

# Globalisation and resistance in horticulture

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A case study of witchcraft in the Kenyan horticulture

*Bachelor Thesis*  
*Sociology of Development*  
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## ***Preface***

This thesis is written as a partial fulfilment for my Bachelor International Development studies at Wageningen University. The subject of witchcraft in the Kenyan horticulture came to me during courses I followed at Wageningen University, like African studies and the sociology of farming and rural life. My interest lies in the East side of Africa, with his own nature, inhabitants and cultures. By following some courses, I was interested in the minds behind some actions of smallholder farmers, especially when they came in contact with globalised and intensified production and the question why smallholder farmers act in a specific way raised to me. Through talks with my supervisor I came out on the subject of witchcraft in the Kenyan horticulture.

Special thanks are going to my supervisor Paul Hebinck, to whom I could return every time with my questions and for his critical view on the pieces I wrote, and for his patience for my delay in writing.



## ***Summary***

This thesis is written as a partial fulfilment for my Bachelor degree at Wageningen University and search whether witchcraft can be understood as a form of resistance against the globalisation of the agricultural commodities. Agency is an important concept here, because without allocating agency to every person, you cannot search for the cause of resistance. With agency, all people have the opportunity to act and to make decisions. With the globalisation of the agricultural commodity chains, the production processes commercialised and vertical integration took place. These changes cause differences in the production processes and the commodity chains. Resistance in the agricultural production is a practice and expression of an ongoing social struggle, about the unrest of and the struggles with the new way of producing. The case study of witchcraft in the Meru district shows that witchcraft is a form to show the unrest and the disadvantages about the globalisation of the agricultural commodities. Based on this literature review you can state that there is a connection between globalisation of the agricultural production, commercialisation, struggles and resistance, autonomy and witchcraft. Through the globalisation of the agricultural commodities and the vertical integration, the struggles of the smallholder farmers and witchcraft as a form of resistance grew.



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## **1. Introduction**

This Bachelor thesis is a partial fulfilment for my Bachelor International Development studies at Wageningen University. The thesis is about resistance by smallholder farmers in the global South to protect their interest in the context of ongoing process of globalisation and restructuring of the agriculture production. Resistance is here treated as a practice and is an expression of an ongoing social struggle. Resistance as a practice that smallholders engage in when they feel trapped. This thesis is focused on the resistance of the smallholder farmers in the Kenyan highlands, in the Meru district. This thesis is based on a literature study. Searching for and reading the relevant literature is an important skill I acquired during the writing of this thesis.

A literature review shows that there are many forms of resistance. People are resisting their dispossession of land, farmers protest against the low prices of their commodities, some people occupy their land after being evicted, etc. I decided to focus on a case in the Kenyan horticulture to underline my argument and to show the context of the resistance in farmers' households. The case is about export horticulture in the Kenyan highlands where witchcraft occurs relatively frequently. This case study will show that agency, autonomy and resistance are linked with witchcraft in the agricultural production. Agency is something all people have and when they have the opportunity to express themselves, they can have autonomy. The globalisation in the agricultural production caused changes in the lives and division of labour, and autonomy in the smallholder farmers' households, which created struggles in these households. Witchcraft is a way to show these struggles and resist against this new way of producing.

The main question that is tried to be answered with this thesis is 'Whether witchcraft can be understood as an expression of resistance against the globalisation of agricultural commodities?' The sub questions that will help to answer this main question are 'What are the different forms of resistance against the globalisation of agricultural commodities?', 'What is witchcraft and how is it developed over time?' and 'What role does witchcraft in the Kenyan horticulture have and why?'. To answer these questions this thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 explores resistance and develops a set of concepts to understand and research resistance. Some key texts, like O'Brien, Van der Ploeg, Geschiere, Evans Pritchard, are read to come to grips with the multiple nature of resistance. Chapter 3 explores the history of witchcraft and how people and sociologists interpret witchcraft over time. Chapter 4 looks into the case of witchcraft in Kenyan horticulture. Understanding this case required me to read some additional texts about the horticulture in Kenya, especially of Dolan and Ciekawy, and texts about the different forms of witchcraft are used as a form of resistance. Chapter 5 brings these together in a discussion and states a conclusion to show that

witchcraft is one of the many forms of resistance smallholder farmers in the global South express to protect them in the restructuring of the agricultural production.

## **2. Methodology**

To tell more about the resistance in the agriculture production in relation with smallholder farmers, there are some concepts explained here to sketch a theoretical approach, to make the theories and concepts clear. There could be different definitions about some concepts, in this chapter it will be defined which specific definitions are used and why especially these are used.

### *2.1 Agency*

To show how resistance arises and is manifested, it is necessary to know how different relations are formed. Agency is an important concept here, because that is where struggle starts in relationships, this could be in individual social struggles, but also in collective social struggles. Agency is something all people and things have and they need to get the opportunity to express themselves to use this agency. According to Long (2008) *“Agency refers to the knowledgeability, capability and social embeddedness associated with acts of doing and reflecting that impact upon or shape other persons’ actions and interpretations, and recursively, of course, one’s own.”* Van der Ploeg talks about peasants’ agency and states that there is a principal design which is the informal rules through which agency expresses itself. The seven principles shortly are the exploration of relevant heterogeneity in the territory; the creation, use and development of autonomy; the structuring of changes in such a way it is practical; the need to combine these principles in an intelligent way with the available sources; it is better to be engaged in collateral moves than to fight an impossible battle; the importance of using shifting interfaces within the state apparatus and the last principle concerns the nature of the created interrelations, like relations could be fixed or movable. (van der Ploeg, 2008, p. 204-206).

Agency tells something about your capacities to handle with certain things, this could be how you are taking some advantages but also how you are reacting or just ignore at some happenings. *‘Agency is a socially generated and a culturally defined phenomenon that takes different forms depending on the context’* (Long, 2008, p. 80). It is important to keep in mind that agency is something that is intertwined in social relations, cultural habits and material elements. *“Central to this interpretation of agency, then, is the notion that it is embodied in social relations and can only be effective through them.”* (Long, 2008, p. 80). Because all people and things have agency, they all have the possibility to make decisions. You can say that agency gives people some autonomy. Agency is the chance to grab and attempt opportunities, through which you can show what you are worth. So here it is important to understand that agency is something all people have, it is rooted in their bodies and lives, and they all need a chance to show their agency to demonstrate what they are worth for.

## 2.2 What is resistance?

Rural resistance is not something new; there have always been peasant rebellions and rural unrest in developing rural areas (O'Brien, 1996). According to O'Brien (1996) rightful resistance *"is a form of popular contention that operates near the boundary of an authorized channel, employs the rhetoric and commitments of the powerful to curb political or economic power, and hinges on locating and exploiting divisions among the powerful."* With this resistance smallholder farmers can express their unrest and disadvantage. Resistance is a way to show the society and the politics that there is unrest, there are disappointments and disadvantages. This is a way to show the social struggle and an attempt to make changes. According to Norman Long *'the notion of resistance is commonly used to characterize struggles against sites of power and authority, or what are often called "dominated" actors or regimes, carried out by less powerful or so-called subordinate actors, both individual and collective.'* (Long, 2008). So resistance is something to express disagreements and to show that there is some unrest. Smallholder farmers' resistance is a form of disagreement and fight against, mostly, the political leaders and their plans. As O'Brien mentions: *'So long as a gap exists between rights promised and rights delivered, there is always room for rightful resistance to emerge.'* (O'Brien, 1996, p. 55).

There are different ways to show your disagreement and disadvantages, not all kinds of resistance are the same, or with the same intention. *"The concept of everyday resistance also needs to be disaggregated to capture the diverse intentions of the actors as well as the consequences of their actions."*(Isaacman, 1990, p. 33). The most common forms of smallholder farmers' resistance are *"trespassing, unauthorized utilization of privately owned land, and, generally speaking, a refusal to recognize large landowners' property rights."* (Korovkin, 1999, p. 2) These are forms of resistance that are visible. But resistance does not always have to be an open form, there are also forms of resistance that you cannot see or feel, that are covert. Van der Ploeg talks about peasant resistance in his book 'The new peasantries', and he describes peasants resistance as something that is not only shown as overt struggles like demonstrations, occupations and marches, but also through expressions that are never absent (Van der Ploeg, 2008). He emphasizes that there are several ways to express the resistance and struggles the peasants feel. Van der Ploeg tells that in whatever form of resistance you want to show your struggle, pride and dignity are important elements, because the *'countervailing power resides in the dignity of everyday life'* (Van der Ploeg, 2008, p. 267).

## *2.3 Smallholder farmers and their households*

This thesis is about resistance in the agricultural production with a case study in the Kenyan horticulture. In these regions it is about smallholder farmers which resist. To define smallholder farmers, I agree with van der Ploeg (2008) that smallholder farmers are peasants who produce agriculture in a sustainable way with use of ecological capital. With their production they try to defend and improve their peasant livelihoods. Smallholder farmers are producing with their own labour and with help of their family, the production process is families' property and the main reason why they produce is to improve their lives. Smallholder farms are practically always family farms. On a smallholder farm, there are a lot of different tasks to do to get the whole production done. These tasks that have to be done are not only different from each other, they are also labour intensive and there is need for different disciplines. Like van der Ploeg says: *"Multifunctionality is often a major feature. Labour is basically provided by the family and land and the other major means of production are family owned."* (Van der Ploeg, 2008, p. 1) The production of peasants are oriented to the markets, to maintenance the farm and their family. (van de Ploeg, 2008).

Van der Ploeg calls them peasant farmers, but in this thesis the term smallholder farmers will be used. Because I think smallholder farmers is a broader term and includes all different kinds of farmers, which is in my opinion not with the term peasant farmers. Smallholder farms are farms where is worked with ecological capital and in a sustainable way, the work is done by family members and they try to improve their farmer lives.

## *2.4 Growing horticulture*

This thesis is about the different forms of resistance of smallholder farmers in the agriculture production. If you talk about smallholder farmers' resistance, it is commonly about resistance in the agriculture production process. To search for the cause of the resistance of smallholder farmers, it is necessary to look at the colonisation and globalisation of the Kenyan horticulture. From the moment of colonisation and with the start of the globalisation, struggles increased.

### **2.4.1 Globalisation**

The horticulture in Kenya was not always that big as it is right now. In the colonial period, there was a big demand for horticulture like french beans and snow peas. The production of these vegetables was very large, because there was a lot demand for the export chain to the Western world. (Dolan, 1999; Dolan, 2001). With the globalisation of the horticulture, there vertical integration arose. Vertical integration of the smallholder farmers in the global food production. The production processes changed and were commercialised. The great demand of the global food chain needed commercialised production, through vertical integration like contract farming. *"Commercialization was accompanied by capitalization – on a restricted*

*scale, but capitalization, nevertheless, because productive consumption was the object of accumulation, and production depended upon the employment of wage laborers.*" (Cowen, 1983, p. 203). Contract farming is a way in how foreigners get in contact and make arrangements with smallholder farmers about the production and the prices of the crops; *"Contract farming involves a contractual relationship between farmers and a central processing or exporting unit."* (Glover, 1990, p. 303). *"Contract farming is a form of vertical coordination between export firms and growers, who range from smallholder farmers to large scale farms."* (Dolan, 2001, p. 43). With the contract farming there was contact between the foreigners and the smallholder farmers.

With this vertical integration there were many changes for the smallholder farmers' households. Were the women had some gardens to grow vegetables for their own households and some to sell at the local markets, the contract farming took over these fields to have enough space to grow their horticulture for the export chain. (Dolan, 2002). For the extent of the quantity and the quality of the products, the production process has been rapidly intensified and commoditised. (Dolan, 2001). Through this intensification, the cultural norms became under pressure and over time they changed. The division of labour changed; were previously the women had the fields to produce some vegetables, now mostly the man were owning the land, but the women still had to do all the work, which has become a lot more. The division between men and women activities in the households had to change, because otherwise they could not reach the expectations of the foreigners. *"Cultural norms, combined with the seasonality of agricultural production result in an asymmetrical division of labour, with the average amount of time allocated to agricultural activities greater for women than for men."* (Dolan, 2001, p. 48) Besides that the man owned the land, they also appropriate the returns of the yields, which leads to a lot of dissatisfaction with the women, who want also some autonomy about the production and the income of the horticulture. *"Today, both men and women acknowledge that export horticulture has changed from being a predominantly female sphere to a mixed-gendered one, revealing not only a shift in material relations but also a reconstitution of male and female property."* (Dolan, 2001, p. 58)

The growing horticulture in the Kenyan highlands, Meru District, came through the globalisation and the vertical integration of the farms, the industry of the Western world, who wants a big and cheap production. *"In short, household production had become commercialized, but also subordinate to, rather than competitive with, capitalist relations of production."* (Cowen, 1983, p. 204). The intensification of the production brought a lot more work for the women, and the men appropriate the land and the production, with their returns. *"In fact, the economic benefits of growing French beans and other horticultural export crops are predicated upon the unpaid labour of women and children."* (Dolan, 1999, p. 24). Through the globalisation with its vertical integration and contract farming, the economic returns were lower for the households, the division of labour distorted and the quality of the crops were lower. (Dolan, 2001). *"The lives of peasants – women and men, old*

*and young – were dramatically transformed under colonial capitalism.”* (Isaacman, 1990, p. 30)

## **2.4.2 Struggles**

The struggle in the agriculture production is mainly located with the smallholder farmers, they experience the disadvantages in their daily life. These disadvantages all start with the industrialisation and the globalisation of the world food market. As told above, with the colonisation and globalisation, the vertical integration in the food chain and the contract farming came up. These new, different ways of producing caused a lot of changes for the smallholder farmers, which they did not all agree upon or which they did not all understand.

The smallholder farmers have some traditions and local knowledge about their products and their farming. These knowledge and habits are different in every tribe, every village, and every place. *“Local traditional knowledge is generated in the practices of locality: it is inseparable from actual practices of inhabiting the land.”* (Mackenzie, 2003, p. 256) With the introduction of the globalisation and industrialised companies, the production needed to be the same at a large scale, to get the same products. This induced to conflicts and disadvantages with the smallholder farmers. *“To understand how these groups are coping with the impact of the world market – to recognise their own reflections on what western people call ‘the forces of the market’ and the peculiar expressions of these forces at the local level – it is especially the more intimate spheres of life, like kinship and sorcery, that we have to study.”* (Geschiere, 1992, p. 159). Like Geschiere mentioned here, are the different forms of resistance against this industrialised agriculture production not always clear and is it necessary to look further.

Van der Ploeg talks about *“the struggle of autonomy that takes place in a context characterized by dependency relations, marginalization and deprivation.”* (Van der Ploeg, 2008, p. 23) Van der Ploeg states that the strive for autonomy is the creation and development of the self-controlled resources. These resources are linked with the co-production and the nature and these interact with the market. Thus *“the allow for survival and for further prospects and feed back into and strengthen the resource base, improve the process of co-production, enlarge autonomy, and thus, reduce dependency.”* (Van der Ploeg, 2008, p. 23). The smallholder farmers want to be independent and self-governing. They produce for their own consumption and try to improve their farms and lives. They do not want to be dependent on co-productions or international companies. Van der Ploegs’ striving for autonomy is also a form of resistance. Isaacman also makes the point of peasants’ autonomy, which is linked with the labour process and with the struggles the new production processes take with them; *“The uniqueness of peasants is the degree of relative autonomy they had vis-a-vis the State and the appropriating classes. It was this partial autonomy, linked to the labor process, that helps to explain why peasants were prone to*

*engage in subterranean protests rather than in broader social movements.”* (Isaacman, 1990, p. 58).

Dolan describes in her texts also a form of resistance of smallholder farmers, she is talking about witchcraft as a form to express the disadvantages. In her article ‘The good wife’ (Dolan, 2002) she expresses the implications that globalisation with his new forms of agriculture and exports have for the smallholder households and their labour relations. These non-traditional production processes are causes of struggles and unrest. Geschiere also makes this statement: *“But often these modern transformations of ‘traditional’ idioms prove to express not a refusal of the market as such but rather a determined struggle to gain access to it on the people’s own terms.”* (Geschiere, 1992, p. 160).



## *2.5 Resistance in the agricultural production*

As seen above, you can describe resistance in many different ways. But resistance in agriculture production is the struggle with and the unrest of the non-traditional way of producing. You can express these struggles in different ways, like van der Ploegs' striving for autonomy, Geschieres' kinship or Dolans' witchcraft.

The smallholder farmers aims to have the autonomy about their own production, they want to make the choices off how, and when, and why they are doing something to the production. They want to have the control, they strive for autonomy. (Van der Ploeg, 2008). When they do not have this control about the production process, there could occur some dissatisfaction about specific things. These dissatisfactions and disadvantages could be expressed in social struggle and resistance. *"These social struggles drew upon deeply held values of justice, kinship obligations, and work which were embedded in historical memories and expressive cultures that peasants retained and remade as part of their partial autonomy."* (Isaacman, 1990, p. 33) The social struggle then occurs because the smallholder farmers do not have the autonomy about their production processes anymore, because they are told what to do. So there is a link between Van der Ploegs' strive for autonomy and the resistance in the agricultural production process from the smallholder farmers. The resistance is a way to show the dissatisfaction and to get the autonomy about the production, so with resistance there is the strive for autonomy. *"Autonomy involves the desire of individuals to exercise control over the use of their labor power. Such individuals seek self-sufficiency as a means to extract themselves from the wage-labor market."* (Cowen, 1983, p. 202).

*"It has been frequently asserted that in Kenya, as elsewhere, when peasant households become locked into the production of commodities that they do suffer from nutritional deprivation, and the capacity for household autonomy and self-sufficiency is destroyed."* (Cowen, 1983, p. 199). Then, there are different ways to express the disadvantages and the struggles which arise through these squeezing of the globalisation. One way to express this resistance is, like Dolan says, witchcraft. (Dolan, 2002). Witchcraft is a way to express the social struggle and the disadvantages about the changing horticulture production. So, actually you can state that witchcraft is a way in which, mostly female, smallholder farmers can express their disadvantages about the situation and a way to try to get the autonomy (back). *"Today, women in Meru practice many forms of witchcraft which are widely used to secure power and autonomy within their marriage."* (Dolan, 1999, p. 27). So, you can state here, through linking Van der Ploegs' striving for autonomy and Dolan's witchcraft as a form of resistance, that witchcraft is a way to strive for autonomy and to express the resistance.

In the next two chapters witchcraft as a form of resistance against the changing agriculture production will be discussed. The case of the Kenyan horticulture in chapter 4 will clarify this and is a good example of witchcraft as a form of resistance.



### **3. The history of witchcraft**

Witchcraft is something that is deeply rooted for generations in Africa. Magic is used for good and bad, no matter of the social status or locality or changing settings. (Kohnert, 1996, p. 1347). But what exactly is witchcraft and in which way it is used in smallholder farmers' culture in Africa? Those questions will be answered in this section.

#### *3.1 What is witchcraft?*

Witchcraft as used in this thesis is a form of resistance, a way for smallholder farmers to show their disadvantages and to express their struggles. But before the colonisation and industrialisation, before the globalisation and the mass production, witchcraft was already existing in these countries and there were different forms of witchcraft, like Kohnert says in his article 'Magic and witchcraft' (Kohnert, 1996). There was no need to resist against the agriculture production, because the smallholders produced in the way they wanted to, how they learned it from their elderly and they knew what they did with their crops and their production. With the advent of the colonisation the agriculture production of the smallholder farmers changed, because they needed to produce a lot more production and in the way the settlers wanted to, the smallholder farmers did not understand the whole production process anymore and did not know why they are doing something in a particular way. Here is where the resistance broke, by which the witchcraft grew. But there is not much literature about witchcraft before the colonisation and industrialisation of the African countries. This is because there was more visible witchcraft expressed after this period.

It is hard to give a discrete definition of what constitutes witchcraft. The term witchcraft could be seen as a western term, a term which is picked by the western people to describe the local notions about the struggles and habits of the local people. *"The local notions often have much broader and more ambivalent meanings."* (Geschiere, 1998, p. 831) Geschiere also talks about the local tenor of witchcraft, it describes most often the way in which people experience some things and how they express that in their intimacy, mostly their family or their households. (Geschiere, 1998). Dolan (1999) talks about the witchcraft as it is a principal forum through which struggles about the land and the division of labour are expressed. Mudege uses in her book 'An ethnography of knowledge' (2005) the description of Bourdillon: *"For Bourdillon the term 'magic' can also be used to denote circumstances where 'people confuse the logic of communication with the logic of material efficacy.' His argument is that this kind of confusion sometimes occurs and that is convenient to classify such confusion as magic."* (Mudege, 2005, p. 175). These are three different ways in which you could interpret witchcraft. In this paper witchcraft will be seen mostly in the way like Dolan states, a way in which the smallholder farmers express their unrest and their disadvantages. As Dolan says witchcraft *"represent ways of expressing discontent with prevailing social norms, and offer women strategies to reclaim autonomy and security within their households."* (Dolan, 1999, p. 25). Rutherford talks in the same way and states that the

knowledge of witches is connected to the strategies to get the authority. (Rutherford, 1999). And this corresponds with the strive for autonomy of Van der Ploeg, as stated in paragraph 2.3.

### *3.2 Witchcraft and the agricultural export production*

As told above, witchcraft is something that is rooted for generations in the culture of smallholder farmers. But with the advent of the export production, with his intensification, industrialisation and mass production, witchcraft also intensified and increased. With the advent of the export production, the processes of agricultural commodities changed. The way of producing and the distribution of work, household tasks and administration had to be changed too, otherwise it would not be possible to reach the high standards of the export production. This could be a reason why witchcraft was more used; as Dolan says: *“In Meru, the spiritual domain has become the principal area in which gender-based conflicts over crops, property rights, and labour allocation are expressed.”* (Dolan, 1999, p. 25) But with the new way of producing, there are also misunderstandings and ignorance about the production process, which lead to unrest and resistance. The way in which the smallholder farmers express these unrest and resistance could be through witchcraft. *“As in many African societies, witchcraft in Meru is seen as a way to diagnose and understand misfortune and adversity.”* (Dolan, 2002, p. 666)

With the advent of the globalisation and intensification, witchcraft was more often expressed. As the case in chapter 4 will show, with the intensification of the agriculture production, also the witchcraft intensified. It seems like the intensification of the agricultural production has led to many problems and disadvantages, with a lot of stress for especially the women, through which resistance occurred and how witchcraft is grew so fast. As Mudege says: *“Witchcraft beliefs and accusation have been linked to conflict and stressful situations.”* (Mudege, p. 176). *“In particular, belief in witchcraft may be a reaction to an increasing ‘conflict-producing potential’ caused by processes of social differentiation in the context of the evolution of a market economy and ‘modernization’ of economy and society.”* (Kohnert, p 1348) Witchcraft became a popular mechanism to show the disadvantages and the resistance against the new way of producing in the horticulture. Like Geschiere says: *“The use of these terms [witchcraft, sorcery] seems to indicate that people try to relate modern changes to a ‘traditional’ discourse on occult forces.”* (Geschiere, 1998, p. 812). The smallholder farmers are trying to get the new way of producing, but they do not understand them totally, which make it hard for them to accept these new ways for producing.

Through the new ways of producing the horticulture, witchcraft became more often expressed. As Geschiere says it, witchcraft could be seen as a product of the globalisation processes, to link the witchcraft and the modernity of the agricultural production. (Geschiere, 1998). So the way you can look at witchcraft definitely changed over time. Were witchcraft was first something used through families in specific ways, nowadays witchcraft

became something modern. *“Witchcraft is not merely a ‘traditional relic’ of tribal societies, but is woven into the fabric of modern life.”* (Dolan, 1999, p. 27). Were witchcraft was something to express without people knowing about it, it *“now become icons of local-global interactions and processes.”* (Rutherford, 1999, p. 100). You can say that witchcraft is now seen as part of the globalisation process and the intensification of the horticulture. Witchcraft goes together with modernity, as a symbolic social function or engaged in power, norms and structures. (Rutherford, 1999). Since the colonisation with his intensification and globalisation of the agricultural production, witchcraft has become more often expressed and is expressed in different forms. *“According to many Africans, it [witchcraft] has rather increased, both in terms of frequency and effectiveness over recent decades.”* (Kohnert, 1996, p 1347). Like Geschiere (1998) says in his article; the combination between globalisation and identity in the modern world, can explain why witchcraft plays such an important role in the perceptions of modernity.



#### **4. Witchcraft in the Kenyan horticulture**

This case study will explain that witchcraft could be a form of resistance even more. This case study is about the french bean, snow peas and tea production in the Meru District in Kenya and is mostly based on the texts of Dolan, she did a lot of research about witchcraft in the Kenyan horticulture. In paragraph 2.4 you have read how the horticulture in the Kenyan highlands has grown, in this chapter you will read how the smallholder farmers in the Meru district reacted to this growth and how the resistance is expressed.

##### *4.1 Resistance of the Kenyan smallholder farmers*

With the advent of the globalisation, vertical integration and contract farming were introduced and they changed a lot in the households and the division of labour of smallholder farmers in the Meru district. The most important change is that the fields of the women to grow their vegetables were taken over to grow horticulture for the export. And the men took the right to dispose the crops with their returns. The autonomy the women had was gone. (Dolan, 2002). So the introduction of the export horticulture in the Meru district especially created problems and disadvantages for the women. *“The global market for fresh horticultural produce has had profound implication for female farmers.”* (Dolan, 2001, p. 40).

The conflicts that arose, mainly for the female, were about the land, the labour and the division of income. It is important to understand how gender division and cultural norms have their impact in the production process. And changes in the production process could lead to big problems in smallholder farmers' households, because of these gender division and the cultural norms. (Dolan, 2002). As in the case of the Kenyan horticulture, the production of french bean is cause of commonplace conflicts between husbands and wives and these conflicts often escalates into household violence. (Dolan, 1999) The women want their autonomy about the pieces of land and the division of income back, but the men claim it. Here is where the struggles and the resistance originate. *“Women claim that conflicts over their usufruct property have become particularly marked since the introduction of export horticulture.”* (Dolan, 2002, p. 670). The resistance in the Kenyan horticulture is about the changes in the way of living, the way of producing and the way in which the foreigners change their lives. How they express these disadvantages and resistance, will be told in the next paragraph.

## 4.2 Kenyan horticulture and witchcraft

To directly get to the core; *“In Meru, the spiritual domain has become the principal area in which gender-based conflicts over crops, property rights, and labour allocation are expressed.”* (Dolan, 1999, p. 25). Witchcraft is a way to express their disadvantages and to show the struggles over land and labour. As told above, especially the women have struggles with the new way of producing and the changes in their lives. The women are also the people who mostly use witchcraft, to get their power and autonomy back. *“Today, women in Meru practice many forms of witchcraft which are widely used to secure power and autonomy within their marriage.”* (Dolan, 1999, p. 27). Witchcraft in the Kenyan horticulture can be seen as a way to show the unrest and the disadvantages about the new way of producing the products for the export. As Dolan (1999) says it, the witchcraft can be seen as a principal forum through which struggles are expressed about the land and the division of labour. These struggles and the witchcraft to express these struggles can undermine the development of the export production. (Dolan, 1999). *“Witchcraft is ubiquitous in Africa, implicated in conflicts between rural and urban, state and community, and men and women.”* (Dolan, 2002, p. 663).

This case in the Kenyan horticulture, in Meru, shows that witchcraft is been used to get the autonomy about the land and the way how commodities are produced. Mostly women are using witchcraft against their husbands, because this is a noticeable effect of the contract farming and they see the effects of attacking their husbands. *“Women have developed strategies to reclaim autonomy and security within their households.”* (Dolan, 1999, p. 28) These strategies almost include witchcraft or are a form of witchcraft to attack their husbands and to get back their autonomy about the land and production. That the problems between husband and wife are the most visible results of the new way of farming does not mean that there are no other problems. The women also act with their witchcraft against the economic and the political systems. *“In Meru, the changing balance of power between men and women in domestic, economic, and political spheres has led to the emergence of witchcraft accusations.”* (Dolan, 1999, p. 27) Ciekawy agrees with Dolan that use of witchcraft by the women is a way to get their autonomy and agency back, against their husbands but also against the government and the foreigners with the contract farming. *“I conclude that women’s “work” must be understood as both instrumental action that alters the political and economic relationships between women and the men who they suspect or accuse, and moral action that develops women’s sense of their human social potential and personal capacity.”* (Ciekawy, 1999, p. 226).

This case showed that through the contract farming, the production of french beans, snow peas and tea were much intensified and grew fast in the Meru District. With this intensification the way of producing changed, the division of labour changed, the gender proportions in the households changed and the way of living changed for the smallholder farmers. These changes caused some struggles and problems, especially for the women.



Witchcraft is a good way to show these struggles and to solve the problems. *“The witchcraft idiom provides a framework for interpreting problems in women’s daily lives as manifestations of witchcraft exploitation, paralleling women’s life experiences with men.”* (Ciekawy, 1999, p. 232). As Dolan also indicates it is not only about the new way of producing, but this is taking broader issues; *“Hence witchcraft discourses are not simply about confronting the appropriation of French bean land and income, but more broadly, subjecting the inequity of gender norms to public scrutiny.”* (Dolan, 2002, p. 677). We can conclude here with Dolan that in the Meru District *“witchcraft discourses are a vehicle through which gendered struggles over contract income are articulated and contested, and through which the social costs of agrarian transition become apparent.”* (Dolan, 2002, p. 660).

There is thus a relation between witchcraft and the resistance in the agricultural production. The case of witchcraft in the Meru district clarifies that there is a connection between strive for autonomy, resistance and witchcraft as explained in paragraph 2.5. The different forms of witchcraft expressed in the Meru District are ways to show the discontentment about the way of producing the new horticulture for the export. The women mostly use the witchcraft against their husbands, but there is a deeper and broader issue behind it. The witchcraft is a way to let know there is resistance against the new way of producing agricultural horticulture



## ***5. Discussion and conclusion***

The main question of this thesis is “Is witchcraft a form of resistance against the globalisation of agricultural commodities?”. Witchcraft is explained here as a form of resistance, a way for smallholder farmers to show their disadvantages and to express their social struggles. After these 4 chapters, you can wonder whether witchcraft actually is a form of resistance or not.

### *5.1 Discussion*

As seen in the previous chapters, resistance is about the strive for autonomy. Van der Ploeg states that the strive for autonomy is the creation and development of the self-controlled resources. (Van der Ploeg, 2008). But is autonomy not something that is fought in labour processes and the division of labour? Like in the Meru district, where the division of labour has changed a lot and where women were dissatisfied and started to use witchcraft in extreme degree. Here is the division of labour the battle to get the autonomy. The division of labour is not only a cause which arose resistance, but it is also the battle of autonomy. In addition, the division of the value of the production in a household is also important to take into account. The value of the production could do a lot with the autonomy people earn. If the value of the production is not that much, the production process would not have as much value. The importance of assigning value must not be forgotten.

In these chapters smallholder farmers were seen as peasants who produce agriculture in a sustainable way, with use of ecological capital. Smallholder farms are family farms, the work is carried out through family, and the yield is used to improve the farm. It is too simplistic that all smallholder farmers produce and work in the same way, and they all react in the same way. The case study of the Meru district (Dolan, 2001, 2002) also generalises the smallholder farmers as one homogeneous group. It is useful to look more in detail to these smallholder farmers and to search for the differences and the different reactions of them. Because of time limit I could not split up the smallholder farmers during my Bachelor thesis research.

The differences between men and women are noted by Dolan (2001, 2002). The gender division is an important element in the causes of resistance and the expressions of witchcraft. But also generations differences are important to take into account. Dolan (2001, 2002) does not look at different generations in her case study in the Kenyan Meru district, which would give not a complete overview.

## *5.2 Conclusion*

Agency is an important concept when you look at different forms of resistance. As told in chapter 2, agency is something all people and things have and they want to express. When people get the opportunity to express themselves, they could have some autonomy through reacting and make their own decisions. Because all people and things have agency, they all have the possibility to make decisions. Agency is about the capacities people have. It is important to notice that all people have agency and they all could something and express their selves.

With the globalisation, the vertical integration and commercialisation the production processes of the smallholder farmers are intensified. Some production processes changed and also the lives of smallholder farmers changed, like the division of labour, the way of producing, the division of household care, etc. Through the globalisation with his intensification, commercialisation and vertical integration, there occurred struggles with the smallholder farmers. They had struggles about the new way of producing and the new way of living. These struggles were causes of resistance.

Resistance, as described in chapter 1, is a practice and expression of an ongoing social struggle. When you have resistance in the agriculture production, it is about the struggles with and the unrest of the new way of producing, the non-traditional way of producing in the horticulture. The resistance in the Kenyan horticulture arose after the globalisation with his vertical integration in the food production and contract farming was introduced. The contract farming caused a lot of changes for the smallholder farmers and they had to adjust their practices and habits to the new way of producing.

The case study in chapter 4 shows us that the resistance in the Kenyan horticulture is expressed through different forms of witchcraft. The different forms of witchcraft that are expressed in the Meru district, are ways to show the struggles people have with the changes in their lives through the contract farming of French beans, snow peas and tea production. The case study shows the relations between witchcraft and the resistance in the agricultural production. Without the changes in the agricultural production, the use of witchcraft would not be that much in the Kenyan highlands.

This thesis shows that there is a connection between agricultural production, globalisation, commercialisation, struggles and resistance, autonomy and witchcraft. Through the globalisation in the agricultural production, the production processes commercialised and intensified. The vertical integration in the Kenyan horticulture caused changes in the lives of smallholder farmers. These changes triggered struggles and resistance by the smallholder farmers, where in the Meru district witchcraft expressed these struggles. The resistance, and witchcraft as a form of resistance, is a way to show the disadvantages in the agricultural production and to strive for autonomy.

### *5.3 Further research*

In the Kenyan horticulture, Dolan (2001, 2002) searched, witchcraft is a popular way to express the struggles the farmers have. But there are more forms of resistance in the agricultural production. It would be interesting to search which other forms of resistance are expressed through the globalisation with his commercialisation and vertical integration. In this thesis only witchcraft is studied, the other forms of resistance would have taken too much time to search for.

There are also different forms of witchcraft, it would be interesting to look deeper into the witchcraft. Which kind of witchcraft is used for what kind of happenings. There are several ways to express witchcraft in the community and by whom this witchcraft is used. It would give you a better view what witchcraft exactly is and why certain forms of witchcraft are used. Dolan (1999) describes witchcraft as something that shows the discontent in the social norms and gives women the opportunity to reclaim the autonomy in their households. But there are a lot more different ways to express witchcraft and with other goals. It would be interesting to get the different kinds of witchcraft straight and to look at the differences between them.

A last thing that would be interesting to search for, but I could not due of time, is the role of the government and the businesses in the globalisation and commercialisation of the agricultural production. I wonder if the government is supporting this vertical integration in the global circles of production, and whether the reaction of businesses on the globalisation of the agricultural production is positive or negative.



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