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Under the umbrella of refugee policies – integration or creation of marginality?

Background & Research Question

Burundian refugees in Tanzania: one of the world's most protracted refugee situations (1972 until today); a long-term effect of the civil war in Burundi between Hutu and Tutsi

What are the effects of local integration policies, which imply long waiting times, on refugees' sense of citizenship and belonging?

Theoretical Contribution

- This analysis challenges notions of integration, citizenship and belonging
- It retheorizes role of the migrant in the nation-state
- It adds a time and a space dimension to the analysis of protracted refugee situations

Methodology

Ethnography: *Participant Observation* in and around Ulyankulu Settlement, Tabora, Tanzania in public spaces (e.g. on the market, on fields, in churches, in the court)
- *Semi-structured interviews* with refugees (m/f, 1st and 2nd generation), government officials and aid workers
- Collection of statistics and secondary data

Findings

Waiting

- A state of uncertainty is imposed on long-term refugees by state policies, which marginalizes the refugees;
- Different actors react in varying ways to the situation: some refugees are actively, some passively waiting; there is a sense of donor fatigue and disagreement among different layers of government;
- This waiting situation in turn creates an own dynamic, which can be creative: building of churches and other permanent houses, but also destructive: development not according to population size, dismantling of important services since 2006

Belonging

While waiting,
- Tanzanians and Burundians integrate by language, intermarriage, economic interaction despite discouraging policies
- First generation refugees develop a strong local sense of belonging and integration in the host region despite lack of citizenship;
- Second generation refugees develop a broader sense of belonging to the host nation

Photo: Janna Miletzki 11/2012

Burundian refugee woman with her child in Ulyankulu settlement, Tabora (Tanzania)