

# **Behind the Scenes of the Plastic Bag Ban in Rwanda**

Connections to Culture, Power and Sustainability

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## **Abstract**

If Rwanda was in the spotlight of the international media for over 20 years due to the 1994 genocide, today it is mostly owing to its economic resurgence and its development projects, such as Vision 2020. One of its achievements is the prohibition, since 2008, of the production, importation, use and sale of polythene bags on a national scale. This thesis explores the connections to culture, power and sustainability that can be revealed through the plastic bag ban. The framework of the study is inspired by Marcel Mauss' theory of a total social fact, which helps identify the interactions between various elements, historical, cultural, political and sustainability, pertaining to the plastic bag ban. The collected data compiles information from a qualitative field research and literature. The thesis investigates how the ban on plastic bags is discussed in Rwandan society with a focus not only on political power but also on the different forms of power, namely punishment, law enforcement and discipline. Furthermore, it looks at the effects of the genocide and the resulting transformation of roles and responsibilities for Rwandan women in relation to the plastic bag ban.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AU	African Union
CPS	Culture, Power and Sustainability
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East-African Community
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
Minirena	Ministry of Natural Resources
OAU	Organization of African Unity
REMA	Rwandan Environment Management Authority
RPF	Republic Patriotic Front
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without the help and collaboration of all my anonymous research participants. Some have opened their heart to me and I am immensely grateful for that.

Thank you REMA, Minirena and the private companies for welcoming me.

Florian Jacques, thank you.

## **Preface**

It is for different reasons and with mixed feelings that I have a profound interest in Rwanda and its inhabitants. Our great grandparents, grandparents and parents (as Belgian citizens) once settled in Rwanda, a Belgian colony from 1922 up until 1962 before Rwandan independence in 1962. My maternal great grandparents had a suitcase and cardboard factory in Cyangugu, while my paternal grandparents had an insurance bank in the capital of Rwanda. My family history is thus very much rooted in Rwanda and from an early age I enjoyed listening to the fascinating stories my grandparents told me about their life back in Rwanda.

Growing up in a few East-African countries myself (Burundi and Tanzania), I have always had an affinity towards certain African countries for the above-mentioned reasons. As a child, I loved and dreamed about the beauties of Africa. However, once I grew up and began reading books, discussing with other people and teachers at school, as well as hearing my grandparents and parents debating colonisation, sentiments of guilt were mixed with my profound affection for Rwandan men, women, and children. Guilt. In the month of April 1994, a genocide occurred in Burundi and Rwanda. My youth was thus characterized by the readings of testimonials and stories in books, as well as documentaries about the Rwandan and Burundi genocide in order to understand why former neighbours, within the space of a few weeks, started killing each other in the most atrocious ways. What made those ethnic affiliation so strong as to be able to denounce your own grandfather, the family who adopted you and cared for you like its own child or your neighbour of all time (Aghion 2009)? Different explanations exist, but an often-repeated explanation, as well as the one presented at the Genocide Memorial in Kigali, puts forward the Belgian colonisers' responsibility.

Today, I cherish Rwanda and try as much as I can to follow its development. This is, maybe, due to a natural sense of responsibility towards the country that my grandparents loved but 'abandoned'.

# 1. Introduction

Rwanda, otherwise called “the country of a thousand hills”, is a relatively small country part of the African Great Lakes region as well as a member of the East-African Community (EAC) since 2007. The first official language is Kinyarwanda, followed by French and English. The latter, mostly to lower the French influence as well as to foster cultural integration into the EAC (McGreal 2008). Rwanda, has been in the international spotlight these past few years thanks to its observed economic success (World Bank 2015; Aon One 2011 ; World Bank Group 2015), as well as its take on environmental and many other development projects through its Vision 2020 plan (Kaberuka and al. 2000). Vision 2020 was created by the Government of Rwanda in 2000 with the purpose of achieving many ambitious goals by 2020 (Kaberuka and al. 2000 ; “Vision 2020” 2015 ; Republic of Rwanda 2012). Among many other sectors, projects and objectives, Vision 2020 aims to create a bigger middle-class, enhance its education and health system whilst also fostering gender equality and encouraging the uptake of environmental projects such as the ban on plastic bags (Republic of Rwanda 2012). The initiative to ban polythene bags from Rwanda is a law that was promulgated in 2008 (Kohls 2011). It prohibits the manufacturing, importation, use and sale of polythene bags in Rwanda<sup>1</sup>. The few exemptions to the use of plastic bags were provided to the military, hotel, medical and agricultural sector (REMA, interview). As a consequence, in just a couple of years, plastic bags have disappeared from Rwanda’s landscape. The disappearance has had a multitude of direct positive effects; such as the decreased visual pollution (Kohls 2011), the lowering of malaria cases and other health hazards (“What Rwanda Can Teach U.S. Cities About Getting Rid of Plastic Bags – Next City” 2015) as well as facilitating agricultural production (Kohls 2011).

However, the exact causes that created this change within Rwandans society, and enabled such a drastic measure to be implemented within such a short period of time, are still unclear. In this thesis, I use the ban of polythene bags as a proxy to study and understand various aspects of Rwanda’s current society. These aspects range from political to public and domestic spheres (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). Each of these elements, has been influenced by other processes, be they historical, social or political

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<sup>1</sup> Law N° 57/2008 of 10/09/2008 Relating to the Prohibition of Manufacturing, Importation, Use and Sale of Polythene Bags in Rwanda.



and they, in turn, have affected one another. The field of Human Ecology with its focus on Culture, Power and Sustainability (CPS) studies, through inter-disciplinary perspectives, historical, cultural and political dimensions and current challenges of sustainability (Human Ecology Division 2013; Human Ecology Division 2014). Acknowledging a context characterised by global historical forces, it studies how economic and political processes have transformed and still transform human-environment relations. Moreover, it highlights how consumption habits, values and knowledge are being constructed and how, in turn, they produce and reproduce power, authority, hierarchy and status.

### **1.1.Aim and Research Questions**

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the connections between the field of Human Ecology and its focus on CPS and the Rwandan society through the ban of plastic bags.

The thesis studies the cultural, political, and sustainability processes of Rwandan society through the lens of the plastic bag ban. It identifies, how the ban on plastic bags is discussed in Rwandan society. Furthermore, the 1994 genocide dramatically affected Rwanda. Therefore, understanding the social, cultural and political consequences of the event in Rwanda and its influence on the ban of plastic bags is important. During the latter analysis, the focus is mainly on the Rwandan female perspective. The reason for looking at the female perspective is because Rwandan women had a higher survival rate than men and this had an impact on their role and function both in the domestic sphere as well as on the national level. Overall, it investigates how Rwandan citizens perceive and talk about political sustainability, analysing power and cultural sustainability, through the study of ethnicity and gender roles.

This thesis examines the following key question:

**What connections to Culture, Power and Sustainability can be revealed through the study of the plastic bag ban in Rwanda?**

### **1.2.Structure of the Thesis**

As follow, the framework of the thesis, based on Marcel Mauss' total social fact will

be introduced. Simultaneously, it also introduces, the theories, concepts and ideas used in the thesis, followed by a literature review, giving an overview of the literature available on the subject of the plastic bags ban as well as the use of the notion of total social fact as a framework. The next part of the thesis focuses on the methodology of the research, followed by a presentation of the results stemming from the fieldwork. The discussion intends to put forward recurrent elements of the findings and places them in perspective with other ideas and/or arguments. Moreover, it looks at how these findings can be interpreted. The conclusion tries to uncover different connections between the banning of plastic bags and the field of Human Ecology with its focus on CPS.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This section is devoted to the presentation of three distinct parts: (1) the framework of the study, (2) the overview of the literature and theories used in the thesis and (3) looks at similar studies done previously.

### **2.1. Analytic Framework**

One may wonder what there is to say about plastic bags, especially in a country where there are no more plastic bags. However, putting the banning of plastic bags into context and analysing all aspects of Rwandan society that have been affected or influenced by it, you soon realise that this is not a trivial issue. Based on the data collected during the interviews, certain recurrent themes emerged. These are clarified in the study's framework.

The research's framework is inspired by Marcel Mauss' concept, namely *total social fact*. In his book *The Gift* written in 1924, Marcel Mauss demonstrates how the exchange of gifts is closely related to diverse elements of society, such as economic interest, power relations, as well as for political and religious reasons as well as many more. For instance, the action of giving a present is a complex and powerful act, which involves and assumes a plethora of other obligations, institutions, fields and acts, such as reciprocity. Mauss chose an old poem from the Scandinavian Edda, to give the reader a clear idea of what he was going to develop further in his book. The poem also clearly demonstrates aspects of reciprocity, power relations and more.

(...)

A man ought to be a friend to his friend and repay gift with gift. People should meet smiles with smiles and lies with treachery.

Know—if you have a friend in whom you have sure confidence and wish to make use of him, you ought to exchange ideas and gifts with him and go to see him often.

If you have another in whom you have no confidence and yet will make use of him, you ought to address him with fair words but crafty heart and repay treachery with lies.

Further, with regard to him in whom you have no confidence and of whose motives you are suspicious, you ought to smile upon him and dissemble your feelings. Gifts ought to be repaid in like coin. (Mauss 2001; 2)

The French version being more subtle, the English translation however clearly states the economic and political interest of exchanging gifts and the power relation that may occur due to the obligation of giving a gift which is similar to the one you received last. The fact that gifts are obligatory and that at once all sorts of institutions are linked to it: religious, economic, moral or legal institutions and that it encourages a certain way of producing and consuming, creating classes and impacting the everyday life of citizens, makes the gift a *total social fact* according to Marcel Mauss (Mauss 1950).

A gift can be considered as a *total social fact* as it affects every element (power, culture, technology etc.) of society. Other examples of *total social facts* according to Mauss, are parties, latin ferias, markets, fairs and other gatherings (Mauss 1950).

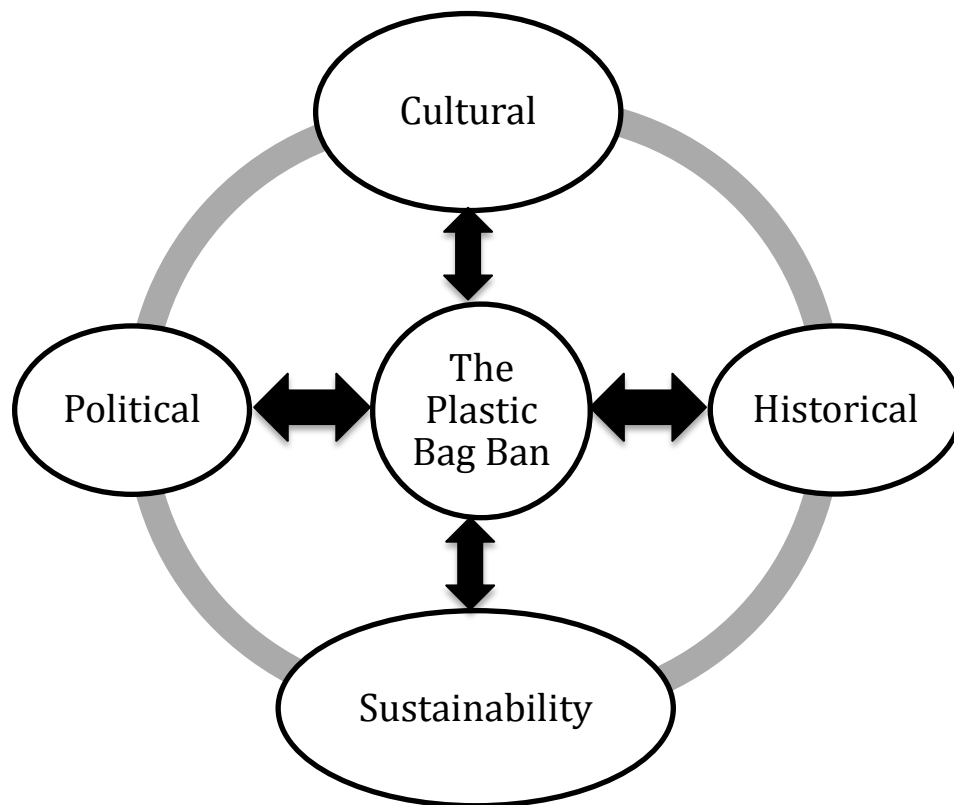
I believe that the banning of the plastic bags can also be considered as a *total social fact* because it influences many elements and institutions of Rwandan Society and has affected Rwandan's everyday lifestyle.

As mentioned before, not all aspects of Rwandan society linked to the plastic bag ban are tackled in this thesis. Moreover, all processes – social, cultural, historical, etc.- are intertwined and are thus addressed in an interchangeable manner throughout the whole thesis.

To understand how the ban on plastic bags is discussed in Rwandan society and how the genocide acted as a cultural and political rupture, there are certain elements that are addressed multiple times. These elements are the concerns interviewees have

about cultural and political sustainability as well as the perspective citizens have on the different forms of power at stake. Furthermore, it takes into account ethnic issues and identifies the role of Rwandan women in their society and its relation to the plastic bag ban.

In order to visualise the thesis' structure, I have drawn a graph of the different aspects linked to my total social fact, namely, the prohibition of manufacturing, importing, use and sale of polythene bags in Rwanda (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Aspects of Rwandan Society. (Author's own illustration)

Figure 1 illustrates the different aspects of Rwandan society the thesis looks at, these being historical, political, cultural and sustainability aspects. By cultural aspects the thesis means to analyse: the different forms of power exerted on the population and its effects on behaviour. Moreover, it will examine the culture of talking about power as well as the way national communications are shared (e.g. changes in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)). Lastly, it identifies the role of women and the differences due to status and ethnicity. These cultural processes obviously are being affected and affect in their turn other aspects of Rwandan society, such as historical

(e.g. humanitarian crisis) and political elements (e.g. the decision of banning plastic bags or creating a national unity). A last aspect will look at sustainability, by questioning the political and cultural sustainability of Rwanda.

## **2.2.Literature Review**

Throughout the thesis, different theories, authors, documents and articles emphasize and complement my arguments. In addition, the thesis makes use of multiple articles from different sources, analysing the political situation, the role of women and presenting specific cases of Rwandan society.

In his book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault puts forward the development of Western systems of torture, punishment to the upcoming and rise of what he defines as discipline. When talking about discipline, which developed during the modern industrial age (18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), Foucault explains the importance of the creation of what he calls docile bodies. Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon to demonstrate his argument of docile bodies. The Panopticon is an institutional structure designed in such a way that one watchman can observe every single inmate surrounding him, while the patients or prisoners are unaware whether they are being watched or not. Foucault's idea is that if people do not know they are being observed they will be less likely to break the rules, even if they are not being watched. The different institutions Foucault puts forward where discipline creates docile bodies are prisons, schools, hospitals but also military institutions or factories. However, he does not disregard the fact that discipline can be applicable to other institutions of modern society. This theory is used to analyse the way people talk about power and their concerns about political sustainability as well as to identify different forms of power applied. Although the case of Rwanda is very different from our modern democratic Western societies, the thesis tries to demonstrate how discipline can be observed outside schools, prisons or hospitals in Rwanda.

Four other authors used in the thesis are: Mathieu Deflem, Val Plumwood, Arturo Escobar and Susan Buckingham-Hatfield. Mathieu Deflem, wrote a book entitled *Sociology of Law, Visions of Scholarly Tradition*. Chapter nine of this book, is of particular interest for the thesis, especially to analyse the results of the fieldwork as repetitively the importance of law enforcement was expressed during the interviews.

Regarding Susan Buckingham-Hatfield, the thesis will make use of her book, *Gender and Environment*, to identify the relations different groups of women have with the environment. While both Val Plumwood (2002) and Arturo Escobar (2006) will help develop the argument of cultural assimilation in the context of Rwanda.

In addition, several articles are used to underline and confront the data collected during the fieldwork. Amongst many articles, one shows the case of women conducting business (Ellis and Djankov n.d.), others analyses the role of women in the reconstruction of Rwanda (Izabiliza 2003; Burnet 2008), while a few more discuss the political regime in place (Friedman 2012; Reyntjens 2004).

The thesis also constantly refers to Vision 2020 (Kaberuka and al. 2000; Republic of Rwanda 2012).

Furthermore, the entire thesis makes use of a vitally important document, namely: *Rwanda: the Preventable Genocide* (2000). The document was written and researched by a group of people working as a consultant for the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The OAU was an organization established in 1963 with 32 participating countries, working on Africa's unity and collaboration. The commission was selected by Africa's Heads of State and Governments. Nowadays the OAU no longer exists, but has become the African Union (AU), with 54 African member states (African Union 2003). The study is very elaborate and the first to analyse Rwanda's history from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the genocide until 2000. It explores in detail, the current problems of Rwandan society and ends by giving a list of strong recommendations to Rwanda and its leaders. In this thesis, multiple aspects of this report are used, but I mainly concentrate on two chapters of the document, notably: chapter 16 on the Plight of Women and Children and Chapter 23 on Rwanda Today.

### **2.3. Similar Studies**

It is Marcel Mauss' notion of *total social fact* that underlies the structure of my thesis. However, multiple other authors have previously used Marcel Mauss' theory of *total social fact* to frame their work. Examples of some of these authors may be Thomas Malm's research on outrigger canoes (2008), Marc Augé's (1982) study on sports and, more specifically, football, or Marie-Claire Bataille Benguigui's on the relations

between men and nature on the Tonga island, emphasised by rites and practices organised by the imagination (1994).

Yet, only limited social science research has been done on the subject of the banning of plastic bags in the Rwandan society. Research on the environmental consequences and impacts of plastic bags were conducted by Rwandan academics such as Innocent Kabenga (2002)<sup>2</sup>, before Rwanda decided to ban all plastic bags. Once the definite ban on plastic bags in 2008 was put into force, however, very little follow-up was done. A few newspapers, like *The Guardian*, *Huffington Post* or Broadcast corporations like *BBC News* and blogs have reported on the subject (The Delicious Day 2012). On the whole, these articles do not, however, go into much detail and simply intend to inform the readers about Rwanda's decision to ban all plastic bags. Other scientists or environmentalists have done further research, but mostly on the benefits and disadvantages of banning plastic bags from a general perspective (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee 2014; Jacobsen 2005). In some cases Rwanda is mentioned, nevertheless when it is, it is often simply referred to as an example or a study case (WALGA 2014). Some researchers have analysed the effectiveness of the law, such as the Australian reporter, Mairead Dundad, who has dedicated a small documentary to the subject, available on France24 ("Down to Earth - Rwanda's Plastic Bag-Free Utopia"). She is one of the few that looks at the case of the plastic bag ban after it has been prohibited.

To my knowledge, there has to date been no social study on this subject matter. As previously mentioned, the articles that exist on the topic all look at it from a different angle. The connections between the ban on plastic bags and society are often overlooked.

### **3. Method**

I have decided to conduct qualitative field research. The research can be divided into three parts: the pre fieldwork research, the actual fieldwork and the post fieldwork analysis. The so-called *pre fieldwork period* marks the time before travelling to Kigali and the preparation of the fieldwork in itself. During this period, I decided to concentrate on all the already existing literature; documents, articles and research, on

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<sup>2</sup> This was communicated to me by an employee of the UNDP.

the Rwanda's plastic bag ban. It was a time of mapping the important actors for my paper and trying to contact them. Through the different literature gathered on the subject and the selection of the research participants, the different interview questions for each different group were established.

The second period was the actual *fieldwork*; I have conducted a field study in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Trying to analyse the different dynamics that were created due to the law on the prohibition of manufacturing, importation, use and sale of polythene bags in Rwanda.

The research methods used throughout my fieldwork were: observation, participant observation, group interviews, semi-structured interviews, structured interviews and informal interviews.

My whole stay in Rwanda was characterized by continuous *observation*, paying special attention to life on the streets, in markets, shops and by observing people's behaviour and habits (e.g. waste treatment in private properties).

*Participant observation*, which is different from the pure observations just mentioned, entails the "immersion of the researcher with those he or she seeks to study" (Bryman 2004). The different participant observations made, were during community gatherings such as during *Umuganda* and at a non-profit organization where women were making peace baskets (*agaseke*<sup>3</sup>). The decision to become a participant as well as an observer appeared to me to be a better option than to go to these different activities and simply watch the proceedings. One of these participant observations did, unfortunately, not turn out as planned. As a white woman, I was not supposed to be there. This episode caused me to reflect on my role as a researcher, something I develop further in the methodology section.

Thirdly, I also conducted one *group interview*, in a very simple and spontaneous setting, with a group of women of mixed ages, but from a similar lower social class. It turned into a group discussion, with me asking questions and facilitator when there were moments of silence whilst also ensuring that they stayed on topic. Subjects ranged from questions concerning the individual's daily habits, occupations and

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<sup>3</sup> Agasekes are handcrafted baskets woven from natural raw materials such as banana leaves, raffia, sweet grass or sisal fibres.



concerns, their relation to the environment as well as their community affiliation and their feelings and perceptions on national issues (questioning *inter alia*, Vision 2020).

On occasion, I used *structured interviews* in the situation where I was required to send my interview questions beforehand (Appendix A).

However, mostly, I used *unstructured interviews*, which allowed more flexibility and openness to change, while keeping a focus on the research question. The benefit of both being open to change, whilst at the same time keeping to a guideline, is that each interviewee is different, with a different story, background, knowledge and insight into the topic. Yet asking the same questions to each interviewee allows you to track tendencies, such as same feelings, same ideas or opinions about something, and to observe patterns.

For the benefit of the reader, all quotations used from interviews will be translated into English, when necessary. However, the original versions can be found in Appendix B. Moreover, every single interviewee is given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

The most unexpected part of the fieldwork were the spontaneous discussions also called *informal interviews*. I have decided to call them informal interviews as the conversations I had with different drivers turned out to be very interesting for my subject and I would insert some of my interview questions into the conversations. My impression was that drivers were the eyes and ears of a city. They meet and talk to diverse people every day of the week, year after year. As a result, they have collected a whole set of information and from various sources.

During the fieldwork stage, I had a diary, where I would note down, all impressions, feelings, and the conversations I had with different people. This diary was a useful tool during the visit to the Genocide Memorial in Kigali, where I took the time to transcribe what was written on the museum panels. The diary was also helpful when I wanted to collect my thoughts, about the information gathered during the day, and rethink the main points.

### 3.1. The Research Participants

Apart from myself, the research participants can be divided into five different categories: (1) participants from the public sector, (2) from the private sector, (3) individual Rwandan women, (4) non-profit and non-governmental organisation employees and (5) unexpected participants.

#### 3.1.1. Public Sector

The participants from the public sector were members of the Rwandan Environmental Management Authority (REMA) and a member of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (Minirena). I interviewed two women at the REMA institute. As they spoke on behalf of REMA, they will be named REMA I and REMA II. Regarding the contact at Minirena, since he only recently joined the ministry, he is speaking for himself but with inside knowledge of Minirena, he will be called Jean-Pierre.

#### 3.1.2. Private Sector

I also interviewed and visited two private companies, such as the plastic bag recycling company, Soimex Plastic Ltd.<sup>4</sup>, and the paper bag company, Bonus Enterprise Ltd.

#### 3.1.3. Rwandan Women

A third group of participants were the Rwandan women. These women were randomly selected during my stay in Rwanda. Two of them were household helpers, which I will call Emma and Léa. Another woman, named Thérèse, I met during a walk in the countryside. The remainder of the women, were employees in the same company in Rwanda. One of these women was the financial manager and will be called Olivia. Another woman was the secretary of the manager and will be called Kristine. Finally two other women were accountants and are referred to as, Susan and Félicie. All these women were very different from one another in age, ranging from 20 to 60 and have different amounts of, what Bourdieu (2010) calls, social, cultural and economic capital.

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<sup>4</sup> Soimex Plastic Ltd. recycles plastic materials from hospitals as well as from the agricultural sector. Moreover, they recycle plastic bags, massively collected during *Umuganda*. They also recycle plastic bags mandatory to pack mosquitos nets. (Soimex Plastic Ltd., interview).

#### 3.1.4. Non-Profit and Non-Governmental Organisations

Fourthly, I had the chance to interview women from a non-profit organization, weaving *agaseke* bags as well as an interview with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Rwanda, a non-governmental organization.

#### 3.1.5. Unexpected Participants

A last group of participants were what I call the *unexpected participants*. These were people I met and talked to randomly, who proved relevant to the research and whose information is used to analyse the research question. I am aware that the data collected from my informal interviews is mostly based on notes and memories, since I have not recorded the conversations and thus acknowledge this limitation. Furthermore, all my informal interviewees were asked whether their information could be used or not and no undesired information is shared. One of the informal interviewees will be called Désiré and the other Thaddée.

A common factor to all the research participants is that they are all native to Rwanda. Moreover, they all have a good knowledge of either French or English. Lastly, they have all been confronted in different ways to the plastic bag ban of 2008.

During my fieldwork, I became interested in the role of a particular rumour. Indeed, throughout my fieldwork I was invited to dinners or events where I would meet other people. Astonishingly, when talking about my research project people would sometimes react with a giggle adding that the president most certainly had shares in all the private companies that had been created after the law entered into force.

### **3.2. Ethical Considerations**

Nowadays, ethnic classifications have disappeared and the word ethnicity is not to be used, as all Rwandans are simply Rwandans (2000). I have asked a Rwandan woman with whom I had very intimate conversations, why it is not right to ask her ethnical affiliations; she responded: [1] It is not good, it is over. The genocide was so terrible. So terrible. You know. (...) My parents were T... (Olivia, interview)

However, believing that ethnic groups no longer exist anymore is a big mistake. Unfortunately, it is a reality that these groups are still very much divided in multiple ways: economically, politically as well as in their access to education and employment (2000).

My point is that ethnicity in Rwanda is a topic which unfortunately cannot be neglected as it is linked to everything in Rwandan society. At the same time, however, it is not something that can be talked about or that can easily be studied due to the difficult fight for a Rwandan inclusive ethnicity. During the fieldwork, I thus had to deal with this ethnical division with great prudence and respect.

### **3.3. Reflexivity**

As Marcel Mauss' states it in his book *The Gift*, a total social fact is not only what you observe but more importantly you yourself as an observer. As an observer, you are part of the observation and thus you must carefully analyse everything you observe and take your presence as an observer, a participant observer or a researcher into account (Mauss 1950).

This requires you to analyse in what your behaviour can alter that of the observed. Other factors such as your dress, body language, and accessories also play a role as much as does the perceived reasons of asking the questions we do and the way of asking them. For this reason, I find it important to incorporate a part on reflection in this paper, on my role and how my presence has altered what I was observing.

There are a plethora of details and elements that could be elucidated in this part of the paper, however I chose to focus only on three of them; the first element, is (1) the physical traits; young thin long-haired white woman. The second is the perception of the researcher to be a journalist and thus (2) the image of the journalist. The third element is both the (3) nationality and the languages.

#### **3.3.1. Physical Traits**

Physically, many aspects can be perceived as vulnerabilities, such as the fact of being a young and thin white woman. However, many people would feel less impressed by my physical corpulence than a tall and strong man and would thus feel more at ease to share their story. Moreover, being a woman facilitated my approach towards other women in Rwanda. Nevertheless, being thin and not physically strong of appearance, made it difficult in some situations of participant observation. An instance was during *Umuganda*, where we needed to cut grass with a machete. The Rwandan women did not think I would be able to do this, they were shocked and gossiping about my lack of strength and about me getting my hands dirty. Lastly, having long hair and being a

*muzungu*<sup>5</sup>, does attract a lot of curious kids and female adults too. Many people would want to touch my skin and especially my hair. This resulted in a lot of laughter and it often lightened up the atmosphere.

### 3.3.2. The Image of the Journalist

The research subject can often be influenced by the perception that you are a journalist. This may be due to objects, such as a recorder, a camera or a notebook, but can also be based on the way one speaks or communicates one's intentions. Telling your interlocutor that you will use their information to better analyses and understand the ban on plastic bags in Rwanda arouses suspicion, creates stress, or doubt mixed, sometimes, with excitement and proudness. In many cases, it adds rigidity to the relation with the interlocutor and thus impacts the data collection. Doubt and wariness from others were definitely aspects that had to be faced throughout all the interviews and participant observations. The subjects were very worried about being right and I observed them being reserved and keeping things to themselves or deliberately changing their point of view in order to say what they thought was expected from them, for safety or personal reasons, or what they thought I wanted to hear from them.

The image of the journalist which people sometimes mistook me for always had some negative effects. This is certainly due to the political situation in Rwanda, where freedom of speech is limited and due to a still very important diaspora. Based on Simon Turner's article on *Staging the Rwandan Diaspora: The Politics of Performance (2013)*, it can be observed that a very high number of Rwandans live outside of the country. This Rwandan diaspora is heterogeneous due to three distinctive waves. The first wave happened in the 1960s where thousands of Tutsis fled the Hutu regime. According to Turner (2013), this first group of exiles is a great support to the Rwandan state, since many members of the government are Tutsis that have come back mostly after 1994, and that benefit from their relations with those unreturned Rwandans. The second wave, happened after 1994, and was composed of Hutus. The State fears this second group, as close to two million Hutus live on the borders with Rwanda and are perceived as a security threat to the current Tutsi-led state of Rwanda. The third wave, started in 2000, when both Tutsis and Hutus fled the country. This group is made up of political opponents, human rights activists or other

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<sup>5</sup> Meaning, being a white man, but also used for a white woman.

Rwandans who fear or are in disagreement with the current political regime and the little room it leaves for critique. This last group Simon Turner calls the diaspora beyond reach.

An anecdote concerning the issue of diaspora is that during *Umuganda*, my presence very quickly caused a rumour to spread amongst local participants that I was sent by the diaspora to report on them during *Umuganda*. This caused a lot of discomfort among everybody, including me, and disagreement, which forced me to abandon *Umuganda* after only ten minutes.

### 3.3.3. Nationality and Language

A third important element during my fieldwork that had an influence on others, was my mother tongue, French, which automatically created the correlation of me being Belgian. Under Paul Kagame's rule, Rwanda has decided to be part of the EAC (EAC 2015), which is mainly made up of English speaking countries (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). Thus, all educational systems are from now on taught in English instead of French (McGreal 2008; Simpson and Emmanuel Muvunyi 2012). As a consequence, two different groups exist nowadays, the first are the younger generation as well as Rwandans refugees from English speaking countries, who speak English as their second language. English is also the language used in the public sector beside Kinyarwanda. The other group are the older generation, who have been to school and university in Rwanda before 1994 and the Rwandan refugees who fled to French speaking countries. They speak French as their second language. A lot of private enterprises still work in French, but increasingly in English. French may be seen as negative in some areas and it is thus a necessity to be able to juggle between English and French, depending on the situation and the public. Being a Belgian can be a burden in some situations in Rwanda as for many it brings back negative memories: colonialism. Additional caution was required from me on a daily basis.

## **3.4. Limitations and Scope**

My research limited itself to the capital of Rwanda, Kigali. I made this decision, for purposes of feasibility (in time and access) but also because the capital is the display of Rwanda, where decisions are taken and where private and public institutions are. However, these individuals all come from Kigali and thus the thesis neglects the rural community which accounts for 87% of the population ("Rural Poverty Portal"). Even

though the findings do not pretend to speak on behalf of the whole country this leaves out the voices of numerous women and men.

Another limitation is linked to the political situation of Rwanda. As mentioned before, due to the political regime, it is a risk to oppose oneself or talk negatively about current or upcoming political decisions. Therefore, during my interviews, some interviewees may have felt differently to what they actually expressed. Moreover, in the public or private sector some things may have not been communicated or things may have been communicated in a way so as to mislead me or hide things from me. The trustworthiness of the information I received has thus to be considered.

Furthermore, an important limitation during the fieldwork, and thus for the collecting of the data, was the language barrier. I myself, do not speak the national language, Kinyarwanda, spoken by all Rwandans. Although English and French are two other official languages in Rwanda, not every Rwandan speaks all three languages fluently. Often people speak only Kinyarwanda, or Kinyarwanda and French, or Kinyarwanda and English, but very rarely, all three languages. Consequently, not speaking Kinyarwanda prevented me from interviewing several people unless I used an interpreter. This was something I did on one occasion, at Soimex Ltd. In addition, not all the interviewees were fluent in French or English and would sometimes struggle to verbalize their thoughts and could not express themselves fully.

#### **4. Findings**

The significant amount of primary data collected during the fieldwork in Kigali revealed a lot of information about Rwandan society. However, the findings are selected in a way that they address both, how the ban on plastic bags is discussed in Rwandan society and how the genocide acted as a transformative event on cultural and political aspects of Rwandan society. By looking at the ban of polythene bags, one is able to identify the different connections to CPS that are revealed.

This section dedicated to the findings, is divided into three distinct parts. It starts by giving a brief overview of the genocide to better grasp the different arguments presented throughout the thesis.

A second part looks at the way Rwandans, of different age and gender, and with different experiences and responsibilities, talk about power. It tries to highlight,

whether or not people feel confident talking about 'power' openly. It also identifies the different forms of power that are being used.

The last part of this section, looks at the role of the genocide and the subsequent elements related to the plastic bag ban. It shows the feelings and perceptions of Rwandan women with regards to their role and responsibilities for Rwanda's reconstruction as well as towards Vision 2020 and the plastic bag ban.

#### **4.1.Rwandan Genocide and the Aftermath**

This short introduction to the Rwandan genocide is based on the data collected at the Genocide Memorial in Kigali. All the information taken from the notes gathered at the Genocide Memorial in Gisozi, Kigali. There are many different versions that can be found about the genocide in books, articles etc. In order not to chose, and potentially take position, from the different sources, I present the version shared by Rwanda through its Genocide Memorial in Kigali. This short overview allows for a better background understanding of the current Rwandan context, which is still influenced by the acts of 1994.

Before the German colonisers arrived in 1891, a royal family and its king, Mwami Rwabugiri, ruled Rwanda. The king and his army tried intensely to protect the country against foreign invasion but were defeated by the Germans in 1895. After thirty years of German rule, the Belgians took over what is now Rwanda's territory in 1922. The whole period of white European rule over East-Africa, was characterised by the creation and growing divisions between Tutsis and Hutus. Due to the rising conflicts between these two ethnic groups and intensified violence, Belgians and Rwandans set up a transitional government lead by Hutus. Two years later, in 1962, Rwanda won its independence. Instead of defusing the situation, this event nourished many Tutsis fears, causing a lot of them to flee the country. From then on, Rwanda went through different humanitarian crises, the civil war starting in 1990 being one of them. This was followed by the Rwandan genocide which started on April 7 1994 and lasted until mid-July, leaving around a million Rwandans dead in its wake. Tutsis as well as moderate Hutus were murdered by Interahamwes, a Hutu-led military and other Hutus. Radio Milles Collines, a Hutu-led radio station, broadcasted messages of



hatred and incited all Hutus to violence by repeating: “kill the cockroaches<sup>6</sup>”. In July of that year, the Republic Patriotic Front, a Tutsi refugee led army that started in Uganda, was able to stop the massacre and mount a takeover.

Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda, who has been in power since the first established government post genocide, is working on a new vision for the country (Republic of Rwanda 2012). One of his most acclaimed acts after the events of 1994, were the *Gacaca Courts*<sup>7</sup>. They were established in order to facilitate reconciliation, forgiveness and unity between the various ethnic groups (Events 2000). Another governmental action for the reconstruction of the country has been to create *Umuganda*. *Umuganda*, is the name for mandatory community work programme for every Rwandan citizen above the age of 18 (The Delicious Day 2012). This was set up in order to bring Rwandan citizens from the same community, regardless of ethnicity, together every last Saturday of the month to work as a group on an assigned duty (Emma, interview). These duties are social work as well as environmental tasks, such as collecting waste and plastic bags lying around the streets, planting trees or rebuilding a community members’ house, if, for instance it has been destroyed by heavy rain or wind (Olivia, interview; Jean-Pierre, interview).

The *Umuganda* Programme and the historical humanitarian crisis, have enabled the Rwandan people to understand the extend of ‘their’ ethnic division and its destructiveness (Events 2000). The Rwandan government has thus been working towards a more inclusive ethnicity. Moreover, institutions such as churches, schools and universities as well as any other public institution have the responsibility to communicate and perform the values of human rights, mutual respect, diversity and solidarity (2000).

## **4.2. Forms of Power**

The word power is a complex term and no definition can adequately describe all that it entails. I focus on two definitions of the word power. Sometimes power refers to

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<sup>6</sup> Tustis were referred to as cockroaches by the Hutu leaders and their followers.

<sup>7</sup> A transitional community court system, which made it possible to speed up the process of justice and reconciliation, simultaneously allowing victims to hear the truth about their family members and relatives and for perpetrators to ask for forgiveness (“Background Information on the Justice and Reconciliation Process in Rwanda - Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations”).

political leaders and those who have control over decisions and actions that are taken under their command. The second definition sees power as a mean, such as authority, law enforcement, punishment etc. (Deflem 2008; Foucault 1991). If the latter can be seen as a tool a leader can use to confirm his authority over others, the former relates to the status of a person according to his position in society. This status and position in hierarchy also determines the power that can be yielded.

This second part looks at the different forms of power – punishment, law enforcement, discipline - observed, based on the interviews conducted during the fieldtrip. Moreover, it studies how the ban on plastic bags is discussed and perceived in the Rwandan society. In addition, it also tackles the way the interviewees talk about power, referring to a political group or as a general force they perceive in their daily lives. Foucault's different notions of power, such as punishment and discipline, as well as Deflem's analysis on law enforcement, helps identify some of the powers exercised in the case of Rwanda. These different forms of power and other aspects of power linked to the plastic bag ban in Rwandan society are used interchangeably throughout this analysis.

Regarding the ban on plastic bags, power is used and exercised by different categories of people, which compose of the minority, while the majority are inevitably subjugated. These different categories are the decision makers, those responsible of the law implementation and their partners.

One of my research participants considered that it was an initiative by president Paul Kagame: “What happened, before there were a lot of plastic bags in Rwanda. A lot, you could see them everywhere. So the president asked a cabinet if they could do something about it.” (UNDP employee, interview).

Furthermore, there is the ministry in charge of making the law and REMA, responsible for its implementation. “The ministry we make laws but the implementation is done by the agencies and our agency is REMA, you know. So we make laws and REMA they do the enforcement, understand?” (Jean-Pierre, interview)

Moreover, different institutions, like the Rwandan police and customs work in partnership with REMA. You can find them on the borders or at the airport once you

arrive. “The national police is helping us to gather information...” (REMA I, interview).

Testimonials of the adaptation process and sentiments about today’s current plastic-free country vary; they range from being very positive and with a sentiment of proudness to rather negative stories that demonstrate how difficult it was to adapt to the new law. All female interviewees admitted it had been difficult at first, as they had to change their grocery, but:

[2] We’re used, it’s hard because for instance if you buy something that leaks, we put it in the paper bag, it leaks, it breaks. But when you see that the cleanliness is clean, we accept, it’s good. We even say, that for the ground it’s not good. For agriculture yes, it’s not good. And when we walked, we saw on the street, bags, bags, bags and bags. Now we begin to get used of no bags and it is better, it is clean everywhere. (Lea, interview)

Overall, all interviewees expressed their contentment about the cleanliness of their country compared to what they were used to ten years ago. Moreover, the majority of them mentioned that they had heard that it was much better for the soil and thus for agriculture even though none of them were working on plantations or on an agricultural farm. However, a few of my interviewees mentioned it had been harder on some people who had their own little businesses and were threatened with closure due to the ban on plastic bags and the challenges of rapidly adapting its activity to this new rule.

[3] Yes yes everyone was ok with it. But, some people I know for instance they had a shop or you know the women who sell goods on the streets and all that, I know that for them, many had to stop what they were doing for a living. (Thérèse, interview)

Unfortunately, none of these individuals wanted to share their story with me. It is possible that these people did not want to confess due to the political regime in Rwanda. An informal interview I had with a chauffeur, Désiré, demonstrates this political regime in place.

Désiré shared his political interest and frustration of not being able to exercise and share his political stance and ideas publicly. He, had once set up a political party, but the current regime hunted him down and he was expelled and sent to prison in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Today, he had been back in Rwanda for six

months and had just found a job as a driver. Désiré is facing the very high risk of being imprisoned again if he decides to pursue his political activities.

This story illustrates the first form of power, the punishment, which could be translated by sending people who have committed a crime, have opposed themselves to current political ideas or disobeyed a law to prison for instance (Foucault 1991). In the case of the plastic bag legislation, we can observe a parallel with the use of punishment exercised through law enforcement. An extract of the interview with the Rwandan Environment Management Authority (REMA) does indeed, demonstrate the importance and frequent use of law enforcement for the success of the ban.

There are still a lot of plastic bags coming in Rwanda. We know they are there, but there are different measures installed to fight that. Sneaking them in, like you know in big bags of rice, they hide plastics bags in the middle. That we know, but we are fighting that, this is what we do as enforcing enforcement. The national police is helping us to gather information and to look and the ones who are caught in the act are given a very high penalty. And we are concentrating on those big importers. It all comes from neighbouring countries, and if you're caught, transporting them, the owner of the vehicle, the driver of the vehicle and the person who was involved in the passage of those goods will face punishment. So they are taking very big risks. (REMA I, interview)

This system of enforcement by police makes sure that whoever breaks the law on the prohibition of manufacturing, importing, use and sale of polythene bags in Rwanda faces punishment, such as a fine, having their licence withdrawn or worse. “It depends, it can be real bad, or you know licence withdraw, paying money, something like that.” (REMA 1, interview).

This form of power is a rather traditional form of power, which is prohibitive and normative. It is prohibitive as the law forbids the use of plastic bags. Moreover, it is normative as both law enforcement as well as systems of control and surveillance are imposed on the population (Deflem 2008). In case of non-compliance, the population is reprimanded.

Thus, the difficulty of interviewing ‘victims’ of the plastic bag law can be explained by the fact that they are too intimidated to express any criticism.

However, if some individuals lost their jobs as a result of the ban, others saw in it an opportunity. For example, the creation of paper bag factories (e.g. Bonus Industries

Ltd.) or the transition from a plastic bag industry to a recycling company (e.g. Soimex Ltd.). As mentioned before, the thesis investigates and verifies the rumour that the president and his ruling party own shares in private companies that have profited since the ban. This rumour is being communicated and shared amongst smaller groups of friends, or expatriates who face low or no risk of punishment. I thus asked both companies – Soimex Ltd. and Bonus Industries Ltd. – whether the state or members of government, were shareholders of the company. While the former, did not understand my question, the latter avoided having to respond merely stating: “ We have governmental aid, ...” (Bonus Industries Ltd., interview).

This does not tell us that the RPF has shares in these two companies, but it does show us that there is an unwillingness to talk about it.

Apart from noticing a certain resistance to talk about power in official interviews, there was another recurring aspect in my interviews. It is a story that was told both during two of my female interviews as well as with REMA. This story was about the president stopping his car in the middle of a trip because he saw a plastic bag on the street and sending his escorts or perhaps even stepping out of the car himself to pick up the waste and drive it to the closest bin to throw it away. It is interesting to see the impact this event had on the Rwandan population, as spontaneously three of my interviewees talked about it during the interviews. One of them was a member of REMA who said the following about the president:

He is more frustrated than us, if he finds a plastic bottle on the side of the road. Actually sometimes he would stop, make his escorts to go and pick up the plastic and put it in the car and then drive until they find a bin to dump it. So if you see such a gesture, then you know as an environmental policy, you need to do more! (REMA II, interview)

Similarly, another woman interviewee stated:

- [4] I remember once, sometimes the President of the Republic organises to participate at *Umuganda* with his men.
- The President joins too, then?
- ééééé, of course of course.
- And not only does he join *Umuganda* in his neighbourhood but he also organises that elsewhere, even if it is never communicated. Once, he came in our area, he stopped at a place, found a plastic bag and stepped out of the vehicle and picked it up. That was quiet an example. Because after *Umuganda*, usually we have a meeting, and then he said, you see I

came to work on the cleanliness of your area. So, you do not pick up the bags. And then we felt hmmmmmm... (expressing how bad they felt at that moment). But really, today, you cannot find plastics anywhere. It is gone hmmmmmm... (Olivia, interview)

It may be obvious, to perceive a president's act as having more symbolic importance, but the important aspect here is how powerful his action was in order to have such an effect on various interviewees. They are from very different backgrounds and have opposing responsibilities yet mentioned the same episode when asked about the plastic bag ban issue. The president's act of picking up waste to throw it in a bin was a powerful one that had a huge impact on the behaviour towards waste of his Rwandan citizens.

Also mindsets change, (...) Before when you were driving, you would just throw something on the ground, it is easy because it is going to find other rubbish friends, now because there is nothing there you find it odd to do it and when someone as the president picks up waste, you understand how important it is. (REMA II)

Furthermore, other elements impacted on what Jean-Pierre would call environmental awareness. These elements are: the TV and radio communications on environmental subjects and the community works, *Umuganda*, that focus on environmental activities.

Because for the last twenty years or ... there has been a lot of things talked about on the television. The Rwanda Environment Management Authority, they do have radio communications, they have video sometimes on TV, a lot of campaigns of tree planting, where for one week we planted trees all over the country. We have *Umuganda* every once a month. So actually, activities that are done at *Umuganda* are most of the time about the environment. So people are very aware about the environmental protection. Very aware! (Jean-Pierre, interview)

A last form of power, which is in some ways similar to the previous one, is the notion of discipline developed and presented by Michel Foucault (1950). Foucault, demonstrates in his book that a new form of power emerged at the same time as the transition from torture to prison happened, namely discipline (Deflem 2008). Discipline, as another way of exercising power, shows how Rwandans just naturally discipline themselves and that even police or surveillance are no longer always necessary since they have disciplined themselves to behave in the expected way; i.e. to no longer use plastic bags and to not throw any waste on the streets or elsewhere when it is not your private area.

An additional example could demonstrate that citizens disciplined themselves, and this is the example of the much talked about *Umuganda*<sup>8</sup>. Through the example of *Umuganda* we also perceive how discipline is not only limited to prisons or hospitals but that they have roots throughout society in general (Deflem, 2008).

You know in other countries, like I was working in Senegal last year. We did a huge work on plastic bags. And they all agreed they had to do something and still after that... [he claps with his hands]. If something does not come from the top it becomes really difficult because people, they, it's not that they don't care but they think that if they don't use plastic bags anyway somebody else will use it... You know in Rwanda, when a law is decided. It's serious serious. So people know that if they don't, they will be punished at the end of the day... And they understand. (Jean-Pierre, interview)

And not only talking about the average Rwandan but also the ones at the ministry, as mentioned here:

And people do what they are supposed to do in the ministry otherwise they are sacked. So this law, like others, the law on corruption for instance, the minister at that time knew the decision came from the top and this political will... You know. (Jean-Pierre, interview)

In this exert we understand how powerful the idea of punishment is communicated. Therefore people in Rwanda disciplined themselves and obey. Indeed, the fact that people know they could be punished if they disobeyed the law, and were caught, is enough for them not to go against it.

However, if in theory discipline always knows resistance (Deflem, 2008), Rwanda would be an exception listening to the following statements recorded during my interviews.

[5] For me, I think that Rwandans are good. When there is no anger we listen, I don't really know how you say this. But when I listen to other countries, I think that we have a success. Calmness. Thanks to the government, because the government gives us the ideas, you see. (...) If people listen to what the government proposes, it works better. I am proud, I think that Rwandans listen well to the government and they help you see. They say it is forbidden and then we don't use any. We help you see. (Emma, interview)

Another woman I interviewed at REMA expressed her feeling about the Rwandan

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<sup>8</sup> *Umuganda* is mandatory to all those above 18 who are healthy enough to work. Shops are closed, and no one is allowed to commute, as everyone should be working (Félicie, interview).

population and the fact that they made this ban possible. Because if multiple other countries in Africa with similar political situations and with similar plastic bag problems have not managed to put this law into force, it would be due to the population resisting and not accepting it.

Rwandese are, what should I call them? They are good at, they collaborate really, they listen, they're not rebellious, I've lived in Uganda and you know you know you don't just bring a decision and people accept what you are talking about. But Rwandans are really understanding. It's a really understanding population. You tell them, plastic is not good, it is not the best option and yes, it doesn't go very fast but before you know they started understanding. Yeah ! (REMA I, interview)

### **4.3.Rwandan Women and Rwanda Today**

During the 1994 genocide, Tutsi women and Hutu women married to Tutsi men suffered tremendous physical as well as psychological violence. An explicit example of their status during the genocide, which caused their suffering, can be found in the Hutu Power Propaganda (Events 2000). These published the "Hutu Ten Commandments", two of them being:

1. Each Hutu man must know that the Tutsi woman, no matter whom, works in solidarity with her Tutsi ethnicity. In consequence, every Hutu man is a traitor:
  - who marries a Tutsi woman;
  - who makes a Tutsi woman his concubine; and
  - who makes a Tutsi woman his secretary or protégée.
  
2. Every Hutu man must know that our Hutu girls are more dignified and more conscientious in their roles as woman, wife, and mother. Aren't they pretty, good secretaries, and more honest! (Events 2000; para. 16.2)

This extract shows the non-esteem regarding Tusti women, who were tortured, raped, mutilated and/or killed. Concerning Hutu women married to Tutsi men; they were often forced to kill their own children, being Tutsis due to their father's ethnicity, to show their faithfulness to the Hutu group. Besides having to kill their own children, these women often suffered from physical and sexual violence themselves.

The reason why this discussion focuses on Rwandan women is because, at the end of the genocide, a higher number of men had been killed, resulting in a gender imbalance: the Rwandan population was made up out of 70 percent of women



(Weaving peace in Rwanda). Today 51 per cent of the Rwandan population are women, but even then, still thousands of men are in prison or in the army (Events 2000). This high number of women in Rwanda can also be observed in government, parliament and at the ministry. Indeed, Rwanda is one of the countries with the highest number of women in power, with for instance, 45.3 per cent of the seats in parliament occupied by women (Ellis and Djankov n.d.).

Knowing this, one may wonder if the women in power influenced the making of the decision, concerning the prohibition of the use, manufacture, sale and production of plastic bags so as to install transitional projects or encourage existing ones, in order to help the Rwandan population and more specifically, the majority female population. Expressed differently: if transitional projects for women were created and encouraged, was it thanks to the high number of women in power? This question of course leads one to ask, whether women were more affected by this regulation than men, leaving aside the aspect that they are more numerous.

Concerning the latter, my male interviewee at the Ministry of the Environment and of Natural Resources, explained:

- Women in rural areas they suffer a lot when the environment is degraded.
- Do you think women suffered more than men in the banning of plastic bags?
- I'd think at the beginning, you know they were used to go to the shop with nothing and then you get plastic bags. So the adjustment from now with the paper bags, it doesn't go with meat etc. But you know they kept, they started adjusting. But yes, I would say that women were more affected. The adjustment took more time than men. But it is for the better for them too in the long-run, especially in rural areas, because they work more in the fields and so. (Jean-Pierre, interview)

However, my female interviewee at the Rwandan Environment Management Authority, stated: "Not quite. Ok in the sense that many women are more involved in the shopping, probably yes. In that sense." (REMA I, interview)

Followed by her acknowledgement of REMA's responsibility towards those having more difficulties with adjusting to the new legislation.

Actually now, we picture a lot of women who take decisions. They are just looking at the bigger picture of what Rwandans need, if this is going to improve the livelihoods of Rwandans in general, then we go for that decision. But, often times you realise that any policy has to look at the vulnerable people. And often times you find that the vulnerable people, are the ones either

that are very old, or women that didn't go to school. That's why such policies will come up with, you know ... of how to help the vulnerable to cope with the new legislations that have been put in place and that is when cooperatives like, women cooperatives, come up and they earn support and funding from different government. (REMA I, interview)

Concerning the former question of whether, for instance, REMA thought of new transitional projects for women or encouraged some existing ones to help women adapt to the new legislation, my interviewee responded: "Yeah we do, we do. At some point, there was a cooperative, a women association, which used to do weaving, yeah! Weaving of baskets, to support the policy that had been taken to eradicate the use of plastic." (REMA I, interview)

I requested the name of these different organisations, but that day no one at the institute was able to tell me where I could find one of these organizations. I left my email address so that they would communicate it to me, when it would come back to them. Unfortunately, I never received a response and thus decided to visit an organization I had heard much of and that coincided with REMA's response about women taking decisions and being active. This organisation is called Gahaya Links and is interesting in the sense that it puts forth elements of the current situation in Rwanda, linked to women in the Rwandan society and the plastic bag ban.

This is the story of two sisters, Janet Nkubana and Joy Nkubana, who a few years after the genocide, decided to start a weaving business. They hired both Hutu and Tutsi women, but women only. These women of different ages, in different stages of their lives and with different perspectives on Rwandan society, all work together to bring back a little peace, by working as a group, weaving baskets. These baskets are therefore called peace baskets or *agasekes*. Gahaya Links currently hires approximately 3 500 women all across Rwanda and this number has increased after the plastic bag law came into force in 2008. Indeed, the women I met explained that demand had soared, since people were looking for new ways of carrying goods.

Apart from women being increasingly active in Parliament, leading projects, starting businesses and working to sustain their families, Rwandan women are also what many call, the mamas of the country and have plenty of other roles and responsibilities (Hinson 2015). One of my female interviewees described what she believed is the role of the Rwandan woman:

- The woman has many roles... Because if the woman does not complete her roles. The family can't work.
- So what exactly are these roles?
- Family, education, cleanliness and all that, I think yes. Here, the woman needs to take care of a lot of things. Even if the father doesn't do anything, if the mother is there, all is ok. If the mother is there, she takes care of the kids, and it is ok. The role of the woman is very important. If a woman doesn't do what she is supposed to do, immediately we can see that the family is not ok. The fathers they think, for instance, that education for the kids doesn't concern him ! It is the mother that always follows that and that makes sure that everything is ready, food, clothes for school, cleanliness of the house etc. You know, the fathers help, but most of the time they are somewhere else. We don't see them a lot in the family. You know mother even if she works, she will go directly home after work. The father, he goes the opposite direction, for instance, the bars, you understand? (Lea, interview)

If undeniably women's roles and responsibilities have changed since 1994 (The Institute for Inclusive Security 2014; Izabiliza 2003) to non-traditional roles, such as being into business or head of a financial unit etc. in this extract we notice how traditional roles have remained. These roles are, the children's education and health care, as well as being responsible of the cooking, confined in the domestic sphere (Buckingham-Hatfield 2000).

Moreover, the interviews with the female group, gave the impression that while women have been fighting for peace and reconstruction, men have rather been characterised by a drinking culture, being a possible result of the genocide. Some of these views were expressed with discomfort: “[6] I take care of my brother, because after the genocide, he started to become a little crazy and he drinks all the time. I must have an eye on him.” (Olivia, interview)

And another:

- [7] Men after work they go to the beer.
- Does he go often?
- Yes a lot a lot.
- Every day?
- When he comes back from his office, he immediately goes to the cafés. Hmmmmmm, I don't like that, when he drinks a lot. That's why I haven't tried. I don't want to try. That's how it is. (Félicie, interview)

Furthermore, as mentioned, after the genocide a new political party took over, the RPF lead by Paul Kagame. Under his leadership a huge project has been launched, called Vision 2020. Under Vision 2020 multiple development, economic, social, environmental, political and educational projects are designed to be implemented by 2020 (Republic of Rwanda 2012). The prohibition on the manufacture, use, sale and production of the plastic bags was one of these projects realised in 2008. Some of the interviewees' impressions concerning Vision 2020 were the following:

[8] I think that we are going to go really far. For instance, because when we would hear about it before, we thought it would never happen. Now, when you see how clean clean the roads are in Kigali, then we start to believe that we really are going towards Vision 2020. It is beautiful, I like it. Even the houses, before there were torn houses and all that. Now we build houses made out of cement and not clay anymore. Rwanda is a real success ! (Emma, interview)

One even expresses how proud she is, when she compares Rwanda to other neighbouring countries:

[9] You know, my grandparents they didn't have plastic bags, and then, we had plastic bags everywhere everywhere everywhere. For the moment everybody who listens to the reasons of the banning of the plastic bags and when you see the cleanliness right now in the cities and everywhere, people start to understand. (...) In Burundi, there are plastic bags everywhere, everywhere, but here really I'm proud. [Giggling] ... (Susan, interview)

Similarly, another one of my interviewees responded: "Can you imagine that after what our country has gone through, we have a Vision 2020. Do you know many neighbouring countries of Rwanda who have the same? I think it is a great sign and I am very proud as a Rwandan." (Jean-Pierre, interview)

While another woman feels a little less confident about giving her opinion on the subject:

- [10] I heard on the radio and television, that they said that.
- What do you think about Vision 2020?
- Euh hihi (nervous laugh), it is beautiful, yes, it's good but... (very long moment of hesitation) Since, we are working on it. We're not yet finished and as we are working on it, we don't know. If it's the future, we don't know... (Lea, interview)

Furthermore, soon after the genocide, Paul Kagame implemented *Umuganda*, a monthly meeting where everybody above the age of 18 from the same neighbourhood comes together. *Umuganda*, has been very important during the implementation of the

plastic bag law as, through these *Umuganda* sessions, Rwandans cleaned up their area and collected all the plastic bags (Soimex, interview; “Why Is Rwanda so Clean? Umuganda Day” 2015). That way, Rwanda has been cleared of all its polluting plastic bags. However, *Umuganda* serves and has served for a multitude of other things, such as the planting of trees throughout the country or, most importantly, the act of working together as a team (Emma, interview; Jean-Pierre, interview).

[11] We are part of *Umuganda*, because *Umuganda* helps, we do the work together in our neighbourhood and it helps. We talk with the people. Even for instance, when someone is poor, a really poor mama whose house is falling apart, then the whole community does *Umuganda* there. We do *Umuganda* all together, you see. Yes. And then when *Umuganda* is finished, we meet to talk about our country, about the problems there are in the country and in the neighbourhood. (Emma, interview)

## 5. Discussion

The following section attempts to put forward recurrent elements of the fieldwork findings presented above and to set a discussion in order to share ideas, from other authors, to the reader on these recurrent elements. Lastly it looks at how these findings could be interpreted.

### 5.1. Historical Elements

To start with, in the beginning of the findings a brief introduction was given on the 1994 genocide, based on the Genocide Memorial of Kigali. It clearly emphasized the responsibility of European colonizers for creating significant divisions between Tutsis and Hutus. However, it is interesting to put this in perspective with other narratives. Jared Diamond in his book *Collapse, how societies choose to fail or succeed* (2011), advances the argument that the genocide was caused due to a too high number of inhabitants for too little available land and resources. This overpopulation with the support of political leaders (Hutu leaders) urged people to kill landowners, who tented to be Tutsis (Batware 2012), and other people if they wanted to survive. Furthermore, in a slightly different representation from that of the Genocide Memorial in Kigali, many authors insist on that there were ethnic divisions before the colonial era and that the Belgian colonizers used and aggravated these divisions to realise their political agenda and goals (Saur 2009). Lastly, the OAU report on *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, shows that versions differ amongst Tutsis and Hutus.

In addition to this, the findings show that there is a growing awareness and understanding of environmental degradation, even amongst those who, just as the majority of Western people, are detached from the source of their food, since they do not grow their food themselves (Buckingham-Hatfield 2000). Moreover, there is a growing sentiment of satisfaction mixed with pride regarding the prohibition on polythene bags. This is largely thanks to television programs and radio communications on environmental subjects. As seen in the historical introduction and in Elizabeth Baisley's book *Genocide and Construction of Hutu and Tutsi in Radio Propaganda* (2014), such radio propaganda played a great role in the Rwandan genocide. Similarly, the programmes REMA broadcast on TV and radio on environmental issues greatly influence all Rwandans.

## **5.2. Politics, Ethnicity and Power**

There are clear signs that the government wants to work towards national unity and underplay ethnic affiliation (Republic of Rwanda 2012; Events 2000). However, it is evident that ethnic questions are still central in Rwandan society and even in the political sphere. Even if it has been observed that there is a will from the dominant few to create a national unity devoid of any ethnicity or at least a will of having an inclusive ethnicity. When looking at the numbers the OAU made available, we see that the Tutsi, minority in Rwanda are the majority in the political sphere:

Some have argued that from the very first, real power in the government has consistently been monopolized by a small group of Tutsi, even though Hutu have formally been well represented. In 1999, for example, while the Cabinet contained 14 Hutu and 12 Tutsi, of 18 ministerial general-secretaries identified, 14 were RPF Tutsi; with only two exceptions, all the non-RPF ministers have RPF general-secretaries. Of the 12 district prefects, nine were Tutsi, two Hutu; one position was vacant. Over 80 per cent of burgomasters are estimated to be Tutsi. Among the 14 officers comprising the army and gendarmerie high command, only one is Hutu. The "tutsization" of the judicial apparatus is also evident: the Supreme Council of the Judiciary is mainly Tutsi; three of the four presidents of the Courts of Appeal and the majority of the judges of the Tribunal of First Instance are Tutsi.[9] For the first time since the new government took over, the President is now Tutsi as well. (Events 2000; 247)

From the extract above we could assume that creating a national unity devoid of ethnicity, would potentially have as a consequence the denial of cultural differences between the ethnic groups and pressure dominated groups (Hutus) to assimilate to the culture of the dominant few (Tutsis) (Escobar 2006). In this, Plumwood (2002) sees a

parallel with colonial history where the cultural assimilation of the colonised towards a unified culture was oppressive. This cultural assimilation produced an inferiorised version of the dominant colonizers, “denying the other’s to define their own reality, name their own history, and establish their own identity” (Plumwood 2002; 203). These denials of cultural differences and the obligation of adapting to new cultural habits, values and ideas have often proved to be conflictual (Escobar 2006). Therefore, as Escobar (2006) mentions, it is a necessity to limit the cultural dominance in key institutions, such as in the government, parliament or judicial area, to achieve justice and equality while respecting cultural difference.

Moreover, concerning the political regime, we noticed the difficulty of interviewing ‘victims’ of the plastic bag ban. This can potentially be explained by their fear of openly criticising<sup>9</sup> decision-makers, the government and its president.

Indeed, Rwanda is often referred to as an authoritarian regime (Smith 2012; Friedman 2012; Kinzer 2011). The president Paul Kagame himself did not hide his political decisions and stance from the rest of the world; he stated his political choices in multiple interviews and international articles. He explained in these articles, that the authoritarian regime is necessary for the stability of the country (Smith 2012). Paul Kagame believed importing more democracy into the country, could again trigger ethnic divisions and sentiments of hatred, which could possibly cause another genocide (Kinzer 2011).

This authoritarian regime allows for human rights to be neglected as well as rephending all political opponents (Smith 2012). According to Désiré, a former political opponent, prisoner, and exile, as well as other journalists, such as David Smith (2012), dissenters are being hunted down. The Rwandan population in general is well aware of these not uncommon stories, as the majority of them know a friend or relative, who has been punished or in exile. Thus, a general sentiment of fear felt by the Rwandan population may influence their freedom of expression leading to self-censorship. This constrained freedom of expression may cause Rwandan citizens to avoid communicating negative sentiments towards their government and its political

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<sup>9</sup> Like the absence of help for their career transition or assistance towards advisable or possible alternatives corresponding to their needs.

decisions and acts. This would explain the strong unwillingness of the ones who suffered from the ban of plastic bags to share their stories.

Similarly, the findings clearly demonstrate the important use of law enforcement and punishment, in the case of the plastic bag law. With time, people started to discipline themselves because they know they could be punished if they disobeyed and were caught in the act of littering. However, the findings also demonstrate that there is a clear sign of growing understanding from the Rwandan population. The interviewee, Emma, mentioned how Rwandan people listened and helped in the implementation of new laws. As it is forbidden, they no longer use any plastic bags. Instead of resisting, they prefer to help by conforming themselves to the law.

### **5.3.Rwandan Women**

The findings identify two groups of women. A first group is what REMA and Minirena identified as the vulnerable group; the very old women, the women that did not go to school and the women that live in rural areas and work in the field. This group increasingly suffers from environmental degradation (Buckingham-Hatfield 2000). Because, as Susan Buckingham-Hatfield (2000) observes, even though it is usually the rich who are the heaviest polluters, it is the poor and the women, in charge of feeding their families as well as being responsible for their health care, who suffer from it the most, as they cannot escape.

After the devastating genocide, a second group of women emerged. Indeed the genocide created single women who were either widowed or had husbands in prison. The role of these women right after the genocide was central; They had to take care of the thousands of orphans or abandoned children, as well as the rest of the population and the country as a whole (Izabiliza 2003). In the past the participation of women in politics and decision-making in Rwanda was almost non-existent (2003). But as we have seen, nowadays women hold nearly 50% of the parliament seats and other decision-taking positions. Jeanne Izabiliza (2003) believes the genocide had a significant impact on the Rwandan society as it changed gender roles and responsibilities. Increasingly, women have non-traditional roles, such as being head of a financial division, like Olivia, part of governance or decision-making and implementation, such as our female interviewee at REMA, or undertaking business, like Gahaya Links founders, amongst many others.



It is obvious from this, that gender roles have undergone an enormous transformation and it would be natural to think that this change has benefited women. However, according to Jennie E. Burnet (2008), given the authoritarian regime in Rwanda, these changes have not given more political power to women and problems of gender equality are still present, even though a ministerial department has been created for gender and family promotion, namely the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF).

On a different note, when looking at the findings, we see that interviewees successively mention the cleanliness of Rwanda. Any observer or casual visitor, notices within a very short space of time how the law is strongly respected (Thaddée, interview). Once you drive among Kigali's roads and into the nearby countryside, you notice the cleanliness of the country, especially compared to ten years ago. It is astonishing, how there is no trace of a plastic bag or even any other waste on streets. As Anver Versi (2014) states:

Kigali surely is one of the cleanest cities in the world [...]. The cleanliness [...] reveal[s] a discipline and determination without which it is impossible to move beyond the mediocre. Rwanda can become outstanding – as long as politics does not get in the way, or more accurately the wrong politics. (Versi 2014; 15)

In a sense, this cleanliness may give the impression that everything is working perfectly in Rwanda. Similarly to the cleanliness of the country, we could take Jennie E. Burnet's argument (2008) that the state of Rwanda uses the image of gender equality to hide the fact that it is ruled by an authoritarian regime, and to rather give an image of democratisation. This could be seen as a political strategy of depicting a positive image of Rwanda to the international stage. However, it may also be that Rwanda truly is working towards more gender equality and inclusive ethnicity. But, one is to observe that this is a long and tedious process that Rwanda has not yet achieved.

Analogously to the culture denial of the Hutu, we observe that women are not given the same right of decision-making than men. Yet, these two groups – Hutus and Tutsi, women and men - have different social roles, values, perceptions of the world surrounding them and these cultural differences in the case of Rwanda have the

potential of intensifying inequalities and power relations, if the dominant few imposes their cultural norms instead of equality with respect to differences (Escobar 2006).

Overall, it is undeniable that Rwanda today is a step ahead from the disasters of the genocide and the short period after that humanitarian crisis characterised by a period of justice and reconciliation (e.g. *Gacaca Courts*), as well as reconstruction. In fact, between 1994 and 2003, women's organisations, working on reconstruction problems and helping the needed, was the most active sector of Rwandan society (Burnet 2008). Today, Rwanda knows a rapid economic growth and seems to be able to concentrate itself on sustainable development projects such as the banning of the plastic bags part of Vision 2020.

#### **5.4. Plastic Bag Ban**

However, simply the fact that Rwanda has managed to abolish all plastic bags is in itself a remarkable achievement. Based on what some of the interviewees said, if this ban on plastic bags has been possible in Rwanda, it is because “it comes from the top [...] and when a law is decided, it's serious serious” (Jean-Pierre, interview). Many other countries in Africa have tried to implement the same policy, such as Senegal or Tanzania<sup>10</sup>, but have not yet managed. Similarly, in Europe, it seems we are a long way off from a total prohibition on polythene bags. A few weeks ago one could read in the Flemish newspaper, *De Standaard* (2015), that all member states of the European Union should work to reduce the average use of plastic bags consumption or that by 2018 the consumer would be required to pay for (except in the case of meat or fish) every plastic bag used. This only concerns plastic bags thinner than 0.05mm thick, also called single use plastic bags and not all plastic bags.

Numerous journalist explain that in a democratic country the banning of plastic bags is a very difficult reform that would require a considerable amount of time to enter into force, while in Rwanda, the authoritarian regime in place facilitated the implementation of the law in an efficient and short period of time (Friedman 2012). However, even though Rwanda is the first country to push the law so far as to prohibit the manufacturing, use, sale and importation of plastic bags, a few other cities or countries have banned plastic bags too (“How Many Cities Have a Ban on Plastic

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<sup>10</sup> “In Tanzania a bill was put in the Eastern African community, but the bill didn't pass through that time.” (REMA, interview).

Bags?” 2015). As an idea for further research, it would be interesting to do a comparative study on two very different places, in order to analyse how aspects of society - historical, cultural, political, etc.- have created an enabling environment for such a ban to occur?

## **6. Conclusion**

This section summarises and identifies the different connections the plastic bag ban has with culture, power and sustainability. It has become apparent that with the lens of the plastic bag ban, a total social fact, we can study various aspects and processes of the Rwandan society and the Rwandan’s everyday lifestyles.

### **6.1.Culture**

The role played by women in the aftermath of the genocide was a critical element that contributed to the situation enabling a plastic bag ban to occur in Rwanda. Women representing the majority, after the genocide, played a major part in all aspects of the country’s healing and reconstruction phase. Without their hard work, Rwanda would not have been able to develop its numerous projects, such as stipulated in Vision 2020. This process, which changed and transformed the role of women in society, has created two distinct groups of women: a group of women dedicated to traditional roles, and a growing group of women having non-traditional roles.

Behaviours and habits have also been affected by the plastic bag ban. If Rwandans were once used to go to the market knowing they would pack their purchase in plastic bags, today men and women have to plan when shopping and take cotton bags or baskets to carry their goods from the market. Moreover, the disappearance of wandering plastic bags from the streets impacted the consumer, who consciously adopts a more responsible waste management attitude.

Through the monthly community works, *Umuganda*, Rwandans come together to clean their neighbourhoods of plastic bags. These gatherings are not only important for the cleanliness of the country but also to bring all Rwandans together for the benefit of their country.

Cultural changes have also been observed in the political will to create a national unity and inclusive ethnicity. However, doubts still exist regarding this national unity,

which in the eyes of many is more perceived as a ‘tutsization’ or pressing of cultural assimilation than an inclusive ethnicity.

Rwandan history has proven how influential ICT, such as radio and TV broadcasting, can be on people’s values, ideas and behaviours. During the genocide, this media of communication urged Hutus to kill Tutsis. Today, ICT are increasingly used for broadcasting programmes to raise awareness regarding the environment.

Lastly, there appears to subsist reluctance among the population in general and chiefly among those suffering from the plastic bag ban to openly talk about ‘power’.

## **6.2.Power**

The political regime in Rwanda, an authoritarian one lead by a Tutsi president, is a regime that leaves little to no room for critique. A handful of people exert decision-making power while the majority simply obeys. Even in the political arena, where Rwanda ranks as the country having the highest percentage of women in the world, women have little say in political decisions. In addition, political opponents are being hunted down, while Hutus are near to absent of the political scene.

Furthermore, different forms of power are being utilised to maintain compliance, namely law enforcement, punishment and discipline. REMA, in charge of the law enforcement, controls that nobody enters the country in possession of plastic bags. The ones caught, face high risks of severe punishment. Being aware of those consequences, the Rwandan population disciplines itself so as not to be confronted to justice.

## **6.3.Sustainability**

Growing numbers of political opponents and human rights activists have fled the country these last years and have not come back. This is mainly owing to the fact that there is no room for critique and the fear of being punished. It is obvious that fear and discontentment does not ensure political sustainability.

Today ethnical divisions are still central and unlikely to disappear in a nearby future. If the government were able to work on equality regarding roles and responsibilities without disregarding cultural difference, this would allow for cultural sustainability.

However, imposing a dominant culture would only weaken this cultural sustainability, as history has proven how often this causes conflicts.

Lastly, to use the sayings of Tutsi exile former Chief of Staff to the current Rwandan president, Theogene Rudasingwa: “Rwandan exiles are still very concerned and live under constant threat of the opposition. [...] For there to be sustainable prosperity for people, you have got to enrich people’s right.” (“20 Years After Genocide, Rwanda Prospers but Political Freedom Remains Elusive” 2014)

Evidently, this thesis shows how through the plastic bag ban, multiple aspects of a society can be studied. This certainly was the case of Rwanda, where it was possible to go as far as to understand the impacts on and of the political regime, gender equality, national unity, cultural assimilation amongst many other elements of and on the plastic bag ban.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendice A**

#### **Interview REMA**

- When did the plastic bag ban enter into force?
- Could you specify what type of plastic is not allowed and which one still is?  
 And for what purposes the plastic bags are still used?
- How long did it take, you reckon, for the law to really be effective?
- What is the function of the Rwandan Environment Management Authority concerning this law?
- What is the scope of your activities?
- Have you observed a change in mentalities and behaviours from the citizens since 2008?
- Has it had any effect on the consumers' habits?

- Could you sum up the positive effects of this law, and the negative effects that still need to be worked on?
- Do you know approximately how many people suffered from this law entering in to force? How many people were doomed to stop their activity or close their shop?
- Do you believe women were more affected by these measures?
- Did REMA or do you know of a support that has been implemented to help these people (the women and the ones who lost their jobs)?
- Could you give the references of some of those women associations, like weaving baskets, you have supported?
- What was done to encourage private investors to set up factories that make ‘eco-friendly’ and affordable packaging materials?
- How well did *Umuganda*, the community work sessions go?
- What did you do with all the collected plastic bags?
- How many tons of plastic bags per year do you still collect at the borders and at the airport?
- Could you say a little about the illegal activities and the black market of plastic bags?
- Who are the other institutions you work with to tackle illegal plastic bags and activities?
- Can individuals also report to your institutions?
- Do you believe there is a lack of environmental awareness among the people? If so, what do you do to tackle this?
- What is the next step, if there is a next step, concerning plastics in Rwanda?
- Could you, tell me what made and makes Rwanda so strong only 15-20 years after the atrocities of the Genocide?
- Could you describe the Rwandan women?
- Do you know how many women work in REMA approximately?
- Have these women had any influence on the plastic bag ban and its effects?

## Appendice B

[1] C’est pas bien, c’est fini. Le genocide c’était trop dur. TROP dur. Tu sais.” “Mes parents étaient des t...

- [2] On est habitués, c'est dur parce que par exemple si tu achètes quelque chose qui coule, on met dans le sachet en papier, ça coule, mais ça casse. Mais quand tu vois que pour le moment la propreté c'est propre, on accepte, c'est bon. Même on dit que dans la terre c'est pas bien. Pour cultiver oui, c'est pas bien. Et quand on marchait on voyait dans la route, les sachets les sachets, maintenant on commence à s'habituer pas de sachets et c'est mieux, c'est propre, partout.
- [3] Oui oui tout le monde ça a été je pense. Il y a des gens je sais que par exemple ils avaient un magasin ou vous savez les femmes qui vendent les marchandises sur les rues et tout ça, je sais que pour eux, beaucoup ont du arrêter ce qu'ils faisaient pour gagner des sous.
- [4] Je me rappelle une fois, parfois quand le président de la république il organise de participer à Umuganda avec ses hommes.
- le président participe aussi alors ?
  - éééé, biensûr biensûr.
- et non seulement dans son quartier mais aussi il organise, même si c'est pas communiqué à tout le monde. Une fois il est venu du côté de chez nous, il s'est arrêté à un endroit, il a trouvé un sachet et il est descendu de son véhicule et il l'a ramassé, alors là c'était vraiment un bel exemple. Par ce que après umuganda, généralement on tient des réunions, alors là il a dit, vous voyez je suis venu vous faire la propreté chez vous, donc vous ne ramassez pas les sachets, alors là on s'est senti hmmm... Mais vraiment aujourd'hui tu peux trouver presque nulle part les sachets. C'est parti hmmm.
- [5] Pour moi, je crois que les Rwandais sont biens. On écoute tant qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup de colère, je sais pas comment on dit. Mais quand j'entends les autres pays, je pense que nous on a du succès. Du calme. Grâce au gouvernement, parce que c'est le gouvernement qui nous donne les idées quoi. (...) Si les gens écoutent ce que le gouvernement propose ça va mieux. Moi je suis fière, je pense que les Rwandais écoutent bien le gouvernement et ils aident quoi. Ils disent que c'est interdit et alors on utilise pas. On aide quoi.
- [6] Je m'occupe de mon frère, parce que après le génocide, il est un peu devenu fou et il boit tout le temps. Je dois le surveiller.
- [7] - Les hommes après le travail ils vont à la bière.
- Il y va beaucoup?
  - Oui, beaucoup beaucoup.
  - Tout les jours?
  - Quand il rentre du travail, il va directement aux cafés. Hmmmmmmm j'aime pas ça, quand il boit beaucoup. J'ai jamais essayé moi pour ça. Je veux pas essayé. C'est comme ça.
- [8] Je pense qu'on va arriver très loin. Par exemple, parce que quand on entendait avant, on pensait que ça arrive pas. Maintenant, quand tu vois Kigali, comme les routes sont propres, propres, alors on voit vraiment qu'on va vers Vision 2020. C'est beau, moi j'aime bien. Même les maisons, avant il y avait des maisons cases et tout ça. Maintenant on construit des maisons en ciment et non en argile. C'est un succès le Rwanda !

[9] Vous savez, mes grand-parents ils avaient pas de sacs en plastiques, et puis il y avait des sac partout partout partout. Pour le moment tout les gens qui écoute pourquoi on a éliminer le sac en plastique et quand on voit pour le moment la propreté qu'il y a en ville et partout, tout les gens commencent à comprendre. (...) Au Burundi, il y a des sacs plastiques partout partout, mais ici vraiment je suis fière. Hihi...

[10] - J'ai entendu à la radio, à la télévision qu'ils ont dis ça.

- Qu'en penses-tu?

- Euhhh, hihi (rire nerveux). C'est beau, c'est bien... Mais on est pas arrivé. Comme on est pas arrivé, on sait pas. Si c'est le future, on sait pas...

[11] On participe l'Umuganda, parce que l'Umuganda ça aide. On fait le travail dans le quartier et ça aide. On parle avec les gens. Je crois que c'est bien. Même par exemple quand il y a quelqu'un qui est pauvre, vraiment une mama pauvre, qui a une maison qui va tomber, alors tout le quartier va travailler l'Umuganda là-bas. On fait l'Umuganda ensemble, quoi. Oui. Et après Umuganda, on parle pour notre pays, pour les problèmes qui sont dans notre pays et dans le quartier.