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Borders of everyday life:
Congolese young people's political identification in contexts of conflict-induced displacement

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Abstract: Ethnicity and citizenship issues have been among the contributing causes of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) over the past decades. These identity issues are exacerbated by the large-scale migration of people to and from the DRC and neighbouring Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, both historically and in the context of recent political violence. Using ethnographic data collected over a 15-month period, this paper explores Congolese young people's self-identification vis-à-vis ethnicity and citizenship discourses in Kampala and Kyaka II refugee settlement, Uganda. In particular, research findings highlight the conceptual and practical implications of the territorialisation of 'tribe' and citizenship for migrants; the consequent conflation of ethnicity and nationality in migration contexts; a reinforced notion and assertion of 'Congoleseness' among refugee populations, even when this creates conflict with Ugandans; and, migrants' limited opportunities for formal political participation. Understanding this political context from which Congolese refugees have fled, and to which they are returning and will return, is important in anticipating the peace and conflict implications of current Congolese migrations.

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Introduction

Migration has historically been part of everyday life in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and neighbouring Great Lakes region. While migration is 'normal' and borders are 'fluid' in this context, neither are politically neutral. Indeed, citizenship has been amongst the most politically contentious issues in post-colonial DRC. This article thus specifically addresses the political narratives and experiences of Congolese young people in Uganda. Analysis of research subjects' individual and collective experiences and narratives reveals the dynamic inter-linkages between migration, ethnicity, citizenship and conflict in the African Great Lakes. While Congolese young people in the study recognised the socially constructed nature of social, political and geographic borders, the latter have real consequences for them in their daily interactions. A more comprehensive understanding of these complex political identification processes could thus inform more appropriate responses to conflict-induced migration in the Great Lakes. This is particularly important in the context of a fragile peace process in the DRC and the repatriation of Congolese refugees from neighbouring countries. These population movements, like those that preceded them, have the potential to contribute to peacebuilding processes, but also to destabilise a precarious political situation.

Geopolitical context: Borders and belonging in the African Great Lakes

The Great Lakes region has witnessed mass migration in the context of political violence over the past decades. In 1994, almost 2 million Rwandese fled genocide and civil war, the majority arriving in Zaïre/DRC and Tanzania over the period of just four months (UNHCR 1997). While most have since returned to Rwanda, several thousand remain

unaccounted for (Pottier 2002). The DRC hosts over 200,000 registered refugees from neighbouring countries (UNHCR 2005) and between 1.5 million (UNHCR 2006) and 3.5 million (Global IDP Database 2004) internally displaced persons (IDPs). Similarly, Uganda officially has over 250,000 refugees (UNHCR 2005) and 1.4 million IDPs (UNHCR 2006). Statistics in the Great Lakes region are notoriously unreliable (Kibreab 1983) and do not take into account large numbers of undocumented refugees in the region. However, these figures are indicative of the importance of migration and displacement for regional geopolitics.

While the scale of these population movements appears to be unprecedented, migration in the Great Lakes is not 'new', but has historically been poorly documented, and often deliberately manipulated and politicised. From early colonial racial frameworks based on the Hamitic hypothesis (Sanders 1969) to current ethnic discourses, groups have sought justification for their political positions in alleged historical and moral claims to economic and political resources (Newbury 1998; Ranger 1983). Who came 'first', from where, and how different 'peoples' interacted with others are politically salient questions in geopolitical struggles in the Great Lakes region. Seeking answers in historical accounts and collective memory, different groups have interpreted and 're-imagined' (Anderson 1991; Pottier 2002) their history, migration and identities in often contradictory ways. The multifaceted political violence in the DRC, and the experiences of Congolese in Uganda, must be contextualised against the backdrop of colonisation, regional geopolitics, strategic security interests and competing claims to land and resources.

People have historically migrated to and from what is now the DRC for political, social and economic reasons. Colonisation affected borders, as well as the nature and magnitude of this migration. For example, whilst Leopold II's personal colony, Congo was the site of atrocities, including slave labour to extract rubber and ivory (Hochschild 1998), causing the forcible movement of people (Young 1965). After taking over administration of the colony in 1908, the Belgian government abolished slavery, but continued to exploit natural and human resources and perpetuated many administrative structures based on race and ethnicity (Dembour 2000; Leslie 1993). The colonial administration also directly and indirectly caused the migration of peoples within and to Congo. For example, after assuming administration of Rwanda (a former German colony) as a League of Nations mandate, it promoted a large migration of Rwandese to the Kivus from 1937 to 1955 to provide labour for its mineral and agricultural enterprises, and to relieve population pressures in Rwanda.

After independence, once President Mobutu had consolidated power, he tried to creative a cohesive, post-colonial state in the newly renamed Zaïre by de-emphasising ethnicity (Schatzberg 1988) in favour of ill-defined 'citizenship', as the focus of 'Zaïrianisation' and 'authenticity' campaigns (Young and Turner 1985; Leslie 1993). The 1964 Constitution of the newly independent state had granted nationality to "*toute personne dont un des ascendants est ou été membre d'une tribu ou d'une partie de tribu, établie sur le territoire du Congo avant le 18 octobre 1908.*" (Marysse and Reyntjens 1996: 24) The Mobutu government interpreted this legally ambiguous wording to mean that all residents who did not have a relational tie to an 'indigenous' resident in Zaïrois territory before

1908 did not obtain Zaïrois nationality (Marysse and Reyntjens 1996). It also introduced French as the official administrative language and only formally recognised four local languages: Kongo, Lingala, Swahili and Tshiluba. These policies reified 'indigenous' ethnicity and its implicit link to citizenship, thereby casting doubt on the political and economic status of people whose ancestors had historically migrated to the country (Willame 1999).

However, Mobutu was willing to bend the rules on citizenship for his own political ends. As part of his divide and rule strategy, he privileged Rwandophone Hutu and Tutsi[1] in the Kivus. A high-ranking Rwandophone in Mobutu's government, Barthélémy Bisengimana, succeeded in changing citizenship policy through a 1972 law that granted citizenship to any person of Rwandese or Burundian descent who had lived uninterruptedly in the Kivus since before 1 January 1950. This brought economic and political benefits to Rwandophones, especially through Zaïrianisation. However, Bisengimana eventually lost power. In 1981, the 1972 law was annulled and Rwandophones once again became classified as 'foreigners' (Pottier 2002). Mobutu also abandoned de-ethnicisation and began to privilege his own Equateur region for state appointments, patronage and political and economic opportunities (Leslie 1993; Schatzberg 1988).

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[1] The terms 'Banyarwanda' and 'Banyamulenge' – literally, 'people from' Rwanda and Mulenge, respectively – have become politicised and distorted in recent years. As a result, I will privilege the term 'Rwandophone' to refer to Kinyarwanda-speaking Hutu and Tutsi who have historically migrated to eastern DRC. The term 'Rwandese refugee' will designate Rwandese citizens who have fled political violence in Rwanda. I use quotation marks around other terms used by research subjects or in the literature. To facilitate reading, 'Bantu' language prefixes (m- for singular; ba- for plural; and ki- for language) have been omitted, except when quoting research subjects or literature.

When Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu in 1997, he presented his *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo/Zaïre* (AFDL) as a spontaneous movement of Zaïre's revolutionary opposition parties, which had joined Rwandophone Tutsi in solidarity against discrimination (Pottier 2002; Marysse 1997). However, AFDL was following a well-established strategy, supported by the governments and armed forces of Uganda, Rwanda and, to a lesser extent, Burundi and Angola (Marysse and Reyntjens 1996; Pottier 2002). After Kabila ordered Rwandese and Ugandan troops to withdraw in July 1998, his former allies backed other rebel movements to carry out proxy wars in the DRC for control of natural resources and strategic positions (Reyntjens 2004; Pottier 2002). These regional dimensions of the Congolese conflict have exacerbated questions over ethnicity and citizenship.

In November 2004, the Congolese parliament passed a new law that granted Congolese citizenship to all people and their descendents who were resident in the DRC on or before independence on 30 June 1960. Dual citizenship is not permitted. While this law officially grants citizenship to Rwandophone Congolese, it does not resolve the underlying tensions between them and others perceived to be 'indigenous' to the DRC. Indeed, when more than 1,000 Tutsi returned to North Kivu from neighbouring countries to register to vote as Congolese citizens, it provoked conflict with other residents, some of whom alleged that Rwandese posed as Congolese to influence the election results (Human Rights Watch 2005; Amnesty International 2005).

These elections, which confirmed the incumbent Kabila *fils* (who replaced his father after the latter was assassinated) as president, are part of a transition process towards peaceful resolution of the conflict. However, fighting continues in several areas, including Katanga, North and South Kivu and Ituri district of Province Orientale. The direct and indirect effects of on-going conflict in eastern DRC have resulted in approximately 1000 deaths per day and an estimated 3.8 million total death toll (International Crisis Group 2005). Millions of people have also been, and continue to be, displaced, both internally and to neighbouring countries, including Uganda.

Historically, Uganda's migration and citizenship policies have been influenced by political interests. In the early twentieth century, the British colonial government facilitated the migration of thousands of people as indentured labourers and commercial workers from the Indian subcontinent, also under British rule. This kept people of African origin in agriculture, and those of Asian origin in the commercial sector. There was also a steady labour supply from Rwanda, due in part to Belgian cash crop policies that resulted in conscripted labour and high taxes. Most of the migrants were Hutu cultivators, who took up jobs in the agricultural, construction and other manual sectors in Uganda and largely integrated into the local population (Otunnu 1999; Mamdani 1996). In contrast, Rwandese Tutsi refugees fleeing political violence after the 1950s were at first turned away by the colonial administration, then classified as refugees and contained in camps.

After independence, citizenship in newly independent Uganda, as in the DRC, was premised on proving 'indigenous' origins (Mamdani 1996). This 'indigenous' rationale for citizenship policy underlay the expulsion of 'Asians' in 1972 (Mamdani 1976, 2001). It also created problems for refugees who had been living in Uganda for decades, especially those of Rwandese origin. The post-independence regime continued the colonial policy of refugee encampment (Otunnu 1999; Mamdani 1996). Children born to Rwandese refugees in camps had to conceal their identity in order to access education and employment in Uganda. In 1982-83, the Obote regime organised state repression and expulsion of Rwandophones, causing 40,000 to flee to Rwanda, until the Habyarimana government closed its border. Following a crisis as thousands of Rwandophones were caught between the two countries, the Ugandan government allowed them to return. The majority either regrouped in refugee settlements, or joined Museveni's National Resistance Movement and Army (NRA/M), where they were important in terms of numbers and leadership (Otunnu 1999).

At the beginning of his presidency, Museveni appeared open to 'non-indigenous' migrants, particularly Rwandophones, who had participated in the NRM/A. He changed Ugandan citizenship requirements from proof that one's father, grandfather and great-grandfather were born in Uganda, to 10 years' residence. However, this provoked criticism from those who saw the NRM/A as an "unholy power-hungry coalition of indigenous and nonindigenous [*sic*] factions" (Mamdani 2001: 174), and led to backlash against Rwandophones in certain areas. There was soon pressure within the NRM/A to base promotions on descent rather than on merit or seniority, with Rwandophones and

other 'non-indigenous' leaders losing out. In 1990, the Ugandan government passed a land bill, which forbade non-citizens, of whom Rwandophone refugees and their children were explicitly named, from owning land. Some analysts regard this as a precipitating cause of the 1990 invasion of Rwanda by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) (Mamdani 1996; Otunnu 1999).

Currently, refugee policy in Uganda is premised on two pillars: the settlement policy and the self-reliance strategy (SRS). Under the former, refugees are required to reside in designated settlements, all of which are located in remote, rural areas. Non-Ugandans living outside designated settlements – often referred to as 'self-settled refugees' – have not necessarily been granted refugee status and are not registered in official statistics, nor provided with assistance. Although difficult to ascertain exact numbers and locations of 'self-settled refugees', the largest concentration is likely in Kampala (Bernstein 2005), with estimates ranging from 10,000 (Huff and Kalyango 2002) to 50,000 (Human Rights Watch 2002: 17). Ugandan officials have recently granted some of them discretionary permission to reside in Kampala on condition of 'self-sufficiency'. This is a new development and not officially recognised in any policy documents; therefore, their status is precarious (Huff and Kalyango 2002; Macchiavello 2003; Bernstein 2005). 'Self-settled' refugees living in other areas, such as Bundibugyo District, are not allowed to apply for permission to live outside settlements and have been deemed 'illegal aliens' (Clark 2004).

Assistance in settlements is informed by the SRS, which was launched in 1998 as a joint initiative between UNHCR and GoU in response to protracted refugee situations in northern areas (UNHCR and OPM 1998). It was conceived as a way to bridge the 'relief-development gap' by providing refugees with the means to support themselves through subsistence agriculture, thereby reducing their dependency on food aid (OPM and UNHCR 1999). It was also intended as a way to integrate services for refugees into local infrastructure to improve efficiency and reduce tensions between Ugandans and refugees. Although initially established only for Sudanese refugees in the north, the SRS "has now been adopted as a national policy for the whole of Uganda" (Government of the Republic of Uganda and UNHCR 2004: 34). The SRS is gradually being replaced – on paper but not necessarily in practice – by the Development Assistance for Refugee-Hosting Areas (DAR) program, which maintains a central focus on self-reliance (Government of the Republic of Uganda and UNHCR 2004).

Since the late 1990s, Uganda has officially hosted between 10,000-20,000 Congolese refugees (U.S. Committee for Refugees 2002; USAID 2003; UNHCR 2005), largely in rural settlements in the west. At the time of research, UNHCR records indicated that there were approximately 17,000 registered Congolese refugees in Uganda (UNHCR 2005). However, these figures do not take into account those who have not registered as refugees, but live informally in border areas and urban centres (Macchiavello 2003; Huff and Kalyango 2002). In Kampala alone, the number of Congolese refugees is subject to widely disparate estimates, from 3,500 (interview with Congolese community leader) to 20,000 (Dryden-Peterson 2003: 22). Other Congolese, such as business people and

religious leaders, do not self-identify as refugees, but live in Kampala temporarily or permanently. Many Congolese also live in other urban centres such as Fort Portal and Kasese, and in areas bordering the DRC, including Kasese, Bundibugyo and Hoima districts.

Methodology

Given the large number of Congolese outside of designated refugee settlements, this study was undertaken in two different research contexts: Kampala, where the majority of Congolese live informally or illegally, and Kyaka II refugee settlement. At the time of research, Kyaka II hosted the largest number of registered Congolese refugees residing in settlements: just under 12,000 – 6,019 males and 5,861 females – in October 2005 (Government of Uganda 2005). Both research sites were visited twice over a 15-month period (September 2004 to December 2005) to gain longer-term data in dynamic circumstances within individual research subjects' lives and broader socio-political contexts.

Data were gathered using a variety of qualitative methods, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, oral history and individual writing exercises. Snowball and purposive sampling were used to identify 400 research subjects, of whom approximately 50 young people became key research subjects. Despite logistical and sampling limitations, efforts were made to diversify the research population to include people of different age, ethnicity, sex, class and those living in different circumstances in the two research sites.

Congolese young people's political identification vis-à-vis ethnicity and citizenship

Against the politicised migration context described above, Congolese young people in Uganda engage in political identification through everyday encounters. Identification is a process through which people situate themselves and/or others within narratives (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Various, sometimes conflicting, narratives are embedded in social practices. This section uses one such narrative to highlight key findings regarding Congolese young people's engagement in political identification processes vis-à-vis ethnicity and citizenship.

This is not to suggest that this narrative is 'representative'. Rather, drawing on Mouffe's (1993, 1995) concept of multiple subject positions, this article explores individual's identification with different networks and narratives at the same time. These multiple subject positions inform the ways in which individuals self-identify, with each dimension shaping others and with each subject position understood by the individual through dominant ideas and discourses, which influence everyday reality (Jones and Gaventa 2002). In this way, individuals are not only shaped by, but also shape, meanings of their different subject positions (Henriques et al. 1994).

Moreover, the relational and contextual nature of identification processes explored below highlight the diverse interpretations of what it means to be a member of a particular group, contradicting much of the 'identity' literature's emphasis on "bounded groupness" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 27). This focus on boundaries between group members and

'outsiders' (Barth 1969) contributes to essentialism, overlooking fragmentation, exclusion and marginalisation *within* groups (Donnan and Wilson 1994; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Emphasis on perceived collective identities obscures differential meanings individuals ascribe to experiences (Deutsch 1953). In contrast, this article interrogates identification *processes* among Congolese young people in Uganda.

Innocente's story highlights several contextual and relational issues related to ethnicity and citizenship.

Innocente is a 22-year-old woman from Bukavu, who self-identifies as Shi.[2] In the DRC, Innocente had trained to become a hairdresser. She attended hairdressing school for one year, and then worked as a trainee for two months, before fleeing to Uganda. Innocente enjoyed her work and wanted to become a professional hairdresser. But, it is difficult to get a job in a salon in Kampala because she has little practical experience and Ugandans are motivated by "tribalism" and "don't give work to strangers".

Innocente lives with a group of Congolese young people who come from different ethnic groups. "Before, the Congolese didn't have problems with tribes. It was the Rwandese who showed us this. We live together like brothers and sisters. Others don't know we're not of the same tribe. We're all Congolese." There are other Congolese in Innocente's neighbourhood, which is important to her: "We can't go where there are only Ugandans. We don't know Kiganda. With other Congolese, we can communicate. And the older ladies, they can give us advice." Congolese people in the neighbourhood visit each other frequently and there are informal gatherings.

Although Innocente was attracted to Mbuya because other Congolese live there, she has problems with some of them. "They touch me and say I am Rwandese. I say that I am Mushi. They say that the Bashi are Rwandese. But I'm Congolese because both my parents are Congolese." This mix of ethnic groups and nationalities is the main difference Innocente describes between her neighbourhoods in the DRC and Uganda. "There are many Congolese, but we come from different tribes, we have different upbringing, different mentality. There in Bukavu, we grew up together. We were from the same tribe. We had the same upbringing and experiences."

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[2] To facilitate reading, Bantu language singular and plural prefixes – 'm-' and 'ba-', respectively – are omitted, except in direct quotations from research subjects.

Innocente works in a restaurant, where she is the only Congolese employee. The restaurant is owned by a Ugandan, who has some Congolese friends and many Congolese clients from a hotel nearby. According to Innocente, the Ugandan owner employed Innocent so that she could serve the Congolese clients. She thinks the Ugandan employees are sometimes "complicated": "They say, 'You Zairoise, what are you doing here?'"

Innocente was in central Kampala when anti-government riots occurred in November 2005. She is fearful for the future: "If things happen here, where will we go? We came here for refuge. Where will we go now? People say when elections start, there will be problems. If you have a conflict with someone, they will profit from it. There are Ugandan men here who like us a lot. When we refuse to be with them, they say, 'You will see in 2006.' The elections will go badly. It's already starting. We pray only."

Innocente feels that political events in both Uganda and the DRC are beyond her control. "Those political things, people don't talk to us about them. I see people coming to talk about the Movement. That doesn't concern us because we're not Ugandan. First, we don't have the right to vote, so why would that interest me? We're also not aware of what's going on. The only thing we're interested in is to have peace and be left alone. When we ask what's happening, they just say they're having a meeting. We're not told what's going on. We can't go and involve ourselves in things that don't concern us. But, if they invited us, we'd go."

In Mbuya, the local government representative is aware that she and other Congolese are refugees. They report problems to him and pay fees for services. "But we live like foreigners, not like Ugandans. Ugandans have access to all things, but we have things we can do and can't do because it's not our country. We can't go get ID cards. They [Ugandans] can go where they want. In the Congo, I thought after I finished my studies I'd be someone. But, with the war, that disappeared. I can't change the situation because I'm not a politician. I can't influence the government. They don't treat refugees well. If they gave me nationality, I could have access, but I don't."

Innocente feels Congolese and is proud of her nationality, even though it poses problems in Uganda. "You can't forget your nationality. It's my blood that tells me that. I resemble Rwandese physically, but I am 100% Congolese. My aunt also has a pointed nose like Rwandese, but I know she is Congolese." Innocent often explicitly and implicitly asserts her Congolese identity. For example, in our first interview, when talking about raising her younger siblings, she said that she did not want them to forget about Congolese culture. She often thinks and talks about home. At this point, Innocente started quietly crying. On other occasions, Innocente wore traditional Congolese clothes, even though they identified her as a foreigner in Kampala.

Several research findings related to ethnicity and citizenship are highlighted in Innocente's story. First, many young research subjects believe that ethnicity and citizenship are broadly based on extended kinship – whether inherited or adopted through marriage. When asked why they self-identified as members of a particular 'tribe'[3], most responded: "because my father is ['tribe' name]" or "because I was born a ['tribe' name]". Such sentiments are summed up in Jim's conception of what it means to be Hema: "It is our culture because we were born into it. Our grandfathers and fathers were Bahema, so we follow that chain." Similarly, the majority feel that Congolese citizenship is an extension of kinship relationships. For example, in an informal discussion, Marie argued, "It [tribe] is what creates divisions. We also have clans." Paul added, "Many clans make a tribe." When asked what many 'tribes' become, they paused; then Marie said, "Nation, nationality." In discussions about determining Congolese citizenship, a common response was, "Every man who is born of a Congolese father or mother." In an informal discussion about presidential candidates in the DRC, young males argued that one of the candidates would make a good president, but his election would be problematic because he is not a "true Congolese. His father is a pure Rwandese". According to these young men, to have Congolese citizenship, "Your father has to be a pure Congolese". Legally, Congolese citizenship can be claimed either through one's mother or father. Young people's emphasis on male lineage appears to be a conflation of citizenship with patrilineal determination of ethnic identity. This link between citizenship

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[3] I use the term 'tribe' deliberately in reference to ethnicity, reflecting common practice among research subjects.

and ethnicity is explicit in Etienne's explanation that Congolese citizenship is accorded to anyone from the 452 'tribes' that are "indigenous" to Congo.

The importance of birthplace and territorialisation of 'tribe' and 'citizenship' has practical and conceptual implications in contexts of migration. The freezing of political boundaries in post-colonial states in the Great Lakes, as well as the creation of state institutions that reinforce a sense of 'nationality', means that some groups are deemed not to 'belong' in areas where they now live. As one young man argues, "In fact, the problem of nationality has its roots in tribalism." While some 'tribes' are perceived to be 'indigenous' residents of what is now the DRC and hence 'pure' Congolese, others are believed to have historically migrated from areas which are present-day Rwanda, Burundi or Uganda, and are hence portrayed as 'outsiders'. Similarly, once they arrive in Uganda, young people's nationality becomes 'fixed' as Congolese.

However, findings do not simply reinforce the primordialist view of ethnicity and citizenship as 'bred in the bone' (van den Berghe 1981; Geertz 1963). Rather, the perceived biological 'reality' of ethnicity or citizenship is made socially meaningful in context. Although 'markings', such as physical traits, language, livelihood strategies and geographic origin, are important to distinguish between groups, most research subjects contend that these concrete characteristics are not sufficient in and of themselves to create a 'tribe' or a nationality. For example, young Hema males acknowledge that their 'tribal' language and Lutoro are mutually intelligible and, indeed, the same language, but different dialects. But, they insist there are no cultural links amongst them: "The Hema

are Nilotic, but the Lutoro are Bantu. Here in Uganda, people consider the Hema like the Banyakole." These findings suggests that, while there is consensus that 'tribe' is a relationship of extended kinship, the manifestations and significance of 'tribe' vary contextually.

These contextualised meanings of ethnicity and citizenship are a second element revealed by Innocente's story. As Shi, Innocente constantly reasserts her Congolese citizenship vis-à-vis other Congolese who question it, because of her physical resemblance to Rwandese and/or historic links of Shi to Rwanda. Innocent verbally affirms her citizenship, seeks out other Congolese, and wears Congolese clothing. Most research subjects have strong views about the right to Congolese citizenship of groups who are believed to have historically migrated from Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, including Tutsi, Hutu, Shi and Hema.

Rwandophone Tutsi, often referred to as 'Banyamulenge' or 'Banyarwanda', are the subject of the most intense debates about citizenship. Many Congolese from other ethnicities cite 'Rwandese' origin as proof that Rwandophone Tutsi are not 'true' Congolese because they are still 'loyal' to the Rwandese cause. For example, in an informal discussion, Paul discussed the difficulties in distinguishing who is Rwandese and who is 'Banyamulenge'. Marie added that 'Banyamulenge' are 'infiltrated' by Rwandese in power and claim they are Congolese in Congo, but Rwandese in Rwanda. Similarly, Eric argued, "The Banyamulenge work for two countries – Rwanda and the

Congo." Etienne then gave several examples of prominent politicians who had changed sides at various points in history.

Despite the assumed link between Rwandophone Tutsi and the Rwandese government, some self-identified 'Banyamulenge' research subjects disagree with Rwanda's policy in the DRC and the Great Lakes region. For example, Rose follows the situation in the DRC by listening to the radio and gaining information from other Rwandophones in Kampala. She argues, "It isn't a good thing that Rwandan troops are in DRC." The Rwandese government says they are there to protect 'Banyamulenge', but Rose does not see this in practice.

Hutu have also historically migrated from present-day Rwanda and Burundi to areas that are now in eastern DRC. While Hutu are not usually perceived to be linked to the Tutsi-dominated Rwandese government, many research subjects also consider Hutu in the DRC to be Rwandese: "They call us 'false Congolese'." According to some, Congolese Hutu self-identify as 'Banyabwisha', but are easily confused with Hutu from Rwanda, similar to the conflation between 'Banyamulenge' and Rwandese Tutsi. However, some young Hutu subjects self-define first and foremost as Congolese, often in opposition to Rwandese. For example, unsolicited, Nicholas discussed developments in December 2004 in eastern DRC, which had caused him to flee. "There in Goma, there are soldiers from Rwanda. The president [of the DRC] said that he was going to send soldiers to North Kivu. Then the Banyamulenge, or the RCD, brought together all the Rwandophones." Nicholas participated in a student demonstration against Rwandese

'colonisation'. Later in our discussion, Nicholas self-identified as Hutu or 'Munyabwisha'. When questioned about his role in the demonstration, given historic links of Hutu to Rwanda, he replied that when the students said "Rwandese", they were meaning Tutsi. "For me, I am not Rwandese. The Banyabwisha are Congolese."

Hema, who are pastoralists and 'Nilotic', are believed to have historic ties to several pastoral groups in the Great Lakes region, including Tutsi in Rwanda and Banyakole and Hima in Uganda. They are thus also classified as 'outsiders' by research subjects claiming to belong to 'indigenous' ethnic groups. For example, Etienne believes that Hema are an "invented 'tribe'", like 'Banyamulenge', that did not historically exist in the DRC. Eric added, "We who are Congolese, we are worried about the Congo." An impromptu discussion amongst some young Hema males and their Tutsi friend, Dan, who has Ugandan citizenship, reveals interesting differences in opinion about self- and externally attributed citizenship of Hema. Dan self-identifies as 'Banyarwanda', since his grandparents came from Rwanda in the 1950s and were granted Ugandan citizenship. He described his 'culture': "In our tradition, my people keep cattle, so I always carry a long stick around with me, like my ancestors." When probed about ethnicity in Rwanda, Dan self-identified as Tutsi and discussed other groups of Tutsi origin, including 'Banyamulenge':

> For them, they took them ['Banyamulenge'] in Congo when the borders were drawn. Now, they are no longer the Rwandese, but they still are. Even them, they are Tutsi. According to our acknowledgement, we [Tutsi] think that these people [pointing to his Hema friends] are not real Congolese because many of them look like Tutsi in Rwanda.

Dan's Hema friends disagreed with him, arguing that they are Congolese, even if others do not believe this. After a lively discussion, Dan conceded, "The Hema are Congolese by citizenship."

As mentioned above, Shi are believed to have historically migrated from Rwanda, and some still have familial, social and/or business connections there. Paul commented on discrimination he faced in the DRC due to his ethnicity: "Because of the problems with the border between Congo and Rwanda, many people said that the Bashi had sold the Congo. This idea continued to grow in people. It is true that among Congolese, some had accepted money to betray their brothers." In public, some try to hide their ethnicity because of its political implications. For example, Scholastique stays quiet when he hears clients talk negatively about Shi. On one occasion, he wanted to open an email account, but when asked for the required information, including his surname, Scholastique said he did not have one. Jean-Pierre, who was standing nearby, asked, "Why don't you give your last name? Are you ashamed to be Shi?" Etienne also tries to distance himself from historic ties between Shi and Tutsi: "We the Bashi, we say that our uncles are the Batutsi. But, now the Tutsi want to take over our land. We like them a lot, but we don't like their politics." Indeed, young Shi research subjects (including Marie, Paul and Claire, quoted above) are among the most adamantly opposed to Rwandophone Tutsi and their right to Congolese citizenship. Others, like Innocente, explicitly assert their 'Congoleseness' in a variety of verbal, visible and social ways.

Innocente's story also reveals a third aspect of contextualised identification: a reinforced notion of 'Congoleseness' due to migration. Despite 'tribal' divisions and contested nationality, self-defined Congolese express solidarity with, and often deliberately seek out, others in Uganda, as Innocente did in moving to Mbuya. Male secondary students in Kyaka II feel like they belong with "people of the same country. Even if there are differences between tribes, we are all the same and have the same rights if we are all the same nationality." In some cases, young people deliberately choose to identify first and foremost as Congolese. For example, Alain said, "I feel Congolese [in Uganda] because here we don't have the problem of tribes. We ignore that here." Similarly, Augustin argued, "In Uganda, I feel like an abandoned Congolese refugee. The tribal question is one of the causes of the war in Congo. Sometimes, I say to myself that it would be better not to accept this idea of tribe and to consider myself simply as Congolese." Others mention that this reinforced 'Congoleseness' is a consequence of being a refugee in a country that is not their own. For example, Adèle said, "Here in Uganda, I feel Congolese, refugee." Similarly, Salome said, "When I go anywhere, Ugandans look at me as a Congolese." Jean-Pierre explained, "In Uganda, we are Congolese, but among ourselves, we still feel like members of our tribes."

However, at other times, research subjects conflate ethnicity and citizenship, revealing a fourth aspect of the relational and contextual meanings ascribed to identities. Innocent attributes her difficulty in finding work as a hairdresser to "tribalism" amongst Ugandans "who do not give work to strangers". Many other research subjects spoke about 'tribalism' in terms of discrimination by Ugandans against Congolese and refugees of

other nationalities, including difficulties finding work and being over-charged in the market and on public transportation. Some young people believe this 'tribalism' impedes friendship with young Ugandans and integration into Ugandan society: "They only like themselves and don't want to cooperate with us Congolese." But 'tribalism' works both ways. Female secondary students of mixed nationality in Kyaka II, raised the "problem of tribalism". One Ugandan explained, "If I am a national and I quarrel with a refugee all the refugees will go to the refugee and all the nationals will go to the national."

A fifth issue revealed in Innocente's story relates to political participation. Innocente feels disadvantaged because she does not have access to decision-making processes, as a 'foreigner' or 'refugee', in contrast to 'nationals'. Although interested in political events, she believes she cannot participate unless invited. Similarly, Bondeko argues, "People should be given the green light to do what they want. But, 'Baganda' know that I'm not a man from here."

These research findings reflect debates in academic literature on citizenship, which has historically been conceptualised in state-centric terms as a legal status associated with rights against, and duties to, a state (Nolan 1995; Jones and Gaventa 2002). Radical formations of citizenship contest such state-centric approaches and conceptualise it rather in terms of dynamic identification with political communities at sub- and supra-state as well as state levels (Lister 2003; Kabeer 2002; McEwan 2000; Thompson 2001; Isin and Wood 1999).

> An understanding of citizenship in terms of membership and identity underlines
> that what is involved is not simply a set of legal rules governing the relationship

between individuals and the state but also a set of social relationships between individuals and the state and between individual citizens. These relationships are negotiated and, therefore, fluid. Their nature and how they are understood reflects national context and culture. (Lister 2003: 15)

Similarly, Mouffe (1993) sees citizenship "not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given" (Mouffe 1993: 65-66).

This leads to social and historic constructions of citizenship, a sixth aspect of identification revealed in Innocent's story. She argues that "the Rwandese showed us" problems with 'tribalism' and citizenship in the DRC, alluding to the exacerbation of identity questions due to foreign involvement in the Congolese conflict. Several other research subjects point out that geopolitical borders were constructed through colonisation and reinforced by recent events in the Great Lakes. In a focus group discussion, one male student said, "Back in history, we were one people. The problems came during the colonial period. The Congo was colonised by Belgium and Uganda was colonised by the British and they created boundaries." A Congolese student then added, "You come, you live, you build your house, but you are not of that nationality." Similarly, a male student said, "Those Europeans are the ones who made these boundaries." Another added, "Before independence, there were no boundaries, except between kingdoms." Etienne argues that he knows which 'tribes' are 'indigenous' to DRC because Belgian scholars have documented the history of groups in the area, which is taught in schools and broadcast on the radio.

While recognising that these socio-political borders are 'artificial', research subjects reinforce them through everyday categorisation and self-identification. One young female said, "For example, if a boy loves me, he asks my culture and I ask his culture." Another added, "There is segregation." Young people have grown up in an era when states are important. They have different presidents, who make different policies and laws, and who enforce these laws differently. This has caused political, economic and social differences. "Others see you as different because they know where you came from." Generations are identified as coming from 'elsewhere'. While some "have managed to buy citizenship" through paying graduated tax, "Ugandans will see you as foreign."

Even young people who have spent the majority of their life in Uganda self-identify as Congolese and emphasise the significance of borders, including those separating groups with historic links. For example, Antoinette, although educated in Uganda since primary school, would like to return to Congo if there is peace: "That's the place I was born, and my parents and grandparents." Asked how she knows that Ituri is really Congolese, not Ugandan, Antoinette replied, "Because there is a big lake called Lake Albert. That one divides Uganda and Congo. It's a border." Similarly, James, who has lived in Kyaka II since he was six years old and knows several Ugandan languages, believes that he could 'pass' for Konjo from Kasese in other parts of the country. However, James says that he would still assert his Congolese citizenship: "Actually, your motherland, it is difficult to deny it. For us Nande, we say there is a tree that is planted for your grandfather. If you deny that place, you won't be good in life." For James, Nande are Congolese, despite

their historic links to Konjo in Uganda, and even though the political border between Uganda and Congo is a more recent phenomenon.

Conclusions

These young people demonstrate nuanced understandings of identification processes in politicised environments. They are thus political actors with political views that should be recognised and taken into account. However, young people's political roles are too often sensationalised and pathologised, with an over-emphasis on children and young people participating in armed groups and militia (Willame 1999; Van Acker and Vlassenroot 2000). This negates the significance of young people's views and the varied roles they play in political movements, documented from the colonial period (Hochschild 1998) through decolonisation and independence (Willame 1972; Young 1967; La Fontaine 1970) to present-day.

Recognising refugee young people as political actors is not just a conceptual imperative; it also has practical consequences in contexts where refugee policies impact on political processes at household, community and policy levels. Most agencies emphasise the 'human face' of refugees in deliberately non-political ways (Malkki 1996). This depoliticisation should be contextualised within the explicitly 'neutral' and non-political mandates of UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations for ideological, security and logistical reasons (Loescher 2001; Rutinwa 1997; James 1995). However, ignoring the political realities of refugee contexts will not make them go away, but can tacitly support state policies that prohibit refugees' political participation. Refugee camps and

settlements, for example, are a visible manifestation of political consensus amongst UNHCR, governments, donors and international humanitarian actors (Harrell-Bond 1996, 2000).

These restrictions on citizenship – both in terms of legal status and political participation – are often predicated on the assumption that refugees, individually and collectively, challenge the integrity, security, stability and economy of host communities (Loescher 1992; Loescher and Milner 2005). The GoU's self-reliance and settlement policies are intended to reduce costs and contain refugee influence (Macchiavello 2003; Otunnu 1999; Kaiser 2005), while historic and current Ugandan legislation explicitly prohibits refugees from engaging in political activities, a policy upheld by UNHCR. However, prohibition does not prevent refugees from engaging in political activity in home and host countries, as Rwandophone participation in the NRM/A and RPF clearly shows.

Acknowledging the political engagement of refugees within politicised environments provides a more fruitful point of departure for understanding migration movements and responses. This article has attempted to contribute to this understanding by interrogating Congolese young people's political identification vis-à-vis ethnicity and citizenship. This analysis revealed the importance of contextual and relational factors influencing the socio-political salience of ethnicity and citizenship. Although these boundaries are socially constructed – and are recognised as such by research subjects using and promoting them – they still have real consequences for refugees in their daily interactions. Greater focus on this cognitive dissonance in the borders of everyday life

could deepen our understanding of complex political identification processes and hence offer more appropriate response to conflict-induced migration in the Great Lakes. Given current and expected repatriation to the DRC in the context of a fragile peace process, the linkages between migration, identification and conflict must also be explored in more depth to address the potential impact of returning population movements on national and regional stability.

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