

The ‘bitter fruit’ of a new agrarian model: Large-scale land deals and local livelihoods in Rwanda



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Overview

- A 'new agricultural model' for Sub-Saharan Africa
- The Rwandan development model
 - Rural development policies
 - Swampland reorganization
- Two case studies
 - Large-scale land deals through foreign investment
 - Large-scale land deals through local elite capture
- Impact of large-scale land deals upon rural livelihoods
- Policy recommendations

The World Bank Discourse: a seeming contradiction?

2010 Report *Rising Global Interest in Farmland*

- Acknowledges **potential of large-scale land deals** -> improved access to technology / capital markets / infrastructures / institutions that allow increased productivity and effectiveness in the utilization of land
- But **risks** of large-scale deals -> Recommendations in terms of
 - promoting **responsible corporate behaviour** (side of the investors)
 - enhancing **good land management** (side of government)

2008 World Development Report *Agriculture for Development*

- A **Green Revolution** for Sub-Saharan Africa ~ 'a productivity revolution in smallholder farming'
 - Analysis of challenges for smallholders
 - Analysis of institutional innovations to improve smallholders competitiveness

The World Bank Discourse: a seeming contradiction? Not at all

2008 World Development Report *Agriculture for Development*

- Report 'does not support smallholder farming per se, but **commercially-oriented, entrepreneurial smallholder farming**' (Akram-Lodhi, 2008) -> **only applicable to minority** of small-scale entrepreneurs
- **3 pathways out of poverty**
 - Through **agricultural entrepreneurship** for smallholders
 - Through the rural **labor market** and nonfarm economy
 - By **migrating** to towns, cities or other countries

Dominant view upon the 'new agriculture' for Sub-Saharan Africa

- Focus on **maximal production and productivity**
 - Either through involvement of investors operating at large scale
 - Either through transformation of innovative smallholders into agricultural entrepreneurs
- Ignoring impact of policies upon **equity, distribution**, local agency, identity
 - Requires focus on **capacities and needs of different peasant groups**
 - Requires focus on **political economy** dimension and elite incentives

Rwanda

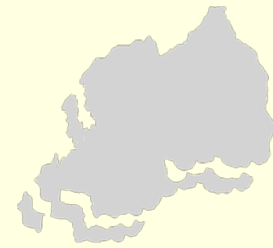


The Rwandan model: Post-conflict 'renaissance'



- **Economic growth** of 4.6% 2000-2008
- **PRSP** 2001-2006 and 2008-2012
- Progress in **social sectors**
- **Technocratic Governance**
- **Poverty** 4,8 -> 5,4 millions
- **Inequality** Gini 0,47 -> 0,51 and 0,37 -> 0,44 in rural areas
- **Pro-poor character of economic growth = problematic**

Rural Development : policy priorities



GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- Transformation of agricultural sector in professionalized motor for economic growth
- Creating economies-of-scale effects
- Agriculture-dependent population from 85 -> 50% (2020)

STRATEGIES

- **Agrobusiness** and role of private capital in agriculture
 - **Larger land holdings** in individual or collective hands
 - Enforcing the adoption of '**modern**' **production techniques** + **market-orientation**
- => **“Re-engineering rural society”**

Swampland valorisation policies

OBJECTIVES

- Protect fragile ecosystem
- Increase **productivity** through large-scale exploitation

ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS

Transfer of informal individual user rights ->

- concession to **individual large-scale investor**
- user rights transferred to collective farmer groups

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

- from multicropping to **monocropping**
- from free crop choice to particular **market-oriented** 'high-value' crops

Reorganising the marshes: The role of private capital in the agricultural sector

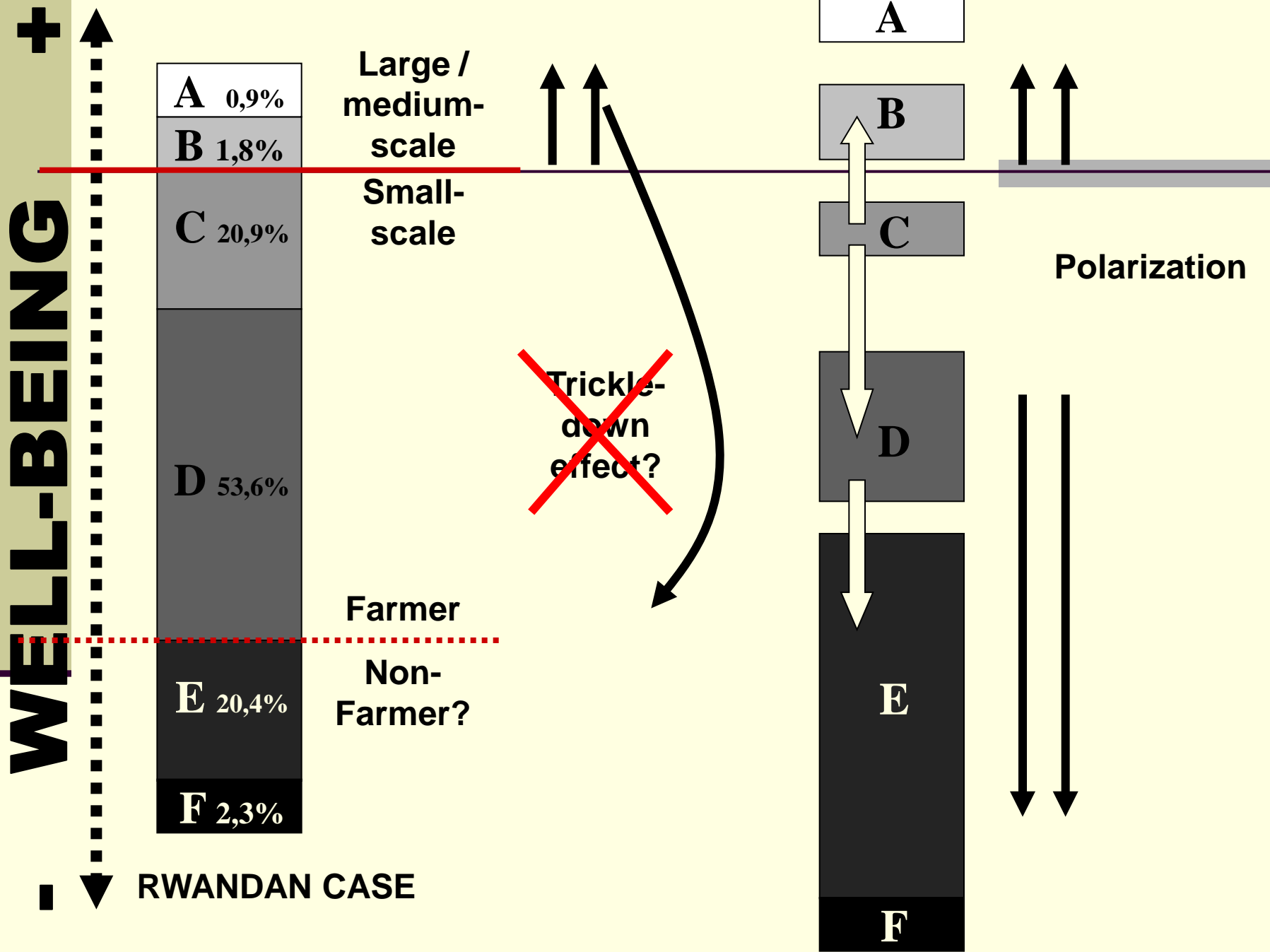


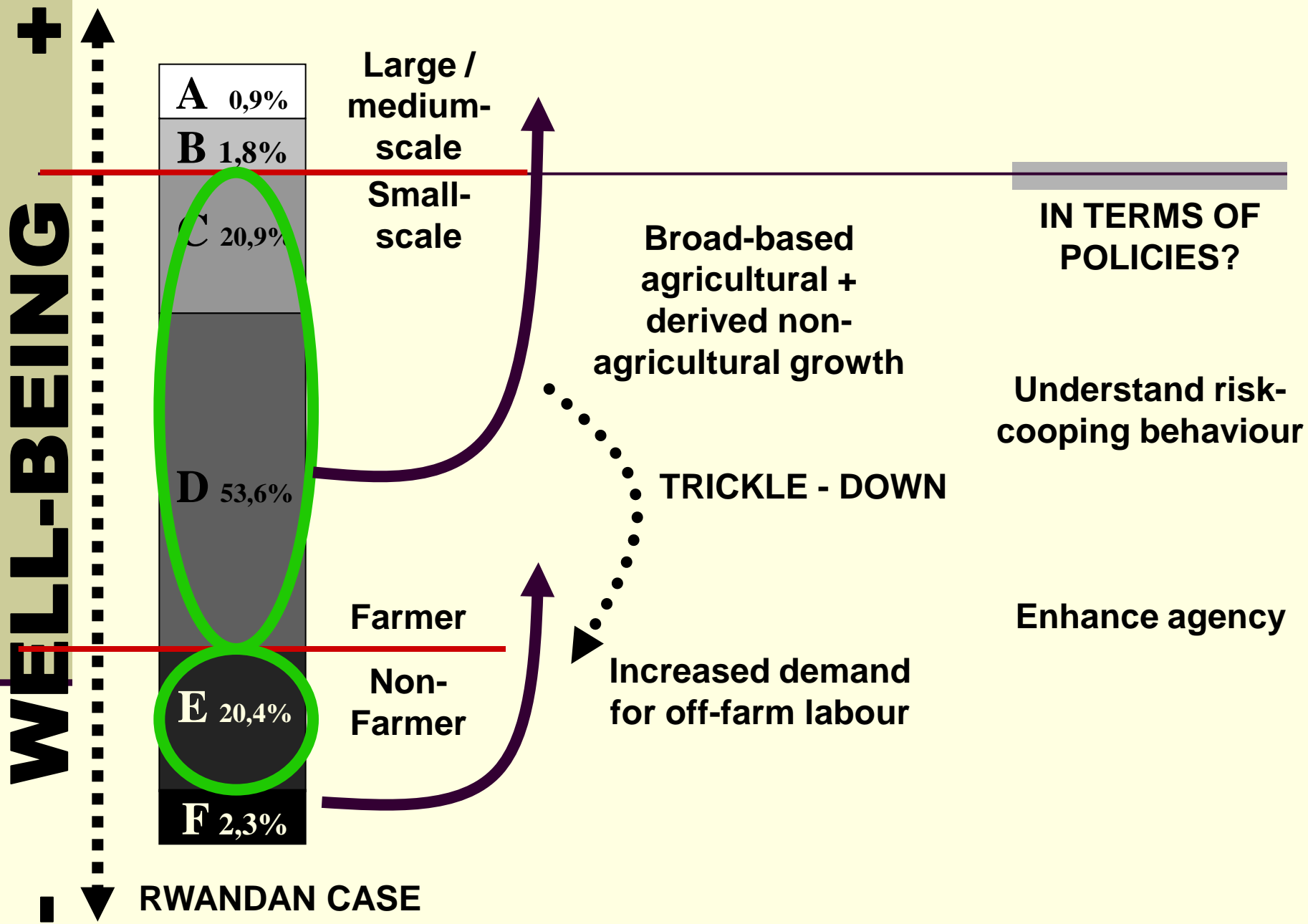
- Concession given to Madhivani Business Group
- Total change of the physical and social organization of space
- Gains in terms of productivity ?
- Net gains in terms of employment creation ? and loss in terms of livelihoods
- Net effect on poverty reduction = negative

Reorganising the marshes: From influential brokers to 'collective action'



- Control to influential individuals with political connections => part A and B
 - PART A
 - Monocropping + market-oriented production
 - Disappearance of local broker but replacement by 'broker – cooperative'
 - PART B
 - Monocropping
 - Clientelism in getting access to associations
- ⇒ Polarization in access





Policy recommendations

- Need for inventive solution to go beyond current ecological barrier BUT not through the rigid **top-down reengineering**
- Facilitates **new types of land grabs**, and accelerates **'old' types of grabs** (opportunities captured by elites)
- Need for a voice of the rural poor in policies that concern them: **'bringing the peasants back in' at all levels, but HOW?**
 - Authoritarian governance structure - lack of bottom-up accountability -> extensive opportunities for elite capture
 - International donors inspired by neo-liberal market-oriented logic
 - International peasant movements reinforcing local civil society? -> glocal corridors connecting local pools of agency with (inter)national pools of agency

Murakoze cyane



Interested in the paper?

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