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An economic profile of peasant perpetrators of genocide Micro-level evidence from Rwanda

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a research project in which we have traced 350 Rwandan households who were part of a rural household survey before the Rwandan genocide (1994). Economic, demographic and agricultural data from an extensive 1989–1992 survey can be linked with the condition of the household at the time of the Genocide Transition Survey (2000). This allows us to study the fate of the household members during the genocide. Our results show that age, sex, the sex of the head of the household, the size of rented land, off-farm income, gross household income and farm-level anti-erosion investment significantly determine the probability of a household member to become a perpetrator of genocide. These results are interpreted in the political economy of Rwanda.

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1. Introduction

In his book on the social origins of dictatorship and democracy, [Barrington Moore \(1993\)](#) writes that the Nazis best succeeded in appealing to peasants whose land holdings

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were relatively small and unprofitable in the particular area in which they were located. Moore cites several publications that demonstrate that the Nazis won 70–80% and sometimes 100% of the vote in areas with small farms and poor soils, heavily dependent on sensitive markets for young cattle and hogs. Parts of an area known as *Geest* and parts of Hanover show association between small farms and voting Nazi. In Nuremberg too, Nazis got very high percentages in areas of relatively low land values, middle-sized farms and generally marginal agriculture dependent on the urban market. According to Moore (1993), a specific type of agrarian relation between peasants, landlords and the state is favourable to the development of fascism. He writes that peasant revolutions have occurred under regimes where the political and landed elite has not succeed in transforming an agrarian economy based on traditional and feudal relations into a modern economy based on commercial agriculture. The elites of what Moore (1993, pp. 434–435 and p. 449) calls “labour-repressive” regimes have preferred to maintain peasant society while squeezing more dues, taxes and services out of the peasantry. A labour-repressive regime is not just a labour-intensive economy (as opposed to a capital-intensive economy) but also a system where non-market (i.e., political) mechanisms make sure that there is an adequate labour force for working the soil, which keeps the peasants on their farms. The attraction of Nazism to small farmers then was the result of the advance of capitalism (commercial agriculture), with its problems of prices and mortgages that seemed to be controlled by hostile city middlemen and bankers. Nazi propaganda presented the romantic image of an idealised peasant. As Moore writes,

“The Nazis were fond of stressing the point that, for the peasant, land is more than a means with which to earn a living; it has all the sentimental overtones of *Heimat*. Physiocratic and liberal notions found themselves jumbled together in these doctrines of the radical right”.

“A firm stock of small and middle peasants,” said Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, “has still been at all times the best protection against social evils as we have them now”. And further,

“Industry and commerce retreat from their unhealthy leading positions and fit into the general framework of a national economy based on need and equality. Both are then no longer the basis for feeding the nation, but only a help in this”.

Interestingly, the former Rwandan president, Juvénal Habyarimana shared these views on the peasantry. He too considered the peasants as the basis of society; he too did not like the liberties of urban life and he too considered food self-sufficiency to be Rwanda’s prime objective (Verwimp, 2003). We recall that 95% of the Rwandan population resided in the rural areas. Umuganda, in addition, was a prime example of a policy to control and mobilise peasant labour. Habyarimana professed to solve a problem that was inherently unsolvable: modernising Rwandan society without changing its social structure.

However, there is almost no data available to test Moore’s hypothesis for Rwanda. Did peasants with small and unproductive landholdings participate more or less in the genocide compared to wealthy peasants or landlords? Scholars writing on the Rwandan genocide consider both these questions very important and at the same time largely unanswered.

Peter Uvin (1998, pp. 200–201 and p. 219), for example, writes that with the exception of the studies by André and Platteau (1998) and Longman (1995), we do not possess the micro-data necessary to test different hypotheses. Claudine Vidal (1998, p. 332) puts it as follows:

“In reality, according to my knowledge, systematic research on the adhesion of peasants to the genocide and on the voluntary or forced enrolment of peasant-killers has not yet been undertaken”.

Granted that voting for the Nazis is different from participating in genocide, the hypothesis put forward is worth researching. Moore has argued that fascism appealed to small peasants because of its anti-capitalist rhetoric in which the Jews were presented as a commercial elite of city bankers and traders. Exactly the same propaganda was used to describe the Tutsi in Rwanda. In this paper we therefore research the economic profile of the peasants who were attracted by the genocidal rhetoric of the Habyarimana regime.

One has to be careful, however, to consider Nazism as a rural movement. It is not because the Nazis idealised German peasants that they can be considered a rural movement. Several historians argue that the Nazis had a catchall ideology, a total concept of a nation in which each group (farmers, labourers, bureaucrats, women, children, capitalists, teachers, soldiers, etc.) had to contribute to the power of the Third Reich. Renton (2001) writes that the Nazis recruited cadres in the cities more than in the countryside. Contrary to rhetoric too, the Nazis as well as the Habyarimana regime, placed agriculture, in terms of allocation of government budget, consistently behind commerce and industry. Hitler personally sponsored and helped to plan the Volkswagen or “people’s car”. The Nazis built monuments to the “unknown engineer” (Renton, 2001, pp. 142–145; Griffin, 1995). As far as Rwanda is concerned, we will see this dual approach: the regime idealised the peasantry but, as Claudine Vidal (1991, pp. 30–31) observes, the leaders at the national as well as at the local level lived urban lives and used all sorts of means to distinguish themselves from peasant life. We thus need the necessary data to investigate which class of people was especially attracted to a genocidal solution in Rwanda. Poor peasants? Day labourers? Rich farmers? Urban elites?

This paper offers an empirical analysis of peasant participation in the Rwandan genocide. The author collected data in Rwanda that allows, among other things, to test Moore’s hypothesis for Rwanda. After a short review of two empirical papers on peasant participation in Rwanda, we describe the methodology of the fieldwork. Section 3 then presents descriptive statistics. Section 4 tests Moore’s hypothesis. Sections 5 and 6 analyse the importance of the land and labour market and present regression results. Section 7 interprets the empirical results in the political economy of Rwanda.

André is one of the few persons to research the link between bad economic conditions and the genocide. She spent 14 months on a hill in Gisenyi Prefecture in 1988 (5 months) and 1993 (9 months) enabling her to gather detailed information on the rural livelihoods of peasants. In her fieldwork, she focussed on land transactions, land disputes and the effects of land scarcity in general. The interval (5 years) between her first and her second stay allowed her to follow up changes over time. The results are astonishing: the incidence of quasi-landlessness is increasing rapidly; land holdings have become extremely fragmented; average size of land holding per capita decreases steadily; tensions over land

within the household are rising; young people postpone marriage because they cannot find land; the (illegal) land market is very active.

After the genocide, André tried to collect data on the fate of the household members in her data set. For that purpose, she travelled to the Kivu and interviewed people in refugee camps. She found (1998, p. 40) that people, who fell victim to the 1994 events, were not a random selection of her sample. From information on 32 victims, André found that 10 of them had comparatively large land properties that 11 of them were land-poor and malnourished and that 10 others were considered either troublemakers or youngsters engaged in militias. André and Platteau (her co-author) conclude that the 1994 events provided a unique opportunity to settle scores, and they consider these people victims of the war (1998, p. 39). The problem with this research, however, is that it provides a profile of victims, not of killers. André and Platteau consider members of youth militia as victims of the war (1998, p. 41). The question, however, is whether these people really are victims. Some of them may have been killed in the act of committing murders themselves. It is certain that score-settling occurred during the genocide, but André and Platteau do not investigate participation in genocide (they do not even use the word). They analyse the characteristics of people killed (no matter how or where) and from this they derive that land disputes must have been the reason behind their death. One would have wished that the authors not only looked for the characteristics of those they consider victims, but also for the characteristics of perpetrators.¹ They show that they have tried to look at killer profiles when they write that (without supplying data)

“In our study area, it is noticeable that the most violent people tend to be young and to come from poor, yet not the most extremely poor family backgrounds. Bleak prospects for the future and a sense of meaninglessness in life, rather than struggle-for-survival under the harshest circumstances, seem to lead young people into violence whether through enlistment in militias or otherwise”.

They also note that one Tutsi woman was the first to be killed. She was an earlier victim of a failed murder attempt by an anti-Tutsi young radical in January 1993. The authors write that (pp. 40–41)

“it is probably a simplification to view her assassination as a purely racial act. As a matter of fact, she was hated for many reasons, particularly because she came from the south of the country and was therefore considered to be a stranger, and because she inherited a relatively large land property upon the death of her husband of whom she was the fourth wife (an anomaly in a society where women do not inherit from their husband). She was involved in many land disputes, which were clearly not of her own making”.

This statement suggests that ethnicity, region of origin and land disputes interfere with each another. A Tutsi widow, from the south, living in an area where she is the only Tutsi, is clearly in a very weak position to defend her land rights. It is not a surprise then that she was the first victim of the genocide in that area.

¹ The authors indicate that they could not obtain this information for their own security (p. 41).

Longman (1995) compared the relationship between the local elite and the peasants in two Rwandan *communes*, Kirinda and Biguhu. He found that, before the genocide, the local elite in Kirinda acted in an authoritarian self-serving way vis-à-vis the population. In Biguhu, on the other hand, relations between the local elite and the population were based on co-operation and understanding. It turned out that the elite and the population in both communes acted differently during the genocide. In Kirinda, the elite organised a mob to kill the local Tutsi in an attempt to re-establish their authority whereas in Biguhu participation was minimal and clearly initiated from outside.

2. The tracing methodology of the Genocide Transition Survey (GTS)

In order to research the fate of the members of Rwandan households in transition from civil war and genocide to a situation of relative peace, we needed data at the household level. This data had to be unbiased, meaning that whatever information on households one could find (e.g., income, household composition, location, farm size, etc.), that information should be collected independently of the behaviour of household members during the genocide. This condition is not satisfied, for example, when one considers a sample of perpetrators or a sample of prisoners. The author therefore decided to trace the rural households interviewed by Dan Clay from Michigan State University and the Department of Agricultural Statistics (DSA) before the genocide. Clay had interviewed 1248 rural households from 1989 to 1992 in all Rwandan prefectures. He collected detailed data on the demographic, economic and agricultural situation of farm households. This data set is a unique source to study the livelihood of Rwandan peasants before the genocide. The research strategy would provide the researcher with data on the fate of rural households during and after the genocide, data based on a pre-genocide sample of rural households.

The intent of D. Clay and the DSA was to first conduct an agricultural survey. That is why the agricultural data are particularly detailed. They include the crops grown, the number of parcels, the size of each parcel for each crop grown, the degree of intercropping, the use of fertiliser, the slope of the fields, the length of the anti-erosion ditches per field, the soil quality of each field and so on. In a personal conversation Dan Clay explained that he could not ask the ethnic affiliation of the interviewed farm households, because the government did not want this. In the political climate of the 1989–1992 period, ethnicity was indeed a very sensitive subject.²

The 1989–1992 survey also has data on off-farm activities such as the number of days each member of the household worked outside the family farm, the income earned from this activity, the kind of off-farm activity. However, households who did not own or cultivate land, mostly young wage labourers not living with their parents, were excluded from the sample. Full-time off-farm workers living with their parents were thus included in the sample as part of the farm household. We stress that households with very small

² It still is in Rwanda today, maybe even more as official parlance does not use the ethnic categories anymore. For our research strategy this meant that we had to approach this subject with much caution.

landholdings were included in the sample. Nevertheless, the choice of Clay and the DSA not to include landless households reduces the representative character of the 1989–1992 sample for the whole of rural Rwanda.

D. Clay had all household survey data computerised, but could not provide a list of the location and the names of the surveyed households. Since the former regime and its allies had to evacuate Kigali in a hurry and did not have the time to destroy their archives (they only destroyed or stole the computers), we believed to have a (small) chance of finding the old surveys. Digging in the archives in the Ministries of Agriculture, Economic Planning and their respective statistics department did not result in a list of the households. However, under a layer of dust in one of the archives, we finally found the original questionnaires with the location and the names of the heads of households mentioned on the first page. On the whole, we managed to find the references of 73% of the originally surveyed households in that archive. For 7 of the 10 prefectures, the references were almost complete and for 3 they were almost completely missing.

For reasons of budgetary limitations, however, we could not trace all 1248 households. One must realise that survey research in general and in Rwanda in particular is very expensive and time consuming. Furthermore, a genocide transition survey is not free from security concerns. The genocide took place in 1994, but it is very much present in Rwandan society today. In the summer of 2000 we decided to trace households in three prefectures, Gitarama, Kibuye and Gikongoro. In total 352 households were surveyed by Professor Clay. With 160 households (10 clusters) in the first and 96 households (6 clusters) both in the second and third prefectures. These prefectures were chosen for a variety of reasons. Firstly, we had the information needed to find the households in these prefectures. Secondly, at that time, these areas were safer to work in than Ruhengeri or Gisenyi. Thirdly, Imidugudu policy (villagesation) was implemented to a lesser degree in these prefectures compared to Kibungo and rural Kigali leaving more hope to find the households in the same location as before the war. Fourthly, the prefectures had a mix of a very complete genocide (Gikongoro and Kibuye) and a less complete genocide (Gitarama). Fifthly, the prefectures had a sizeable Tutsi population before the war. (This does only distinguish them from the northern prefectures). Sixthly, the prefectures encompass both very poor and not so poor communes.

We designed the questionnaires for the Genocide Transition Survey and decided to proceed in two phases. A team of research assistants, selected at the National University of Rwanda in Butare (one for each commune, the equivalent of one for each cluster of 16 households) would try to find the households in the indicated sectors. In the first stage, the research assistants would not take a detailed questionnaire, but would only take down a limited amount of information. We first wanted to know whether or not we were able to trace the households in their original dwellings. The information collected in this first stage was the following (Tables 1 and 2):

- can we locate at least one member of the household surveyed in 1989–1992?
- are the head of household and his wife alive or dead?
- what is the ethnic group of the head of household and of his wife?

Table 1
Survey sites (communes) of the genocide transition survey

Gitarama	Gikongoro	Kibuye
Nyamabuye	Musange	Mabanza
Ntongwe	Rwamiko	Kivumu
Mugina	Nyamagabe	Rutsiro
Tambwe	Nyamagabe	Gitesi
Musambira	Muko	Gisovu
Runda	Kinyamakara	Bwakira
Taba		
Nyakabanda		
Masango		
Murama		

- how many members did the household have in 2000?
- to what category (broadly speaking) does the head of household belong? Is s/he a genocide survivor, is s/he in prison, is s/he abroad?
- what was the age of the head of household in 2000?

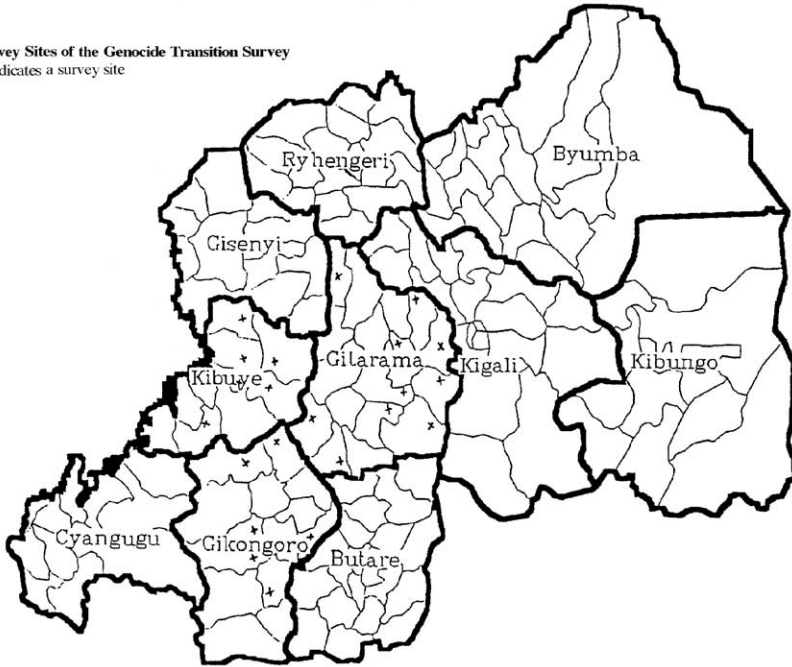
The research assistants were told to approach the households in a prudent manner, taking time to explain that the research was only done for scientific purposes and that we neither belonged to the Rwandan judiciary, nor to the International Tribunal or to the government. In fact, if research assistants thought that households were not approachable, they could gather the information for this first stage of the project by talking to neighbours or to government authorities. Since tracing of households requires extensive knowledge of the area of residence, we decided to work with research assistants from the communes itself. However, since this kind of work is sensitive, we decided not to take research assistants from the sector where the households were located, but from a different sector within the commune. This would at least give a minimum guarantee of security, would save transportation cost and would make local knowledge of the area of residence available to the researcher. Relying on earlier tracing done in Indonesia by [Duncan Thomas et al. \(1998\)](#), we decided to choose research assistants with a good knowledge of mathematics. Since the survey is a quantitative research project, research assistants with a good grasp of mathematics would not only be helpful in the tracing stage of the project (as they were in Indonesia), but also in the actual completion of the questionnaires.

Table 2
Descriptive data by prefecture ($n = 340$)^a

	Gitarama	Gikongoro	Kibuye
Number of households in GTS	155	96	89
With Hutu head of household	133	90	81
With Tutsi head of household	17	5	5
With Twa head of household	5	0	0
With ethnicity unknown	0	1	3

^a During the GTS no information at all could be found for 12 households.

Survey Sites of the Genocide Transition Survey
 * indicates a survey site



The following characteristics determined our choice of research assistants:

- Having a good grasp of mathematics; in practice this came down to having a university degree.
- Having resided in the commune where the interviews take place before and during the genocide.
- Being at least 21 years old.
- Previous experience in survey research, especially interviewing.
- Being able and willing to undertake survey research on the genocide. This came down to my question whether the candidate-enumerator was on good terms with both the Tutsi and the Hutu population of his/her commune of origin.

For the first stage of the project, a 1-day training session was organised. Research assistants were told not to be satisfied with one source of information, but to cross-check their information with members of both ethnic groups. In the end, we employed 22 research assistants, one for each cluster of 16 households. Eighteen research assistants had a university degree or were about to finish their university studies. Four research assistants had taken teacher training during their high school studies and were currently teaching in primary schools. Eight research assistants were female, 14 were male. Research assistants came from both ethnic groups and all of them originated from the communes where the survey was to be held.

The advantage of a tracing exercise is that the researcher has information on the households that is not available to the research assistants. The 1989–1992 database provided a very good instrument to check whether the research assistants found the intended households.³ After the first stage, the information supplied by the research assistants was checked with the database and the researcher was able to criticise unfinished work. Research assistants were also given an opportunity to correct information collected upon their return to the household for the second stage of the project.

The 352 households in the prefectures of Gitarama, Kibuye and Gikongoro interviewed by Clay and the DSA taken together have over 1900 household members. In the first stage of the project, we managed to find information on 340 of these households and on 1800 persons included in the 1989–1992 survey. This success may be attributed to the preparation of the tracing exercise and to the constant presence in the field of the researcher, but it was also due to the organisation of Rwandan society. Indeed, communal authorities have a detailed and well-organised record of all the inhabitants in each sector and cell. They carefully register every birth, death or migration in or out of the commune. The success of the tracing exercise was also a result of Rwandan culture: people in the hills know each other and know of each other's whereabouts. Even when a person is not present on the hill, neighbours have information on where they can be found. When we say that we found information on approximately 1800 of the 1900 people in the original sample, this does not mean that they were all present in their original dwellings, as will be documented in the tables.

3. Criminological data and its categorisation

In one of the most sensitive and difficult questions in the survey, research assistants were asked to find out what the most appropriate “type” was of each member of the household under investigation. Knowing very well that few persons would fit into one type, research assistants had to register the most appropriate characterisation for each person choosing from the following types: (1) victim/survivor; (2) perpetrator; (3) thief; (4) innocent; (5) protector; (6) type unknown. When desired or appropriate, research assistants could fill in two types for the same person, starting with the most appropriate. This happened when, for example, a person had both killed Tutsi (perpetrator) as well as hidden Tutsi (protector) in their own house or when a person both protected Tutsi in his or her house and looted property (thief) in someone else's house. In this way, we tried to capture the ambiguity and complexity of the people's behaviour. When we were not able to ask the household directly about its members' involvement in the genocide, indirect methods of investigation were used. Research assistants could then ask the local authorities and neighbours questions on the whereabouts of household members. [Table 3](#) presents the information found by the skilled and determined team of research assistants. From a total of 1838 household members of which we were able to register the ethnicity, we found 1657 Hutu, 155 Tutsi

³ Apart from the data on the households, the researcher also had another way of controlling the tracking done by the research assistants. During the 1989–1992 agricultural survey, the households were given a solid basket as a kind of reward for their co-operation with the survey. The research assistants were told to ask whether the household received this item and if they still had it.

Table 3
Type of person during genocide (most appropriate), $n = 1838$

	Hutu		Tutsi		Twa	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total	1657	100	155	100	26	100
Age > 12	1056	63.7	99	63.8	16	61.5
Age ≤ 12	601	36.3	56	36.2	10	38.5
<i>Adults</i>						
Age > 12	1056	100	99	100	16	100
Victim/survivor	8	0.8	99	100	0	
Perpetrator	65	6.6	0		1	8.3
Thief	94	9.5	0		2	16.7
Innocent	733	68.0	0		10	50.0
Protector	44	4.5	0		0	
Unknown type	105	10.6	0		3	25.0
<i>Children</i>						
Age ≤ 12	601	100	55	100	10	100
Victim/survivor	0	0	55	100		
Perpetrator	5	0.5	0			
Thief	15	2.5	0			
Innocent	562	93.7	0		5	50.0
Protector	1	0.2	0			
Unknown type	18	3.1	1		5	50.0

Hutu adults with known type, $n = 947$

	Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%
Total	461	100	486	100
Victim/survivor	0	0	8	1.8
Perpetrator	59	12.8	6	1.4
Thief	44	10.4	50	11.0
Innocent	334	70.6	399	81.1
Protector	22	5.2	22	4.8

and 26 Twa. Among the 461 Hutu adult males (age > 12), we found 59 perpetrators, 44 thieves, 334 innocent and 22 protectors.

We thus have 59 male adult perpetrators, 6 female adult perpetrators and 5 children, totalling 70 perpetrators. In order to get a profile of the adult male perpetrators, we compare their characteristics (registered before the genocide) with those of all Hutu males in the sample. The latter namely constituted the group from which potential perpetrators were drawn and as such form the baseline for comparison in the Table 4.

In our sample 12.8% of all adult Hutu males who were alive in March 1994 participated in the genocide. The average age of the adult perpetrators was 33 years (Table 4 does not include child perpetrators). Among the educated (having completed primary school or more), the perpetrators represent 21.1% of all educated male Hutu

Table 4
Profile of adult male Hutu, $n=461$

	# All Hutu adult males	Perpetrators	
		#	%
(1) Personal characteristics			
Number	461	59	12.8
Age			
Average	34.5	33	
Minimum	13	16	
Maximum	93	68	
Education			
Never attended school	156	21	13.4
Incomplete primary	208	22	10.6
Completed primary	57	10	17.5
Post primary (CERAI) or secondary	14	5	35.7
Primary or higher	71	15	21.1
No information	26	1	
Main occupation			
Cultivator	333	51	15.3
Of which without off-farm activity	220	22	10.0
with off-farm activity	113	29	25.6
Full-time off-farm occupation	14	3	21.4
of which businessman	3	1	33.3
administrator	3	2	66.6
artisan	2	0	0
manual worker	6	0	0
All off-farm income earners	127	32	25.2
Pupil/student	63	3	6.1
Domestic worker	13	0	0
Other	3	0	0
Unemployed	7	1	14.2
No information	28	1	
Marital status			
Married	181	23	12.7
Bachelor	222	27	12.1
Divorced	4	1	25.0
Wedlock	25	7	28.0
Widower	4	0	0
All broken relations	33	8	24.2
No information	24		
Family position			
Head of the household	218	32	14.6
Son living with parents	236	27	11.4
of which with female head	57	13	22.8
No information	7		

(15 out of 71). Perpetrators are thus over-represented among the educated. This is also the case for adult male Hutu with a part-time or full-time off-farm activity, where perpetrators represent 25% of this group.

In absolute numbers, most Hutu perpetrators were either married or bachelors. However, among the divorced, the widowed and those who lived out of wedlock, the perpetrators were particularly well-represented (24.2%), compared to the overall percentage of 12.8%. Adult male perpetrators are more strongly represented among heads of households than among sons living with parents. However, in half of the households with at least one son as a perpetrator, the head of the household is a woman, making the (oldest) son the acting male head of the household. In the other households with at least one son-perpetrator and with the head of the household (the father of that son) still living and present in the household, it was only the son who participated, not the father. This means that in most cases in our sample, one male member of the household participated, namely either the head of the household or a son of the household. *As if households decided to supply the labour of one person per household to*

Table 5
Profile of households with Hutu head of the household ($n=282$)

	# All Hutu households	Households with at least one perpetrator	
		#	% difference
Number	282	54	
Household size 1991	5.1	5.6	+9
Adult equivalents (ae)	4.7	5.14	+9
Gross income	42,230	52,872	+25
(1) Auto-consumption	21,473	22,410	+4
(2) Crop sales	3760	4141	+10
(3) Beer sales	4838	6054	+25
(4) Off-farm income	6080	13,604	+123
(5a) Livestock cons	1768	2826	+59
(5b) Livestock sales	2906	2681	-8
(6) Transfers received	1386	1155	-7
Gross income per ae	9804	11,272	+15
Monetary income (2)+(3)+(4)+(5b)	17,595	26,480	+50
Food consumption	29,276	32,758	+11
Size of owned land (in ares)	93.9	93.8	0
Size of owned land (ae)	21.9	18.7	-14
% of cultivated land rented	10	14	+40
Distance to paved road (in km)	32	30	-6
Wages paid to employees (in RWF)	1622	2625	+61
Total hh labour in ae days	916	997	+8
On-farm hh labour	710	859	+20
Labour hired in (in days per year)	26	42	+61
Labour hired out	65	118	+81

(1) Includes crop consumption from own production.

(2) Includes sales of all crops (food, domestic cash crops and export crops).

(3) Includes the sales of artisan brewed beer (banana and sorghum beer).

(4) Includes income from skilled and unskilled off-farm work and from business activities other than beer sales.

(5) Includes livestock and livestock products consumed from own production and sold.

(6) Includes all kinds of gifts of food, beer and livestock received.

*the genocidal effort.*⁴ Of all households with at least one perpetrator, 81% (43 out of 53 households) counted exactly one perpetrator. This means that 19% of these households had more than one perpetrator. Even then the father–son combination is seldom observed, the households often have several brothers or man and wife participating together in the genocide.

Where the characteristics of the households are concerned (see Table 5), households with at least one perpetrator have 10% more members, 8% in adult equivalents, compared to the average Hutu household. They own, on average equal sizes of land, but in terms of adult equivalents, they have less land. This indicates a relative abundance of labour on farms with at least one perpetrator. This explains why they rent more land than average. Households with at least one perpetrator have higher incomes than others. This is especially true because they have a higher income from off-farm activities and beer sales. On average, households with at least one perpetrator have a gross income, which is 25% higher than the income of the average Hutu household, and is 15% higher when reckoned in adult equivalents. This difference also applies to beer sales and the difference is more than 100% higher for income from off-farm activities. Total monetary income (the sum of off-farm work, beer and crop sales) represents 50% of the gross income in households with at least one perpetrator and only 40% in the average Hutu household. Households with at least one perpetrator eat 60% more meat, milk and eggs as shown by data on auto-consumption of livestock. These households consume in general 12% more food than the average Hutu household. The income from off-farm activities is also reflected in the number of days worked off the farm, which is almost double the number for the average Hutu household. They also hire in more labour and thus pay a higher wage bill. This means that, on average, households with at least one perpetrator employ more people, compared to households with no perpetrators.

Since we are dealing with averages, we should consider in more detail the composition of the households with a least one perpetrator. It could be that these averages result from a group of high-income earners and landed households on the one hand and poor households on the other hand. In Table 6, we therefore compare households without and with at least one perpetrator, while distinguishing three groups (tertiles) on the basis of land owned, land rented and income.

The different sections in Table 6 are very similar, households with a high amount of off-farm income per adult equivalent (>911) are most of the time also households with a high percentage of their income from off-farm activities. The Pearson correlation between these two tables is 0.915 with a significance of 0.000. In none of the four tables does it make much difference to present data on land, gross income and off-farm income *per capita* or *per household* instead off per adult equivalents. The outlook of all tables remains the same: households with at least one perpetrator are almost equally represented over the landholding tertiles, over-represented in the landrenting tertiles,

⁴ This result is an indication that some households may have regarded participating in the genocide as a state-directed obligation. Peasant households under the Habyarimana regime had to contribute labour to the weekly Umuganda (a collective form of labour) and this was usually performed by one person per household. The 1993 FIDH human rights report on Rwanda as well as Des Forges (1999) also describe how local authorities summoned people to participate in the killing, calling it a 'special Umuganda'.

Table 6

Distribution of Hutu households over land and income tertiles, $n=279$

	Lowest (<10.3 are)		Middle (10.3<are<23.2)		Highest (>23.2 are)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No perpetrator	75	81.5	71	78.0	81	84.4
At least one perpetrator	17	18.5	20	22.0	15	15.6

*The tertiles for owned land were calculated with inclusion of the Tutsi households who do not figure in the presented data.

**When we take land holdings per household instead of per adult equivalents, we do not observe a distinction between perpetrator households and non-perpetrator households.

% Landrenting "tertiles"*

	Lowest (0)		Middle (<10%)		Highest (>10%)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No perpetrator	133	87	44	78.5	52	72.2
At least one perpetrator	20	13	12	21.5	20	27.8

*Tertiles is put between brackets because they are not of equal size.

Gross income tertiles per ae*

	Lowest (<5338)		Middle (5338<RWF<10.900)		Highest (>10.900)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No perpetrator	79	82.3	82	84.5	75	77.3
At least one perpetrator	17	17.7	15	15.5	22	22.7

*The income tertiles were calculated with inclusion of the Tutsi households who do not figure in the presented data.

Off-farm income "tertiles" per ae*

	Lowest (=0)		Middle (<911)		Highest (>911)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No perpetrator	95	88.8	79	85.9	63	68.5
At least one perpetrator	12	11.2	13	14.1	29	31.5

*From the whole sample (including Tutsi), 37% of the households have no off-farm income.

This group composes the first (lowest) group. The limits for the middle and highest groups were therefore set at 31.5% of the households of the entire sample each.

Off-farm income as percentage of gross income, tertiles*

	Lowest (=0)		Middle (<17%)		Highest (>17%)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No perpetrator	91	88	81	84.4	57	67.9
At least one perpetrator	12	11.5	15	15.6	26	31.0

*From the whole sample (including Tutsi), 37% of the households have no off-farm income. This group makes up the first (lowest) group. The limits for the middle and highest groups were therefore set at 31.5% of the households of the entire sample each.

somewhat over-represented in the high gross income tertile and especially over-represented in the high off-farm income tertile.

4. Looking at Moore's hypothesis

We drew Tables 7 and 8 to investigate Barrington Moore's hypothesis that especially farmers with small and unproductive landholdings were attracted to Nazism, in the case of Rwanda.

Byiringiro and Reardon (1996) computed marginal value products of land and labour from the estimates of a production function with the DSA data. They show that there is a strong inverse relationship between farm size and land productivity, and the opposite for labour productivity. Their results suggest that the marginal value product of land on smaller farms is well above the rental price of land, implying factor use inefficiency and constraints on land access. By contrast, the marginal value product of labour on smaller farms was well below the market wage (100 RWF), implying bottling up (surplus) of labour on smaller farms and constraints on access to the labour market and perhaps barriers to entry into small businesses. These results thus suggest that small farmers experience constraints on the land as well as on the labour market.

The differences between small, middle-size and large farms presented in Table 7 are common in a developing world context and are not particular to Rwanda. In Table 6 we have already seen that perpetrators are not particularly over-represented among owners of small farms, but rather among farmers renting in a lot of the land they cultivate. In order to test Moore's hypothesis, we now look at the following question: are perpetrators over-represented among farmers experiencing low land and labour productivity inside each of the three tertiles (small, middle, large)? We test this hypothesis by looking at the productivity of each farm compared to the local (i.e., cluster level) average productivity (as Moore originally did). We also carry out this analysis for soil quality and for rented land tertiles. The results are shown in Table 8.

The weakest, statistically non-significant results are found for Moore's original hypothesis, to wit on land productivity. There is no over-representation of perpetrators among farmers with farms suffering from low land productivity. At least at this level, Moore's hypothesis does not seem to apply to perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide in the areas of our field work. As for the productivity of labour, a hypothesis not directly researched by Moore but that seems important to look at in a poor economy with lack of off-farm jobs,

Table 7
Land size and marginal value products

	Cultivated land tertiles (in ae) ^a		
	Smallest	Middle	Highest
Marginal value product of land	18,820	9996	5862
Marginal value product of labour	26	35	49

Source: Byiringiro and Reardon (1996).

^a Includes both owned and rented land.

Table 8
Chi-square tests for differences between perpetrator and non-perpetrator households

	Owned land tertiles		Rented land tertiles	
	<average	>average	<average	>average
Marginal land productivity	0.362	0.749	0.150 ^a	0.247
Marginal labour productivity	0.445	0.040**	0.282	0.109*
Soil quality	0.528	0.948	0.00***	0.568

^a Significant at the 15% level.

* Significant at the 11% level.

** Significant at the 5% level.

*** Significant at the 1% level.

the results are somewhat more statistically significant. Perpetrators seem to be over-represented among farmers having higher than average levels of labour productivity, both when we consider owned land tertiles as well as rented land tertiles. The statistically strongest result is delivered for soil quality. The latter is measured by the *C*-value, a measure of protective land use. Lower *C*-values indicate better practices. Perpetrators are not over-represented among farmers with higher than average *C*-values when we consider owned land tertiles. As far as rented land is concerned, perpetrators are over-represented among farmers with good soil quality.⁵ These results do not seem to confirm Moore's hypothesis either.

Thus, we find that perpetrators in general do not own smaller farms compared to non-perpetrators, do not experience lower land productivity and do not have poor soil quality. In terms of labour productivity, households with perpetrators do better than the local average. We do find that perpetrators, more than non-perpetrators, are active on the land rental market. In the next section we will therefore further investigate the land and labour markets.

5. More evidence from the rural labour market

In Table 9, households are grouped according to the *kind* of off-farm income at the household level. When none of the members of a farm household has an off-farm income, the household is put in the first group. When the household earns an income from agricultural off-farm work and not from non-agricultural off-farm work or when the income earned in the latter is smaller than the one earned in the former, the household is part of the second group. The third group then consists of the households whose members earn an income in non-agricultural activities, be it as skilled professionals or unskilled workers. It turns out that the sample, at the household level, has roughly one third of the households in each of the three categories. From Table 9 it is clear that the households with

⁵ In order limit the number of Tables presented, we do not present all cross-tabulations for small, middle-sized and large farms on the one hand and the number of perpetrators in each of the productivity groups (> or < than average) on the other hand. Perpetrators were especially over-represented among farmers with good soil quality (low *C*-value) who rent in a lot of land. The data does not allow to distinguish between the soil quality of the owned and the rented land, but one may assume that farmers will not rent in land of poor soil quality (i.e., high *C*-values).

Table 9
Off-farm work and participation at the household level, $n=282$

Category of off-farm work	All Hutu households		At least one perpetrator	
	#		#	%
(1) No off-farm work	103		12	11.7
(2) Off-farm agricultural work	96		15	15.6
(3) Off-farm non-agricultural work	83		26	31.3
Total households	282		53	18.8

Chi-square test of equality between households with and without perpetrators

	Value	Degrees of freedom	p
Person chi-square	12,616	2	0.002 ^a
Number of valid cases	282		

^a Significant at the 1% level.

at least one perpetrator are more represented in the third group, which represents households with one or more members earning an income in non-agricultural off-farm activities, than in the other groups. Thirty-one percent (31.3%) of the households of this group had one or more of their members among the perpetrators. The sample mean is 18.8%. This average means that one in six to one in five of the Hutu households in the sample have at least one perpetrator among their members. The table also shows that very few of the households without off-farm income are represented among the households with at least one perpetrator. The chi-square test shows that the difference in participation between the groups is highly significant.

The results of Table 9 are confirmed in Table 10. Table 10 shows data on 460 Hutu adult males. Off-farm income earners are over-represented among the perpetrators. In fact, the percentage of perpetrators in each occupational group rises with the degree of detachment from agricultural work. Only 8.4% of the members of the group performing no off-farm work (peasants) were perpetrators. This figure rises to 20% for the group whose

Table 10
Off-farm work and participation at the individual level, $n=460$

Category of off-farm work	Individual participation in genocide			
	All Hutu adult males		Perpetrators	
	#	%		
(1) No off-farm work	333		28	8.4
(2) Off-farm agricultural work	60		12	20.0
(3) Off-farm non-agricultural work	67		19	28.4
Total	460		59	12.8

Chi-square test of equality between perpetrators and non-perpetrators

	Value	Degrees of freedom	p
Person chi-square	23,030	2	0.002 ^a
Number of valid cases	460		

^a Significant at the 1% level.

members perform agricultural work on someone else's farm (day labourers, employees) and rises even to 28% for the group whose members perform non-agricultural work outside the family farm.

The interpretation of Table 10 can be further refined when we look at the composition of the households of perpetrators and non-perpetrators. Compared to their number in the whole sample, heads of households and sons living in female headed households (thus acting as heads) are particularly well-represented among perpetrators with off-farm jobs. Together, they account for 25 of the 31 perpetrators with off-farm jobs.

Referring to the methodological part, we recall that households with no land whatsoever were not included in the original 1989–1992 sample. Landless young people “who hang out in the street”, often described as the core of the Interahamwe, are therefore not included in the sample where they no longer lived with their parents. However, according to Danielle De Lame, the situation of these landless households (not included in the sample) is similar to the quasi-landless households (included in the sample). From our data, we can observe that 12 out of 17 quasi-landless households with perpetrators (low landholding tertile in Table 6 rent a lot of land (they rent more than they own). These are households that were still able to rent land for cultivation. Other poor households, landless households, not had the chance to find a landlord and became landless. The situation of these landrenting, quasi-landless peasants and their household members was all but enviable, the landlord could, e.g., evict them from the land at any time.⁶

6. Econometric specification and regression results

In this section, we use a binary logit model, representing the probability of an event occurring, in which the dummy variable y equals 1 for perpetrators of genocide and 0 for non-perpetrators. This probability of y occurring depends on a number of personal, household and land characteristics. Formally,⁷

$$Prob(y = 1) = L\left(\sum_k \beta_k x_k\right)$$

with x_k = personal, household and local characteristics.

As determinants of the probability of participation in genocide, we use the following variables in the regression:

Personal characteristics

Age and age squared in years;

Read and write: dummy equal to 1 for persons who can read and write and 0 for others;

Off-farm income (natural logarithm) of personally earned off-farm income in RWF;

⁶ Danielle De Lame, Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, personal communication on the issue of quasi-landless peasants, June 2002. Unfortunately, the data I use does not mention the kind of land rental relationships that the farmer-households were engaged in. I therefore have no data describing client–patron ties that determined land rentals.

⁷ The derivation and explanation of this model can be found in Liao (1994).

Household characteristics

The sex of the head of the household is equal to 1 for females and 0 for males;

The gross income (natural logarithm): the sum of income from production for own consumption, crop sales, livestock, off-farm income and transfers;

The percent income earned from off-farm activities at the household level;

Land characteristics

Land size is measured as the area of owned cultivated land per adult equivalent;

The percentage of cultivated land rented;

Anti-erosion is the number of meters of anti-erosion ditches per are on the household farm;

Number of years cultivating

Soil quality is the *C*-value, a measure of protective land use (lower values indicate better practices).

We ran three regressions, of which the third is the most complete and for which we also computed marginal effects. Age and age squared are significant in all three, meaning that the probability to become a perpetrator increases with age, tops at a certain age (calculated as 38) and then declines again. As the age variable captures an individual's place in history, it is clear that the fate of these individuals whether or not to participate in the genocide was partly determined by (their) history: the timing of their birth made them the children of the Hutu Revolution (1959–1962). In 1962, most perpetrators in the 1994 genocide were small children or were not even born. As such they have only known an independent and republican Rwanda. They grew up as children or young adults during Habyarimana's reign. The alfabetisation variable, a dummy variable capturing the capability of writing and reading proves insignificant in the regression. Being literate does not reduce the probability of participation (Table 11).

The amount of personally earned off-farm income has a significant effect on the probability of becoming a perpetrator in the second regression. In the first regression there may be multi-collinearity going on as the percentage of income from off-farm activities at the household level picks up some of the effects of individual off-arm income. We introduced the individual level variable in order to demonstrate that off-farm income earned is not just a household level variable, it is a certain member that earns this income, a member that can be identified. The higher the amount of one's off-farm income (be it earned in part-time or full-time employment) the higher one's chances of participation in the genocide. The effect of off-farm incomes was already observed in the descriptive statistics in previous sections. In Rwanda, off-farm income was the most important source of monetary income. In the first regression, off-farm income (as percentage of household gross income) proves very significant. As a consequence, and to avoid multi-collinearity, we have left individual off-farm income out in the third regression.⁸

At the household level, the sex of the head of the household and the value of gross income play a significant role. Males (since we have excluded women) of households

⁸ The inclusion of a dummy variable for off-farm work (y/n) in stead of the level of off-farm income yields a significant result, but is ultimately less informative than the level of income of off-farm work. A variable discriminating between agricultural and non-agricultural off-farm work was not significant.

Table 11

Results of the binary logistic regressions, dependent variable perpetrator or non-perpetrator

Variables	R1	R2	R3	marginal effect
	Coefficient	coefficient	Coefficient	
<i>Individual level</i>				
Age	0.2187*** (0.071)	0.1694*** (0.071)	0.2471*** (0.069)	0.0194 (0.0042)
Age ²	-0.0028*** (0.0009)	-0.0024** (0.0009)	-0.0032** (0.0009)	-0.0002 (0.0006)
Read and write	-0.2972 (0.335)	-0.1114 (0.330)	-0.2485 (0.3402)	
Ln off-farm y	0.0218 (0.0465)	0.1253*** (0.0438)		
<i>Household level</i>				
Sex of the head	1.4352*** (0.442)		1.2605*** (0.459)	0.1478 (0.074)
Ln gross y (ae)	0.5544** (0.229)		0.4544* (0.2587)	0.0358 (0.020)
% y from off-farm	2.3549*** (0.916)		2.6052*** (0.815)	0.2054 (0.069)
<i>Land characteristics</i>				
Land owned (ae)		0.0059 (0.009)	0.0019 (0.0109)	
% land rented		2.9967*** (0.975)	1.9884** (1.015)	0.1568 (0.081)
Anti-erosion efficiency		0.1649** (0.672)	0.1243* (0.070)	0.0098 (0.005)
Years cultivating		0.0232* (0.137)	0.0121 (0.014)	
Soil quality		-5.4994 (4.437)	-2.1397 (4.588)	
Constant	-10.722*** (2.394)	-5.084*** (1.437)	-10.71*** (2.69)	
N	402	402	402	
Log likelihood	-140.25	-141.47	-136.03	
Pseudo-R ²	0.14	0.13	0.17	

Standard errors in parenthesis; marginal effects only shown for variables with statistically significant effects.

* Significant at the 10% level.

** Significant at the 5% level.

*** Significant at the 1% level.

headed by women had a higher chance of becoming perpetrators. In practice, the oldest male member is the de facto head of the household in this kind of household. As the descriptive statistics of households with perpetrators showed, often the heads of households or the (oldest) sons in female headed households have participated. The gross income of the household also had a significant and positive effect on the probability of participation, indicating again that income poverty is not the explanation for participation, on the contrary one would say. Care should be given to the relative weakness of the marginal effect of this variable, we should not overstate its explanatory power.

The landholding variable is not significant in the regressions. This is a surprising result. Given the importance of land in Rwanda, one could expect the size of landholdings (in adult equivalents) to have a significant effect on participation. The land question, however, is more complicated. It is not the lack of land to cultivate per se that is important in the profile of the perpetrators in our sample, it is the status of that land. The rented land variable is highly significant and it has a strong marginal effect. This suggests that people who are active in the land market, be it out of land scarcity (for quasi-landless people) or out of opportunity, had a higher probability of becoming perpetrators.

Another land characteristic, anti-erosion investments in the land, also proves significant (but a weak marginal effect). Members of households who invested a lot of effort in anti-erosion measures on their farms (measured by the number of meters of anti-erosion ditches per are) had a higher probability of becoming perpetrators compared to farmers who invested less in anti-erosion measures. We will return to the interpretation of this effect in Section 7.

To summarise, six variables were found to significantly explain the event of becoming a perpetrator during the Rwandan genocide. Three of the six have strong marginal effects and the other three have weak marginal effects. It should be added that being male is not included in these six but its relevance is self-evident. Hence we have

- being male;
- (strong marginal effects) living in a household with a high percentage of income earned from off-farm activities, renting a lot of land for cultivation relative to its own landholdings, having a female head of the household;
- (weak marginal effects) having a high gross income at the household level, being a child of the Hutu revolution (middle aged) and having invested a lot in anti-erosion ditches on one's land.

7. Political economy and the profile of individual perpetrators

7.1. Three rural socio-economic categories

Evidence presented in my analysis and in research by other scholars suggests that two groups of households (and their members) began to lose their peasant condition in Rwanda before the genocide.⁹ These two groups are active in the rural labour and land markets. The first are land-poor wage workers in agriculture or low skilled jobs and the second are land-rich employers who hire in wage workers. Table 12 provides an overview. A household is registered in one of the three categories when at least two out of three conditions are met. These conditions are based on the value of three variables, landholdings, percentage land rented and off-farm income. With this proceeding, we were able to place 275 of the 281 Hutu households with full information. The remaining six households were registered according to the size of their landholding only.

What distinguishes the first group (quasi-landless peasants, employees) from the second group (middle-sized farmers) is their very low size of landholdings, which forces them to earn an income outside the family farm. Middle-sized farmers, as we defined the second group, have enough land to produce their own food (which does not mean that they only produce for subsistence). The difference with the third group (landlords, employers) is that the first group only has low skilled, low paid jobs, whereas employers have highly paid jobs outside the family farm. In a 1989 paper on inequality and off-farm work, Clay et

⁹ Relevant literature used to develop the arguments in this section is found in Clay et al. (1989), André and Platteau (1998), and De Lame (1996).

Table 12
Socio-economic differentiation of Hutu peasants in rural Rwanda

	Quasi-landless peasants, employees	Middle-sized farmers (peasant condition)	Landlords employers
<i>Three conditions</i>			
Land owned (ha)	<0.5	0.5 < x < 1	>1
% land rented	>10	<10	0
Off-farm income	1000 < y < 10,000	<1000	>10,000
<i>Observations</i>			
Number in the sample	91	151	39
Percent in the sample	32	54	14
<i>Perpetrators</i>			
No. of hh with at least one perpetrator	21	20	11
% of hh with at least one perpetrator	23.0	13.2	28.2
Test of statistical significance of the difference in participation between classes			
	Value	df	p
Pearson chi-square	6.465	2	0.039 ^a
Number of valid cases	281		

^a Significant at the 5% level.

al. (1989) documents the emergence of a small group of landowners and a large group of nearly landless in Rwanda.

He writes (p. 8) that households with small holdings tend to work off the family farm as agricultural wage labourers, while those with larger landholdings are more likely to hold jobs as functionaries or in commerce. André and Platteau also find this (pp. 14–17) when they write that the landholdings of households with access to regular off-farm activities was significantly larger compared to households without such access. These authors have documented rising land inequality over a period of 5 years, with a major cause being the capacity of wealthy off-farm income earners to purchase land. De Lame (p. 296) considers land disputes to be at the origin of most conflicts between households, whereas access to off-farm employment signals the existence of a powerful relation, mostly a protection offered by the local political or commercial elite.

From Table 12, it is clear that perpetrators are over-represented in the first and third groups. The difference between classes is statistically significant at the 5% level. A household's activity in the labour and land market before the genocide is thus a pretty good predictor of participation of a male household member in the genocide. It should be added that only one Tutsi family belonged to the land-rich, off-farm non-agricultural income earners in our data. Only three Tutsi families are land-poor, off-farm non-agricultural income earners.¹⁰ Most Tutsi in the sample are land-poor or middle-sized families earning an income exclusively from agriculture (and a little of livestock). When

¹⁰ Both when we use the mean and the median as categorisation variable.

the Tutsi in the sample are land-rich farmers, earning their income from agriculture, they are not employing workers on their farm.

Employees (off-farm workers who are land-poor) and employers (off-farm workers who are land-rich) have in common that they lost (or were in the process of losing) their peasant identity or peasant condition. Only farmers with access to off-farm labour could keep or expand their land. This means that Rwandan society during the Habyarimana regime went through a process whereby a sizeable number of households and their members left the second category, either to join the landed or the landless socio-economic category.

These findings suggest that the interests for members of both these groups to participate in the genocide is to be found in their respective relation to the land and labour markets. The landlords or employers had “something to defend”, meaning their job, their land, their farm or farm output and their overall privileged position in Rwandan society. The poor, landless group on the other hand, whose livelihood crucially depends on the availability of off-farm low skilled jobs (mostly working on someone else’s farm) and/or the chance to land rent from a landlord, were in a very vulnerable position. They *could expect to gain from participation*: it has been widely documented that a large number of participants, mainly the rank and file among the perpetrators were very interested in the property of the murdered Tutsi. Among the property, land was a much desired asset. In order to document this, we quote a document from an official meeting in the commune of Bwakira (Kibuye prefecture) during the genocide.¹¹ From the documents it is clear that the Burgomaster of Bwakira commune had to devote all his time during the meetings throughout the genocide discussing two issues: “security”, meaning the advancement of the genocide in the different sectors and cells of the commune and “property” left behind by the victims. At a meeting on 5 May 1994 the Burgomaster says,

“I asked the conseillers to give lists of those who died. Only... have submitted these reports. In meetings, I said that lands must be guarded by members of cell committees. People who want to cultivate may ask permission to do so (lending). After six months, the lands will become the commune’s property again. No one should take those lands for theirs, or add them to their own lands. Those who cultivate must not give any money, because it is not a rent. The crucial problem is that there is still sorghum and banana plantations in some fields. He wonders how people can use them”.

These quasi-landless households not only expected to gain from participation, but because of the vulnerability of their position, they also needed to protect the few things they had. They could be deprived of their land, houses or even lives by decisions by the powerful people who wanted to carry out the genocide. As Alison Des Forges puts it “during this period when the guy with the gun was the one who gave the orders, the poor

¹¹ Copies of these documents were made available by Alison Des Forges from Human Rights Watch. She and her colleagues found and traced these kinds of documents after the genocide in Rwanda.

and weak—who had no way to get a gun—had precarious little means of defence except to join the strong.¹²

The interpretation of “something to defend” for the local elite and “everything to gain” combined with “economic and social vulnerability” for the poor must be confronted with the “obeying the regime” interpretation.¹³ The government indeed demanded a high degree of conformity and obeisance of its population. The regime forced farmers to dig anti-erosion ditches. Since this programme had to be implemented nationwide without taking account of local conditions, it was resented by farmers (Guichaoua, 1991, p. 562). As with coffee policy, however, farmers who did not believe in governmental programmes refused to take part in them (especially from 1988 onwards), or even destroyed previous achievements. It is therefore reasonable to assume that

- since constructing anti-erosion ditches is very difficult and hard work and, depending on local conditions of field and soil quality, they had something to defend after they build them;
- farmers who did implement anti-erosion measures may also have performed this task to avoid administrative fines.

Hence, peasant participation in genocide may be understood as complex behaviour whereby poor people expected to gain something, but in addition hoped to preserve what they already had. This behaviour is very similar to the performance of Umuganda, the digging of anti-erosion ditches and the cultivation of coffee: peasants hoped to benefit from their participation in these activities and at the same time they wanted to avoid sanctions for refusing to participate.

7.2. *The importance of the rural off-farm labour and the land market*

As to why access to off-farm labour is, together with access to land, according to my research, key to the explanation of participation in genocide in our sample, we have to look at the importance of off-farm labour in a poor rural society as Rwanda in the early 1990s. The average household in the early 1990s had very few sources of monetary income: the sale of crops and banana beer, the occasional sale of livestock, the coffee harvest and income from off-farm work. In each of the Gitarama, Gikongoro and Kibuye prefectures, off-farm income is the most important contributor to monetary income, followed by (in that order) crop sales (including coffee), beer sales and livestock sales. From the data it is very clear that income from coffee declined dramatically in all three prefectures between 1989 and 1991, namely by 50%. This situation did not improve in

¹² Des Forges, A., personal communication, December 2002. In the author’s doctoral dissertation, he tries to understand the logic of participation in genocide, using recent developments in the theory of political economy such as developed in Bardhan, P., (1997), *Method in the madness, a political economy analysis of ethnic conflicts in less developed countries*, *World Development*, vol. 25, no. 9.

¹³ The notion of vulnerability can also be invoked to interpret the findings on the effect of sex of the household head. Young males in female headed households had no elder to protect them and hence were more subject to promises or pressure from powerful persons in the community.

1992 and 1993, on the contrary. This decline has an effect (*ceteris paribus*) on the demand for banana beer, which has to be paid for in cash. As a result, banana beer sales decline, also depriving households of this source of income.

As in other poor economies, jobs offering high-income security depend on political loyalty. This linkage has been mentioned often by scholars of Rwanda (and other African countries). It is not a coincidence then that in our data, of the three male Hutu who have a full-time off-farm, non-agricultural occupation, two participated in the genocide (these three of course also owned land, otherwise they would not be included in the sample). Granted that our absolute numbers are very small, this relative number (66%) is very high. We recall that we draw our data from the rural areas where full-time off-farm non-agricultural jobs are in short supply. We also recall that this data is the result of a random sample of farm households in rural Rwanda, drawn before the genocide. Moreover, the three jobs we are dealing with involve two businessmen and a policeman. The policeman and one of the businessmen participated in the killings of Tutsi civilians in their communes. This evidence is corroborated with other data from people holding part-time off-farm jobs. They too show higher-than-average participation figures. In effect, it is not exaggerated to speak of a labour market for participation in genocide. Other scholars, such as [Des Forges \(1999\)](#) have shown that the local elite (a socio-political description of off-farm, landed, non-agricultural income earners) was particularly active in the genocide. She even writes, very revealingly, that one of the first decisions of the interim-government (set up after the murder of president Habyarimana) was to pay the wages of the heads of *cellules* (the lowest administrative unit) that had not seen their wage for several months. This payment is a clear political indication that wages (off-farm non-agricultural incomes) play an important role in perpetrator profiles. These incomes namely tie one's economic well-being to the source of that income, which, in Rwanda, was very often a political or a powerful source.

One should add to this that the elite is very much aware of the political basis of its income sources. Political activities do produce public goods, but they also secure positions of power, giving the local elite access to interesting economic opportunities. In this sense, the situation of the early 1990s, both politically and economically, did threaten the economic well-being of the local elite. Participation in genocide of this local elite thus had a very clear political economy element. Other authors as well have highlighted the importance of off-farm incomes in Rwanda. [Marysse \(1994, p. 43\)](#) has argued that the monetary incomes of a rural population in Butare has declined by 35% between 1990 and 1992. [Guichaoua \(1989\)](#), in his well-known two-volume book on agrarian issues in Rwanda, explains the importance of off-farm income in terms of the access it offers to money. Indeed, in a poor rural economy, where subsistence production accounts for a large part of consumption, monetary income is the only way to consume items that are not produced on the farm: bottled beer, radios, bicycles, European-style clothes, etc.). A household also needs money to pay taxes, to send children to school and to pay for house repairs. A decrease in off-farm monetary income necessarily implies a reduction in the expenses for bottled beers, other "luxury" items and possibly education and medicine.

According to Jean-Paul [Kimonyo \(2000, p. 38\)](#), the Habyarimana regime, in time of economic crisis, succeeded in the preservation of the incomes (wages) of the employees

of the administration. Kimonyo argues that this is evidence that the elite did not experience economic stress. We believe this interpretation of the effect of economics is not correct. Firstly, communal reports show that communes had to dismiss workers because of lack of funds, which makes it possible to keep the wages of the remaining employees at the same level as before the budget cut. Secondly, the local off-farm working elite may not have been hit hard itself by the economic crisis in the 1988–1994 period and the civil war period 1990–1994, but this had a lot to do with generous foreign aid.¹⁴ In order to benefit from this, one had to have very good connections with political power holders.

In this and previous sections of the paper, we have argued that “economic” explanations of participation, both of landless or poor and of landed or rich people, should be regarded in a political (or better political economy) framework. If, on the one hand, wages for government job holders did not decline during the period, the “something to defend thesis”, which is one way to understand an economic explanation of participation, holds true. Pointing out the relevance of “economic” variables does not mean that one has to blame the poor. It means looking at interests and incentives: to whom do I owe my current job, wealth and status and what kind of behaviour is required to continue or even improve my relationship with this person or group of persons. If, on the other hand, some people lost their job, they had nothing to lose and everything to gain and may have acted out of grievance, a wish to restore a previously favourable position.¹⁵

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¹⁴ It is generally accepted that foreign aid at the end of the eighties and in the early nineties increased strongly and allowed the Rwandan elite to maintain the same lifestyle (see Uvin, 1998, p. 91).

¹⁵ At this point, talking about “wages” is too general to draw definite conclusions. More research into the 1992–1994 period could help us to find out what sections of society became poorer or richer.

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