-	Board committee	General assembly
CoprORIZ	FM5	Zone councillor	-	Zone councillors	General assembly
CoprORIZ	MM7	Member	-	-	-
CoprORIZ	MM8	President of zone committee	-	-	General assembly
CoprORIZ	FNM1	Non-member	President	-	President
Coderika	FM1	Vice-president	Board of directors	Steering committee	General assembly
Coderika	FM2	Vice-president of steering committee	-	Board committee	General assembly
Coderika	FM3	Secretary (of Coproriz)	-	Board committee	General assembly
Coderika	MM1	President of lead farmers	-	-	General assembly
Coderika	MNM1	Non-member (Member elsewhere)	President	Board committee	-
Coderika	FM7	Lead farmer	-	Board committee	General assembly
Coderika	MNM3	Non-member (Member elsewhere)	-	Board committee	General assembly
Coderika	MM4	Member	Managers	-	General assembly
Coderika	FM9	Member	-	-	General assembly
Coderika	MM8	Member	-	-	General assembly

Appendix F: Co-ops, respondents, and services named

Co-op	Respondent	Services described
CoprORIZ	MM1	Loans, inputs (fertilizer, pesticides), trees (for fruit, wood, and to halt erosion)
CoprORIZ	MM2	Loans, inputs (fertilizer, pesticides, seeds), market access
CoprORIZ	MM3	Loans, trees (for fruit, wood, and feed fodder), tools from the canteen on credit
Coderika	FM6	Loans, inputs (fertilizer, seeds), training, friendship, development partners
CoprORIZ	FM2	Loans, school supplies
CoprORIZ	MM4 (President)	Loans, death and medical expenses, free mattresses and goats, tontines, transportation to weddings
CoprORIZ	FM5	Loans, training (farming, investing, abuse prevention)
CoprORIZ	FM6	Loans, training (farming)
CoprORIZ	Coordinator	Loans, inputs, free goats (1,761), electricity hook-ups (60), burial fees, dividends, community
CoprORIZ	MM7	Training (farming), feeling welcome, group problem-solving
CoprORIZ	MM8	Inputs (pesticides, seeds), market access, training (farming)
CoprORIZ	FNM1	Loans
Coderika	FM1 (Vice-Pres.)	Loans, pesticides, seeds
Coderika	FM2 (Steering C.)	Loans, inputs (pesticides, seeds), training (farming, seeding), diversification of activities, office access
Coderika	FM3	Loans, training (farming, small scale projects, environment, good governance, conflict resolution, birth control, gender)
Coderika	FM4	Loans, inputs (fertilizer, seeds), training, storage
Coderika	MM1	Loans (for inputs), market access, health insurance, training (farming, gender, family planning, small-scale projects, making herb fertilizer, cooperative management.)
Coderika	FM5	Training (gender, savings, small-scale projects, health insurance, group learning, problem-solving)
Coderika	MM2	Loans, inputs (fertilizer, pesticides), training (farming), health insurance, equipment (pesticide pumps)
Coderika	MNM1	Training (farming)
Coderika	FM7	Training (farming, gender, small-scale projects, group seeding) health insurance (group payment)
Coderika	MM 3	Training (farming, co-op management, planning, small scale projects, savings, family planning, training other members, bookkeeping, gender)
Coderika	FM8	Loans, training (co-op benefits, capacity building, savings, small projects)
Coderika	MNM3	Market access
Coderika	MM4	Training (planting, applying fertilizer and pesticides), health insurance
Coderika	FM9	Loans (in emergencies), training (though unequal access)
Coderika	FM10	Loans (for school fees), group problem-solving, health insurance
Coderika	FM11	Loans (for inputs), health insurance
Coderika	MM5	Loans, training
Coderika	FM12	Inputs, training (farming, gender, family planning) dividends, health insurance, marsh maintenance, meeting others
Coderika	MM6	Inputs, training (farming cooperative management, conflict resolution, money management), health insurance
Coderika	MM7	Loans, inputs, health insurance, training (though unequal access)
Coderika	MM8	Training (farming), health insurance

Appendix G: Training and fairness details

Co-op	Resp.	Title	Directly trained	Indirectly trained	The system	Better if shared
CoprORIZ	MM1	Member	No	No	-	Yes
CoprORIZ	MM2	Member	Yes	No	Good	-
CoprORIZ	MM3	Member	Yes	No	-	-
CoprORIZ	FM1	Member	Yes	No	Good	-
CoprORIZ	FM2	Member	No	Yes	Unfair	Yes
CoprORIZ	MM4	President	Yes	No	Good	-
CoprORIZ	MM5	Vice-president	Yes	-	-	-
CoprORIZ	FM3	Member	No	Yes	Unfair	No
CoprORIZ	FM4	Member	No	Yes	Unfair	No
CoprORIZ	FM5	Zone councillor	No	Yes	Unfair	Yes
CoprORIZ	MM7	Member	No	Yes	Necessary	-
Coderika	FM1	Vice-president	Yes	-	-	-
Coderika	FM3	Secretary	Yes	No	Good	-
Coderika	FM4	Lead farmer and group president	Yes	No	Necessary	-
Coderika	MNM1	Non-member (Member elsewhere)	No	-	-	-
Coderika	FM7	Lead farmer	Yes	-	-	-
Coderika	MM 3	Lead farmer	Yes	No	Good	-
Coderika	MM4	Member	No	Yes	-	-
Coderika	FM9	Member	No	Yes	Unfair	Yes
Coderika	FM12	Member	No	Yes	Unfair	Yes
Coderika	MM7	Member	No	No	Unfair	-
Coderika	MM8	Member	No	Yes	Unfair	Yes

Appendix H: Detailed differences between men's and women's lives.

Co-op	Resp.	Differences between men's and women's lives
CoprORIZ	FM1	Women have recently been emancipated and participate in societies and co-ops. Now they go to the schools and have access to benefits.
CoprORIZ	MM5	They are treated the same. <i>[Do women members have to care for their kids while they also farm?]</i> Though the women are the majority, they are all treated the same. None has an excuse, like child care
CoprORIZ	FM3	Now we are emancipated, but though we talk about genders as equal, there are still tasks that women cannot do, like climbing on roofs. Men do not weave, and some do not cook.
CoprORIZ	FM4	The men are out meeting with others, while the women are at home taking care of everything. That how it has to be, because there are jobs women can not do. It would be a problem if it were reversed. Men are always proud, and then can not cook when the wives are around. But when the women are not around, the men can cook. The new government is responsible for the changes. Before we were taken as useless, but now we are productive citizens.
CoprORIZ	FM5	With gender trainings, women can work and wear coveralls and even clear the roof.
CoprORIZ	MM7	At the co-op, we work all together, but at home people decide what to do.
CoprORIZ	FNM1	A man and wife share duties. But single mothers have to do everything.
Coderika	FM1	It is the same. Equal. We help each other.
Coderika	FM2	Inside and outside they are equal. Yes, we do the same tasks. Women do not do construction, though. But at the hospital in Kinazi, women work. Yes, my husband will even cook.
Coderika	FM3	We work together in common. Before husbands could not cook, but after training from the co-op, then he started to cook sometimes.
Coderika	FM4	Once in the co-op, we are together. Even in the households, it is getting better. We no longer fight and have conflicts; we now work hand in hand. We got a lot of trainings about gender. It starts in the co-op, and when we got talking to non-members, we helped them change, too. And the government played a big role. The government first trained the co-op members, and the word spread.
Coderika	MM1	They are different. In a "gender" area, men try to be equal to their wives, like that guy over there sweeping, but others can not. Before, we did not have any gender system, any equality between men and women. The best word is partnership between spouses. We learned it from UGAMA. Participation was high.
Coderika	FM5	So many people have been trained on gender, it seems there is no problem. Though men do not carry children, they share other things, and we can be in decision-making positions. Before, we were scared, but now we talk in public. Though we are not totally equal, now we sit together and talk about the issues the family faces. And now not all the hard work is given to the women, like before. I don't want men to carry kids, though.
Coderika	FM6	The personal life of men and women is different. Women have a lot of house work, though husbands help. But the main work is women's. In the family, women work harder. In the morning, you dig with your husband, then the women will go home and do seeding and carry a baby.
Coderika	MM2	Women are treated the same. Yes, I have cooked for my wife ever since we got married. Before, I could not understand that stuff. Now I understand that spouses' lives have to work together and help each other. Not all men see this, but things are changing.
Coderika	MNM 1	In families they are different. They are physically different, and their ideas are not the same. Men think about what they can do best for their households. No, I do not drink, but some men do.
Coderika	FM7	Men and women help each other. Men can do women's task if they want to. My husband will cook. Most try. It started from government training.
Coderika	MM3	We are the same in the co-op, even in elections. But in households, some women are still dominated by husbands. But even if it has not changed totally, there has been some change. It is a very popular trend, but women are still behind.
Coderika	FM8	We are treated the same, even at home. Yes, when I am not around, my husband even cooks.
Coderika	MNM3	Years ago, women had no voice in the community. Before, women belonged to the man. Now they share. Men see women's importance because they earn money. The genocide forced women to take over men's roles, and the government policies require equality. And wives have good advice.
Coderika	MM4	Women weed mostly, and they are not treated the same. Leaders are men. Women are elected only to positions like secretary. They are given simple duties. At home, women do more work. Decisions are taken mostly by men.

Coderika	FM9	Life is not the same, especially in households, where women have to take care of all house labour and give birth to children. Women work harder than men. But in decision-making, when someone wants to make a decision, they need consent of both. This is new, a result of government policies.
Coderika	FM10	From the time we were trained on gender, we do the same tasks. At first men could not understand it, but now they do.
Coderika	FM12	Things are different for men and women. Though we have had gender training, women still work very hard compared to men. Men may abuse their wives with violence or by forcing them to work long hours while they take in other women.
Coderika	MM6	They are different. We always talk about gender, but it is not fully applied. Even if people have been trained, like for decision-making positions, women are still a bit afraid. We are experiencing some changes. With time, they improve their understandings, and we will be in positions of power.
Coderika	MM8	It is the same. Even at home, we help each other.

Appendix I: Detailed effects of membership on the status of women

Co-op	Respondent	Whether and how membership affects a woman's status
Coproriz	MM1	Yes. When women join the co-op, they can earn more money than they could anywhere else. For example, at first nobody was using fertilizer, and we asked if it would be worth it to start. But when we started using it, we made a lot more money. Sometimes women have a higher status because they have so many other activities that are part of the co-op, like the weaving.
Coproriz	MM2	No.
Coproriz	MM3	No. Before, women were discriminated against, not allowed to take leadership positions, but now they are equal. Yes, they also are equal at home. They have rights and some are even leaders in local government.
Coproriz	MNM1	Yes, a lot. We bought cows and land, and we built houses.
Coproriz	FM1	Yes. When a woman is a member, she is taught how to work for herself, and she can buy herself clothes and look developed.
Coproriz	FM2	No effect. Women are even in positions of authority now.
Coproriz	FM3	Yes, even being a member is a kind of development.
Coproriz	FM4	Yes.
Coproriz	FM5	It helped women a lot. we can solve our problems here. Before, we were scared to wear boots, because we were scared a woman could not move in boots. But now we ask the coordinator to sell us boots on credit. And now I walk in the marsh even in the rainy season. Women used to stay in their homes and not attend meetings or public functions. But when we started joining cooperatives, we were elected to local government institutions, and now we know our rights.
Coproriz	Coordinator	there is much promotion of women in the co-op. for example, in each training, there is a gender requirement. And we learn entrepreneurship. Before, if a man and a woman had three blocks, the man alone would be a member. It was like the woman was hidden in the man. Now you have women who are their own members.
Coproriz	MM7	It helps women, because they can buy clothes and equipment for school, etc.
Coderika	FM1 (VP)	Yes, it takes her out of loneliness, gives her community, and she becomes smarter.
Coderika	FM2 (SC VP)	It helps because men and women are treated equally. After the training, members' husbands cannot beat them.
Coderika	FM3	It does a lot. I used to stay home, but once I joined, I started coming out for meetings. And I was even able to go back to school and finish.
Coderika	FM4	Yes. We overcame fear. Now we do not fear anything or anybody. We can talk about any concern to any person, no matter how big he is.
Coderika	MM1	It elevates it. Even when only the husband is a member, women get benefits.
Coderika	FM5	Yes. The training made us farm much more efficiently.
Coderika	FM6	Now, we can buy things for ourselves and our children. Our husbands can invest in other things. The money is ours, and we are no longer burdens.
Coderika	MM2	Yes, women better understand the government's policies. And gender. And they can be independent.
Coderika	MNM 1	Yes. A woman with a block can earn money and help her family with its needs.
Coderika	FM7	Yes. When a woman joins, she improves her life. She earns her own money and stops depending on her husband.
Coderika	FM8	Yes. We are no longer fearful to apply for loans.
Coderika	MNM3	A lot. The women who are in co-ops are very intelligent compared to non-members, and with the sharing of experiences with other women. They can apply what they learned to other households. And the trainings help women to improve their handwriting even when they are just in the kitchen cooking.
Coderika	MM4	No.
Coderika	FM10	Yes. Before women were forgotten, but now they are educated. Women could not speak publicly, but now we are in committees.
Coderika	FM12	It is very important for a woman to be in a co-op, because she can learn from her fellow workers' experiences. We had a project where we learned to weave baskets, though many could not attend due to other responsibilities. When a woman is part of the co-op, she gets health insurance, income generating projects, loans, and extra income also helps prevent conflicts from a woman asking the man for money.
Coderika	MM6	Yes. Primarily from the income from the harvest. They can buy their own kangas without asking their husbands, or even a dress.
Coderika	MM8	Yes, it helps with training and extra income, which can be invested in more income-generating projects.