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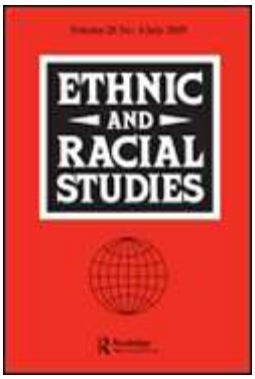

The Waxing and Waning of the Political Field in Burundi and it Diaspora

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The waxing and waning of the political field in Burundi and its Diaspora

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Introduction

Genocide, civil war, oppressive politics and ethnic discrimination have haunted the small African nation, Burundi, since independence in 1962, periodically forcing large numbers of its population to leave the country and live in exile. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to live in camps in neighbouring countries – Tanzania, Congo, and Rwanda – while tens of thousands have made it to Europe and North America, especially to Belgium, the old colonial power. The peasants who crossed the border to Tanzania simply in search of safety, ended up in large part in camps that became seedbeds of political mobilization and military training (Malkki 1995; Turner 2001). Meanwhile the educated elite in Europe is involved in 'long-distance politics' (Anderson 1994; Ostergaard-Nielsen 2001) lobbying politicians, churches and NGOs and supporting the rebellion 'at home'. One might therefore claim that the political struggle – linked to the armed conflict - in Burundi has to a large extent taken place outside the borders of the nation-state itself. And it is therefore essential for any understanding of the conflict in Burundi to explore this transnational political field.

This field is not stabile, however, as Burundi in recent years has experienced a political transformation, affecting the role of transnational politics. Negotiations between the government and various opposition groups, often armed and often with leaders in exile, have led to a power sharing agreement in a transition government,a new constitution and finally democratic elections in 2005. This has consequences for the role of exiled politicians, as political struggles now can take place within the democratic structures of the state rather than being forced into a transnational political field. In this paper I explore what happens when the political field expands beyond the limits of the national borders, and what happens when it shrinks back again. Whereas most studies tend to explore long distance politics from the 'long distance' perspective, I try to explore them from the receiving end as well. I try to see the political field from both these angles in order to overcome the bias that many diaspora studies have of only seeing things from the 'outside'. I discuss the mutual influence of home and exile and the quest for political citizenship inside and outside the territory of the nation-state. Furthermore, I explore how the recent shift in Burundi from conflict to post-conflict affects the political field inside and outside the country. As the gravity of the political field shifts back into the territory of the nation-state, the diaspora has to reinvent itself and redefine its *raison d'être.*.

In order to answer these questions I will compare a historical analysis of the political conflicts in Burundi with multi-sited ethnographies of transnational politics, carried out in Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya and Belgium from 1997 to 2005. In this manner, I will compare changes in political subjectivities in the diaspora with changes in the political field at home and explore the mutual influence.

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Conceptualizing the transnational political field

When I first started fieldwork in a refugee camp in Western Tanzania in 1997-1998, it soon became clear to me that politics was a central preoccupation of the Burundian Hutu there and an organizing – at times violent - principle in the camp (Turner 1998; Turner 2001). Furthermore, it became apparent that the camp was not an isolated unity; worldviews and opinions among the refugees were shaped by party politics and deeply imbued in the political and armed conflict in their home country. It also became evident to me that the political entrepreneurs (Bourdieu and Thompson 1991) in the camp were involved in much larger networks spanning from Belgium and Denmark to Nairobi and Dar es Salaam and to cadres inside Burundi itself. This led me to follow these networks – doing fieldwork in Denmark, Belgium, Bujumbura and Nairobi from 2002 to 2004 – and onto the track of theories of transnationalism and diaspora.

The work in the early 1990s by Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton is often accredited with launching the concept (and theory, some would claim) of transnationalism and the idea that people live lives across borders, belonging to more that one nation-state at once(Basch, Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994), claiming to be a theory that could overcome the 'methodological nationalism' (Glick Schiller and Wimmer 2002) of traditional migration studies. Since the late 1990s there has been a debate on defining and refining the concept – leading to a number of sub-categories and concepts- and first and foremost to discussions of what qualifies and what does not qualify as 'transnational' (Levitt 2001a; Portes 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999).[1]

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Studying transnationalism begs the question of density and scope of transnational relations. When is it possible to talk about a 'transnational social field' (Faist 2000) or a 'transnational political field' (Adamson 2002)? Is a weekly phone call to a relative enough to qualify as a 'transmigrant', even though one works, rests and plays in only one place (Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec 2003)? In order to overcome this dilemma, Itzigsohn et al distinguish between 'broad' and 'narrow' transnational practices (Itzigsohn, Cabral, Medina, and Vazquez 1999), while others operate with 'core' and 'expanded' transnationalism (Levitt 2001a)(see also Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b)).

Rather than attempt the impossible task to define and refine concepts, I am trying to explore not only *that* politics crosses borders, nor *why* it does so or to *which degree*. What I find interesting, is *how* they do so and how the fact that they are transnational affects politics in Burundi.[2] It is not enough, I find, to categorize this or that political activity as either narrow or broad, core or expanded transnationalism. We need to move beyond concept definitions and explore the dynamics of the transnational political field and it affects and is affected by the politics of the Burundian state.

Inspired by Bourdieu (1991) I define the political field as a 'game' where politicians gain a 'practical sense' of the game and learn how to comply with the unwritten rules of the political field. By becoming competent players of the game, political entrepreneurs also reproduce it. In a dialectical manner, the political field determines what can and cannot be debated and fought over while at the same time the field is itself defined by these

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power struggles. In other words, the field is created in the process of being contested. Fiona Adamson has used this concept in a transnational context and claims that the 'transnational political field (…) is open to contestation, mobilization and/or capture by political entrepreneurs' (Adamson 2002, 159). Hence, the transnational political field is created as a terrain upon which various political actors attempt to discredit each other and claim to be the true representatives of 'the Burundian people'. What is interesting about the transnational political field as opposed to other political fields, however, is that it cuts across several political entities that grant citizenship and rights and that claim sovereignty. Likewise, the fact that it is political, distinguishes it from other transnational practices, because politics is exactly about citizenship, belonging and sovereign power; all terms that are linked to nation-states.

The literature on transnationalism has long been eager to emphasizes that we are not approaching a post-national era, as the first theories of transnationalism – allegedly – claimed (Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer 2004; Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec 2003; Willis, Yeoh, and Fakhiri 2004). However, as Rainer Bauböck convincingly argues:

> (T)hat political transnationalism is more than political activity across borders and also refers to these changing and increasingly overlapping boundaries of membership in political communities. (Bauböck 2003, 703)

In this sense, transmigrants have several places of belonging – in terms of livelihoods, rights and belonging – and transnational politics oscillates between these levels as it transgresses national borders. The strength of Bauböck's argument is to bring politics to

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the fore – rather than placing political transnationalism on a par with other transnational practices. We may, with Bauböck, argue that political transnationalism 'also affects collective identities and conceptions of citizenship among the native populations in both receiving and sending societies.' (Bauböck 2003, 700). Politics is by definition about citizenship, rights and belonging and can therefore not be divorced from aspects of statehood and national sovereignty. So, while transnational politics transgresses the sovereign borders of states, it is also about claiming citizenship and the right to belong, leading to a central tension in transnational politics between challenging the nation-state and making claims to the same state.

Belonging to a nation – whether inside its territory or from afar – is, however, not merely a question of citizenship and rights. It relies on a 'supplement'; on emotional ties to the *Patria*, the Motherland, 'the soil' (Anderson 1991; Balibar 1991). We may deconstruct the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1992), and reveal 'methodological nationalism' for what it is, but the fact remains that the illusion of people-place-identity is as strong as ever (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). In fact, the whole concept of transnationalism implicitly relies on the assumption that migrants *want* to engage in their country of origin, or at least feel obliged to do so, despite the fact that they have all the citizenship rights they need in their new country of residence.[3] In order to understand this aspect of transnationalism, I turn to the concept of diaspora.

We have witnessed a shift in the use of the term diaspora over the past years with more and more groups being termed 'diasporas'.[4] It might be argued that due to this inflation in

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the use of the term, it has lost its original analytical value and must therefore either be abandoned or at least narrowed back down again (Safran 1991). However, I believe – along with scholars like Kleist and Axel - that we must take the *emic* notion of diaspora seriously and perceive it more as a process and an aspiration than as a sociological fact. As Kleist (Kleist 2007) points out, the term is moving rapidly from academia to policy-makers and to migrant groups themselves, who use the term to claim recognition. Whether or not we objectively can define the Somalis, the Sikhs or the Tutsi as a diaspora is beside the point. The point is that it has become a powerful concept in identity formation, the struggle for recognition, and claims-making. As Glenn Bowmann demonstrates in relation to the Palestinian diaspora, the term becomes an 'empty signifier' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) that is so open and vaguely defined that it is able to encompass all the troubles and tribulations of a diverse, dispersed and heterogeneous population (Bowman 1994). In fact, there need not even be a homeland from which the diaspora is dispersed, for there to be a 'diasporic imaginary' as Brian Keith Axel has argued in relation to the Sikh diaspora(Axel 2004). The diaspora becomes a means of identification that retrospectively creates the lost homeland. In Lacanian terms, identity formation, or rather subjectivation, is always built up around a presumed original loss (Zizek 1989). Ideology promises to bring back what was lost and heal the individual and 'the community', removing the antagonisms of society (Laclau and Zac 1994). In this sense, creating a migrant community relies on referring back to something lost; the homeland (in Lacanian terms 'l'objét petit a'). This does not need to be a real homeland that was actually lost. Rather it is construed retrospectively as a stand in for a presumed original loss. It is the return of the homeland (which is not the same as the return *to* the

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homeland) that promises wholeness. Obviously, this homeland is unobtainable in the sense that it will never in real life fulfill the expectations of wholeness and healing. However, without this lost homeland, the community could not stick together. Without the 'glue' of loss, the differences in objective interests would surface and 'the community' would seize to exists and simply become an assembly of individuals from the same country. I propose therefore to see diaspora less as a noun – something to be found and verified 'out there' – and more as an adjective – *diaporic* – or a verb – to *diasporise*. To be *diasporic* is to aspire to being part of a community, centered on a loss. Similarly, to *diasporise* expresses an active process, resembling Kleist's proposal to perceive diaspora as 'becoming' rather than 'being' (Kleist 2007).

In sum, I argue that diaspora politics is both about longing and about claiming political rights. Being constituted around loss, exodus and exclusion, diaspora is closely linked to longing for a lost home. But it also produces political subjectivities, I argue, that revolve around exclusion from the *polis* at home and hence are about claiming rights to political inclusion and hence political citizenship. By exploring the shifting political field inside Burundi and how this affects the broader transnational field, I hope to shed light on the relationship between political citizenship (both in the sense of rights and in the sense of belonging) and the formation of diasporic identities.

These theoretical thoughts lead to the following methodological approach. Firstly, I concentrate on the mutual relationship between political transnationalism and the nature of politics of inclusion and exclusion in the sending society. The political field in Burundi

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may at times extend far beyond the borders of Burundian territory, because political opposition is exiled and only can operate in Kenya, Tanzania and Belgium. In these cases politics spills over borders and the political field expands, but borders continue to matter in defining who belongs and who does not belong to the *polis* – i.e. who can and who cannot claim political citizenship. In the Burundian case the political field expands and contracts depending on the nature of the political field inside Burundi. At times, opponents must leave the country in order to participate in the political struggle, because real political citizenship rights are so narrowly defined, in practice excluding large sections of the population. At other times, the rights to participate in politics in Burundi are expanded and the inclusive nature of the political field allows the point of gravity to move back into Burundi. Obviously this is an interdependent mechanism, where exiled Burundians in the transnational political field exert pressure on the Burundian state, forcing it to reform. My second conceptual starting point concerns the historical nature of analysis. In order to explore the perpetual interaction between the transnational political field and the state, it is not sufficient to explore the relations at one moment in time. I therefore explore the temporal changes that have taken place and demonstrate the waxing and waning of the transnational political field and the influence that it has had on Burundian politics and vice versa. Finally, I claim that there is a mutual positioning taking place in the political field. Although the field might be transnational, actors within the field are positioning themselves and each other according to who is inside and who is outside Burundi. Claiming legitimacy in the field depends on one's position in relation to being inside or outside Burundi. The nation remains a strong imaginary and is used in political struggles to discredit opponents and competitors.

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Waves of exclusion – the genesis of a diaspora

Depending on the ups and downs of the conflicts in Burundi, the political field extends beyond the national borders of the territory of the state. On the one hand, political violence in Burundi forced Burundians to live abroad, while on the other hand, refugees and emigrants engaged in 'long distance politics'[5], trying to influence the political situation at home in various ways. In the camps in Tanzania they trained young men and sent them across the border to fight, while the elite in Europe had the financial means and the freedom of speech to function as spokespersons of their party in relation to the 'international community'. They lobbied host societies in a manner of ways, from approaching national politicians to performing dances at cultural events and informing school children about their country and its problems. In order to understand firstly how various diaspora groups emerged and secondly how they have changed, we need to explore the shifting political field in Burundi, exposing the dialectic relationship between the political situation in Burundi and the role of the diaspora.

Burundi is said to be comprised of three ethnic groups; the Hutu (85%), the Tutsi (14%) and a small group of marginalised Twa (1%). The figures may not be exact and there is doubt whether one can actually talk of ethnic groups rather than casts or classes (Chrétien 1990; Lemarchand 1996). However, the groups are 'real' in the sense that hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in Burundi in the name of ethnicity. The Tutsi were privileged during first German and later Belgian rule, and were perceived by the colonial administrators as a race of rulers while the Hutu were considered by the Europeans to be

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best suited for manual labour. Shortly after independence from Belgium in 1962, a small group of low-caste Tutsi from the south of the country monopolised political and military power, introducing a strongly modernist and anti-colonial ideology. They followed a double-edged policy of keeping power tightly in the hands of a small Tutsi elite while claiming that Burundians were a united people and that ethnicity was invented by the colonial administration in order to divide and rule the Burundian people, and mention of ethnicity was banned in the 1970s. [6]

In 1972 a small Hutu revolt in the southern part of the country resulted in massive retaliation by government troops that systematically killed up to 150 000 Hutu, mostly the educated (down to secondary school) and the elite who were assumed to be behind the plot, leading some scholars to call it a 'selective genocide'.[7] This watershed event forced hundreds of thousands of Hutu into exile. A few fortunate managed to get to Europe – often because they already had scholarships in Belgium already. Here, they were inspired by the 1968 student movement and the general anti-imperialist rhetoric of the European Marxist Youth and formed various Marxist student unions, that later moved into transnational politics.

By far the largest number of Hutu, however, fled across the borders to neighbouring countries. In Rwanda, a 'Hutu regime' was in place, welcoming their fellow Hutu, and allowing many to attend school and university there. The less fortunate ended up in camps in Tanzania where these non-educated people who had not been involved in politics and who had not previously identified themselves with ethnic labels, became

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acutely aware of their 'Hutuness'. In the refugee camps, they realised that they had been targeted and forced to flee due to their ethnicity. In 1980 the first serious Hutu opposition party, Palipehutu (Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu), was formed by Rémy Gahutu, who had been exiled in Rwanda but who was expelled from there due to his radical politics and the Rwandan government's need to maintain good relations with the government in Burundi. An agronomist by training, Gahutu was a skilled orator and a real 'man of the people'[8] and decided to start 'awakening the Hutu masses' in the most isolated refugee camp in Tanzania, Mishamo, where expected the population to be the most susceptible to his ideology.[9] According to Gahutu, the major task of Palipehutu was to combat the government's ideology of 'one nation - one people' and insist on the essential differences between the different 'races' and on the long historical roots of the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi which, according to him, dated back to the 14th century when Tutsi invaded the country from the North and subjugated the peaceful autochthon Hutu.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the one party state controlled civil society down to the slightest detail, monitoring and punishing any dissent (Laely 1997). With such a limited room for political resistance inside the country, opposition politics was formulated in camps in Tanzania, among a young Hutu elite in Habyarimana's 'Hutu dominated' Rwanda and among a small Hutu elite in Belgium and elsewhere in Europe. In other words, *de facto* exclusion from political citizenship in Burundi led Hutu in exile to seek inclusion and claims to political citizenship from the outside. Palipehutu managed to re-cast and subvert Burundian history and set a political agenda that was neither possible nor

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thinkable inside the country at that point in time. A narrow definition of citizenship and a restrictive political field made it impossible to create an opposition inside the country. At the same time it was the sense of loss that exile had created that made this vision of a homeland – an authentic homeland, liberated from the Tutsi - thinkable.

In the late 1980s the political situation in Burundi began changing, due in part to pressure from donors to introduce 'good governance' (Ngaruko and Nkurunziza 2000) and from Palipehutu which had begun to infiltrate the country from Rwanda and Tanzania. In 1989 the government created a National Commission to Study the Question of National Unity that produced a report acknowledging the existence of an ethnic conflict, although it was treated very lightly (Ndikumana 1998). The press was given more freedom and a new constitution was adopted in 1992. This constitution mentioned that Burundi was made up of several population components, thereby indirectly admitting that there were several ethic groups in the country (Reyntjens 1995, 9). The same year, political parties were legalised, as long as they were not based on region, ethnicity or religion, thereby excluding Palipehutu, with its explicit ideology of Hutu liberation. Meanwhile Frodebu (Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi), a moderate 'Hutu party' with several Tutsi in the leadership, managed to avoid mention of ethnicity and emphasised democracy and human rights and won a landslide victory in June 1993. However, the optimism did not last long, as the elected president, Melchior Ndadaye, was kidnapped and assassinated by Tutsi officers in what Filip Reyntjens has called history's most successful failed coup (Reyntjens 1993). The Hutu reacted by putting up road blocks and killing up to 30 000

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Tutsi which prompted the army and Tutsi militias to clamp down and kill equal numbers of Hutu.

This caused a new wave of refugees out of the country. Some went to Rwanda and got caught up in – and apparently quite heavily involved in – the genocide there less than six months later, whereupon most fled to Tanzania or Zaire. Others went straight to the massive refugee camps in Tanzania, where I did fieldwork in one – Lukole – in 1997-1998. As I have written elsewhere (Turner 1998; Turner 2001), these refugees had quite different and less radical views than the refugees of 1972. For various reasons they were less obsessed by history and less inclined to think – explicitly at least – in terms of race and were more concerned with democracy. Firstly, the political situation in Burundi had changed, with the government acknowledging ethnicity to some degree in an attempt to depoliticise the issue, hence making Palipehutu's main claim obsolete. Secondly, the genocide in Rwanda and the involvement of Hutu in massive ethnic massacres in Burundi meant that the Hutu no longer could claim the position as innocent victims of ethnic violence, forcing them to downplay the ethnic card.

Following the violence in 1993, Hutu guerrilla movements appeared in early 1994. According to several reliable accounts, the rebellion started spontaneously in several parts of the country. Only later did the overall leadership, which was made up of Frodebu leaders in neighbouring countries, take over the command of the rebellion. This was a rather tumultuous period in Burundi's history where new lines of conflict emerged on top of the ethnic conflict, as various rebel movements appeared and disappeared, at times

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fighting one another as much as they were fighting the army. As opposed to the 1970s and 1980s, it was possible in the late 1990s to mention ethnicity in the political debate inside the country. However, the security situation was bad and too open mouthed critics disappeared or were forced to leave the country. These were not only government critics but also critics of one or the other rebel movement. Also Tutsi began leaving the country because they had criticised the government's handling of the conflict or its human rights record. This in turn produced a more mixed diaspora, opposing the regime at home for different reasons.

The deteriorating security situation also resulted in a deteriorating economy (Ndikumana 2000; Ngaruko and Nkurunziza 2000). Peasants no longer planted crops for fear of having to leave before harvest or of having it stolen by rebels or government forces. The only economy that flourished was the contraband economy, run by the political and military oligarchy (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999). This situation of economic stagnation meant that also a number of young Tutsi began leaving the country and seeking asylum in Europe and North America. This group of young Tutsi and a similar group of young, urban, elite Hutu blurred the borderline between refugees and economic migrants. They were less radical politically and in general less interested in politics altogether. Rather than directing their frustrations into political projects, they were adventurers seeking individual success. In this way we might question whether they were part of the diaspora at all. The Hutu and Tutsi who managed in the following years to get to Belgium and other European and North American countries, joined the small Hutu diaspora that had been in exile since 1972 as well as a number of Hutu and Tutsi who had been sent to

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study in Belgium in particular during the reform period in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[10]

Belgium – a divided, politicised diaspora

In Belgium the small group of radical Hutu with Marxist and revolutionary inclinations, who had fled Burundi following the genocidal violence in 1972, were joined in the late 1980s by a number of Hutu post graduate students who were in Belgium on government grants. At first there was mutual suspicion between them, as the old refugees were convinced that these Hutu were 'turncoats' at best and spies for the regime at worst. One of these students from that era tells me how he had almost expected the exiled politicians in Belgium to have horns from the incredible stories he had heard about them. With the reforms in the early nineties some Hutu returned from neighbouring countries as did a few from Europe, and the political field moved back into Burundi where a lively debate was taking place.

Many remained in exile, however, sceptical of the process. These people were unfortunately proven right by the events, following the assassination of the president. Now these people say: 'what did I say' and use it as a reason for not having faith in the present peace process. Pascal, who was a student in Belgium at the time, went back to Burundi for a visit in October 1993. He thanks God today that he had a return ticket and a visa to Belgium in his hand. He returned to Belgium and sought asylum. He dare not return now in case the same happens. Now he does not have the return ticket and the visa.

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In the late 1990s the picture in Belgium became more mixed, as new groups of Burundians arrived. Many were Hutu who had been politically active, but there were also a number of Hutu and Tutsi human rights activists, journalists and other non-partisan critics of the government. As opposed to previous 'cohorts' they were equally critical of the opposition as well. Finally, many young Hutu and Tutsi from elite families arrived simply because life was getting very difficult in Bujumbura and they saw better opportunities in Belgium. However, rather than mixing freely and creating an alternative to the antagonistic politics inside the country, they managed to create separate groups that did not mix.[11] The following example illustrates these divisions:

Each year on October 21st the Burundian diaspora is invited to a mass at the Koekelberg Cathedral in Brussels, followed by a reunion to commemorate the death of Melchior Ndadaye, the country's first democratically elected president who was killed by Tutsi officers only three months after being elected. There are speeches by Ndadaye's widow and by party representatives and other dignitaries.

This is not shared by all the diaspora, however. On the well known internet site www.umuco.com an invitation is posted by 'La Diaspora de la Communauté Tutsi en Belgique' to commemorate 'the genocide against the Tutsi' to take place 23rd October, 2004. After the mass there will be testimonies by survivors and finally, during the drinks, 'dissemination of pictures and written documents on the genocide of Tutsi in Burundi.'

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In Belgium, home to the largest Burundian population in Europe, people would always tell me, when I explained my research, that there are at least two diasporas. The Hutu and the Tutsi do not mix at all. They do not great in the corridors at Louvain La Neuve, their favourite catholic university, and they do not frequent the same bars.[12]

Apart from the ethnic cleavage there are cleavages among the Hutu as well. These are based primarily on time of arrival. I realised this when visiting the three principal cultural groups in Brussels. In theory, these groups are simply concerned with traditional drumming and dancing, and are open to all. However, it turns out that one has almost exclusively Tutsi members, another has Hutu members who arrived in relation to the massacres in 1972 – as well as their children who often are born in Belgium, while the last group consists primarily of Hutu who arrived after the troubles in 1993. Like in the refugee camp, the refugees who arrived here first are – broadly speaking – more uncompromising and radical in their opinions while the newcomers have a more nuanced view on the conflict.

Exclusion from the *polis* inside the country – the fact that Hutu were effectively denied political citizenship in Burundi, was essential to the emergence of a political diaspora in Belgium as it was in Tanzania. From outside the territory of Burundi this diaspora could make claims to citizenship rights, politicising the diaspora to the degree that even traditional drumming was linked to political factions within the diaspora. The political fault lines among Burundians in Belgium coincide to a large degree with time of arrival, stressing the point that the shape of the political field inside Burundi at the time of

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departure is detrimental to the ways in which the diaspora performs its political position – the earlier arrivals in general being more radical and uncompromising than the later arrivals. The Hutu who had been in Belgium since 1972, had to a large extent remained within the frame of mind of Palipehutu, believing that they were up against a Tutsi government of malevolent genociders. The later arrivals, on the other hand, had experienced democratic reforms and a domestic political field in Burundi which was less polarised, and therefore perceived the conflict and its historical causes in more nuanced and ambiguous ways, at odds with the Palipehutistes. Once in Belgium, their views did not merge. On the contrary, each group stuck to its ideals and was not ready to compromise. Apart from the different political contexts from which they left, the various diaspora groups reinforce the antagonisms through mutual positioning as political others.

Shifting the point of gravity back home

After years of negotiations mediated by Julius Nyerere and later by Nelson Mandela, a large number of political parties and movements signed the Arusha Accords in August 2000. This set off a transition period with various reforms and power sharing agreements. A free and vibrant press emerged, heavily supported by international NGOs who had realised the importance of media propaganda in ethnic violence and wanted to counter this. Despite the Arusha Accords and despite the fact that Hutu now were represented in government, security was still bad as some rebel movements still kept fighting. When I did fieldwork in Bujumbura in 2003 – well into the transition period - Hutu politicians, returning from exile in order to take up positions in the government, were given 24 hour protection by the South African defence force, and there was a night curfew in

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Bujumbura. However, one after one the rebel movements signed ceasefires and were demobilised, many of their soldiers being integrated into the national defence force and *gendarmerie* which had so far been dominated by the Tutsi, and despite some minor setbacks, the peace process has been quite successful. In 2005 elections were held, giving a former hard-liner rebel movement, CNDD-FDD (Conseil National pour la Défence de la Démocratie – Forces pour la Défence de la Démocratie) led by Pierre Nkurunziza, an overwhelming victory.[13] Only one small rebel group, FNL (Forces National de la Libération) led by Agathon Rwasa, has not yet been fully enrolled in the peace process and continues to fight around the capital, Bujumbura. It signed a peace agreement with the government September 7th, 2006, but the terms of the agreement remain vague (International Crisis Group 2006).[14]

In many ways, the diaspora is superfluous in this situation. In the past the Burundians in Belgium saw it as one of their main *raisons d'être* to provide Burundians and the outside world reliable alternative information, unrestricted by government censorship. However, with a more or less free press, their information now seems both superfluous and often out of touch. In other words, they no longer play a vital role in putting political pressure on the government, putting them in a dilemma as to what their new role should be. When I did fieldwork in Belgium and Denmark in 2002-2004, many of them still believed that they had privileged access to 'the truth'. Those who were in Burundi had been fooled, they maintained, into believing that they had freedom of expression and access to unbiased news. In fact, this situation was more dangerous than in the 1980s where the Tutsi so obviously showed their oppressive side, because now the Tutsi had constructed a

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façade of openness and democracy, while hiding their true intentions and thus keeping the key to 'real' power.[15] In exile, they can keep their head clear and see through these conspiracies, they believe. In this sense a group of Burundians in Belgium and Denmark can maintain the illusion that they still play an important part in Burundi's political field. They do not accept the fact that the political field has moved back inside the territory of the state and left them in limbo.

Depending on where they are in the diaspora, Burundians have reacted very differently to the shrinking of the transnational political field. The refugees in camps in Tanzania have worried about their security and have only returned once the hilltops in Burundi were safe and once the Tanzanian authorities had made life too hard for them in the camps. Nairobi was once a regional 'hub' of political activity; the junction between the refugee camps and the elite in Europe. Many opposition politicians were based there, and it was in Nairobi that meetings were arranged, arms deals were sealed, and plans conceived. Everyone came through Nairobi on their way from A to B. Now most of the politicians have returned to good positions in the Burundian government. The Burundians that I encountered in Nairobi in May 2004 were mostly young men – and quite a few young women - living clandestinely in Kawangware and Sattelite, a fairly new, semi-rural, very poor part of Nairobi. They had virtually no income and lived with the constant threat of being stopped by the police and having to give a bribe or going to jail. Their strong Pentecostal belief helped guide them and keep their spirits high while it functioned as a way of keeping discipline, helping them stay away from sex, alcohol and gambling. Although they help each other like brothers through the hard times, their projects were

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strictly personal, as they hoped for a 'miracle' that would get them a job, an education or a visa to Europe. The young 'born-again' men hesitated between staying and returning. This is because in spite of Nairobi being a tough place to live, they were well aware that life would also be tough on them in Burundi. And they feared for their lives in Burundi because young Hutu men who have been in exile are often considered rebels or *génocidaires* by those who remained. And most of these boys had been involved in the rebellion one way or another before becoming born again Christians. In sum, Nairobi has been depoliticised; the important politicians have mostly returned, the young men who used to live in the camps and be part of the rebellion have turned to God and most of those who arrive now, are looking for adventure and personal fortune in East Africa's metropolis.

In Belgium, Burundians are similarly faced with the dilemmas of a depolicised transnational space, although the contexts produce different personal dilemmas. Given the present peace process, a few of the Hutu in Europe have returned to Burundi to 'help build the nation' as they would put it. Many of these had been active exile politicians and were offered positions in the new administration. The majority, however, have chosen to stay in Europe for the time being. At political meetings they would criticise the Hutu leadership in Burundi for giving in to the Tutsi, and they would claim that the Tutsi could still take power in a military coup as they had done before. In fact they believed that the Tutsi still held power because they controlled the army. In private conversations, people's choices to stay or go were more complex and involved a number of human factors. A middle aged man and his wife who both are unemployed – in spite of him having a Ph.D.

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in geology and her being a nurse - and live in a flat in a high rise building on the outskirts of Brussels say that they would return first thing there was peace. 'I'll be on the first plane', they say. But then they start reflecting more seriously on the issue. There is the question of healthcare and the children's schooling. And in Burundi he might be able to get a job in the state, but that would be badly paid. One might be able to survive off the wages up country but not in Bujumbura where living is expensive. And security is bad outside Bujumbura. Most refugees would have similar hesitations although to varying degrees. They feel lonely in Brussels where everyone is so busy. In Bujumbura there would always be visitors, a Tutsi housewife tells me but also admits that it was because you had domestic servants in Bujumbura, making socialising easier.[16] On the other hand, they are well aware that life is tough in terms of finding employment at the moment. Or as a successful young man who has been lucky to get a job as a doctor – after doing extra courses – tells me, while driving me home in his brand new Audi: 'It has taken us years to get this far in Belgium. Why throw it all over board and start all over again?'

There is in other words, a difference between the private choices people make and the public reasons given for staying in Belgium in spite of political reforms in Burundi. This is due to the fact that everything is politicised in diaspora, and very choice has to be related to political strategies – just like the cultural groups or the commemorations. Rather than say that they remain here because they have a nice house or for their children's sake, they claim that the Hutu who have returned either are on the payroll of the Tutsi or are too naïve to see that they are being tricked. In this manner, they manage

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publicly to uphold the image of themselves as political dissidents that are forced to live in exile, rather than being individuals who make pragmatic choices in life.

Bujumbura- the pragmatics of real politics

In June 2003, during the second half of the three year transition government - Domitien Ndayezeye, a Hutu from Frodebu is president - I visit Nahimana[17] in his 'home' in Bujumbura. It is a small, newly built hotel-apartment where he lives alone. Only the South African soldiers outside indicate that a member of the National Assembly lives here. This is obviously a temporary solution, as he has left his wife and children in Holland. He is a Tutsi himself but a member of Frodebu and has always been a strong critic of the *ancient regime*. Just like the refugees who are still in Belgium weighing the pros and cons of returning, the choice for people like Nahimana has not been straight forward. Many returning politicians leave their families abroad. Perhaps they do not quite have faith in the peace process that they are part of, they are waiting to see what the future may bring before jeopardising the safety of their families. Fleeing the country alone is after all easier than as a family. Apart from concerns about security, there are also more pragmatic concerns to be taken into account. Another member of the National Assembly, Mr Butasi, has lived in camps in Zaire, then in Tanzania and finally in Copenhagen where he stayed for two years but was never granted asylum. When in Denmark, he sent money to his wife in the camp in Tanzania, so that she could go to Lusaka. He returned to Bujumbura in February 2002 and has brought his wife and youngest children from Lusaka but left the oldest in Lusaka. She has followed the

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English language school system, and they don't want her to have to do the last year in the French system in Bujumbura.

In spite of the pragmatic circumstances around choosing to return, they see their choice as part of a heroic deed – a duty that History has given them. This opinion was backed up by the other members of the national assembly that had returned from exile that I systematically interviewed in June-July 2003. They have to return to help rebuild their country – whatever the personal costs. In their discourse they are in other words sacrificing themselves for the common good – running the risk of being killed, having to live with armed guards all the time, and living separated from their closest family.

When talking about the politicians in Europe, they agree that they are very radical and uncompromising. 'It is easy just to criticise when you are sitting comfortably in Belgium,' they say. Belgium is perceived to be the worst place for in-fighting and radical politics, because it is so closely linked to Burundi. Nahimana says 'to live in Belgum is like living in Burundi.' That is why he chose Holland. In other words, it seems to have brought all the divisions from Burundi with it but not the imperative to negotiate. 'But here we have to find solutions. We must compromise. That is what politics is about. You cannot achieve anything without compromise.' In the words of Butasi who puts the blame on 'democracy and liberty': 'In Belgium you can say whatever you want without it having consequences – neither for your security nor for political decisions. Here things are more *delicate*. Here, you have a big responsibility. Your words have consequences. So you have to compromise.' He goes on to explain that politicians here are 'partenaires'

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while those that are 'there' just criticise. But it takes time to adapt and gain this attitude of reconciliation, he says and claims that he has also changed his opinions and approach after returning. The reason behind this, he claims, is that the Burundians in Europe get their information via the internet, by phone, etc. 'They prefer to believe the news that they get from the rebels rather than what we tell them. The internet is their Bible!'

The political leadership in Bujumbura is well aware of the power of the diaspora – to which many of them used to belong – and the president and other high ranking politicians regularly meet the diaspora in Europe in an attempt to have a dialogue and 'soften' them.

This picture of the reconciliatory politics in Bujumbura is not all glossy, however. Several Tutsi groups – such as Action Contre Génocide, PA Amasekanye, and a faction of Uprona – see the returning Hutu politicians as *génocidaires* who planned a genocide against the Tutsi in 1993. From another perspective, Hutu politicians who remained in the country during 'the problems,' find that the returnees are taking all the limelight. They feel that they struggled and suffered most, while the leaders in Europe had an easy life where they did not risk being jailed or killed for their opinions. Now the exiles have come back and taken all the attention due to their good connections, while those who suffered the most are not acknowledged.

In sum, there are many perspectives on the role of exiles, stayees and returnees respectively, depending on which angle one sees them from. The difficult personal choices in relation to a transition period which could result in peace and prosperity but

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could equally end in genocide and war are inserted into political discourses. The perception of returnees range from anything from opportunists who want a piece of the peace cake, over naïve pawns in the Tutsi game, to heroes who are rebuilding the nation or *génocidaires* who have conned the international community into letting them into power again. Similarly, the diaspora can be seen as sensible people who can see things clearer from a distance and therefore see the dangers in the so-called peace process or radicals who are out of touch and simply read their own internet sites, reconfirming their own prejudiced views.

The mutual relationship between inside and outside

This paper has attempted to illustrate the continuous and complex relationships between homeland and diaspora. The diaspora has had an enormous influence on the political process in Burundi, altough it is impossible to measure such influence, as it covers a whole range of factors that cannot be quantified. The most tangible influence is, obviously, the armed rebellion, using bases in Congo and Tanzania, allying with various militias from Rwanda and Congo and sending young men from camps. The influence of the diaspora's lobbying activity in Europe is harder to assess. The elite in Europe has the financial means and the freedom of speech to function as spokespersons of their party in relation to the 'international community'. They lobby host societies in a manner of ways from approaching national politicians to performing dances at cultural events and informing school children about their country and its problems. The Burundi Committee in Denmark (Burundikomitéen) in the 1980s is illustrative. Being founded by Danish Baptists who have had missionary activities in Burundi since the 1920s, this small

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organisation with only ten members (roughly half Danish and half Burundian) used its connection to a Baptist member of the Danish parliament to arrange a meeting with the parliamentary committee of foreign affairs. They also organised a visit by founder of Palipehutu, Remy Gahutu, where he had meetings with several Danish parliamentarians. The influence that internet sites, based in diaspora, might have on public opinion abroad and at home is even more elusive. There is no doubt, however, that the diaspora is detrimental to the survival of these sites. When, for instance, agora.com was banned in Burundi in 2002 because it allegedly incited ethnic hatred, a Tutsi in Denmark decided to host it in Denmark.

There are influences the other way as well. As we have seen in the historical overview, changes in the political field inside Burundi have forced the diaspora to redefine itself according to the hegemonic political discourse inside Burundi. In the 1980s Palipehutu gained strength, vindicating a discourse of ethno-national liberation. This was defined in an antagonistic relation to the dominant discourse of the one party state, which claimed that ethnicity did not exist. With the reforms in the early nineties, however, the regime partially accepted the idea of ethnicity, rendering Palipehutu without a cause. In stead a group of young intellectual Hutu who had studied in Rwanda set the agenda as moderates, calling for democracy rather than liberation. Similar changes are taking place presently. With former rebel leader, Pierre Nkurunziza, as democratically elected president, the Hutu diaspora is in disarray. Meanwhile a Tutsi diaspora is emerging, gradually shifting from a number of individuals in Europe and North America to a more political diaspora.[18]

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The question is whether it makes sense at all to talk about the homeland affecting the diaspora and vice versa. With a diaspora so dispersed, living in very different conditions – from refugee camps to clandestine lives in Nairobi to doctors in Belgium – and so politically split, the affects are bound to be equally divergent. Perhaps it is more fruitful to think of it as a single political field that happens to be spread, geographically, over several continents; a transnational political field. There are thus discrepancies in opinions but everyone engages in the same field – which is a central point of Bourdieu's concept of the political field. It is through these struggles that the field is created.

I am not implying that national boundaries are irrelevant, however. Firstly, they are instrumental in the ongoing mutual positioning in the political field. Political entrepreneurs discredit each other according to where they are located in the transnational political field. In rough lines, those in North America and Europe are accused by those inside the country of being 'out of touch with reality' while those inside Burundi are perceived of by the diaspora as being 'blinded by power and position'. In other words, while the inside and the outside conflate in transnational political practice, the *idea* of the inside versus the outside is upheld as a significant differentiating principle in the game of political positioning.

Conclusion: a transnational political field in flux or dissolution?

Once people leave Burundian soil, they do not necessarily leave Burundi. On the contrary, during periods of political exclusion, it was necessary for the political opposition to leave the territory in order to enter the political field. This raises important questions about

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political citizenship, and the nature of diasporic identities as opposed to other transnational identities. Involving oneself in politics as a great many Burundians abroad do, is to claim political citizenship rights to the nation-state. Being in exile, one is in a sense excluded from such full rights but then again those who fled did so because they did not enjoy full political citizenship in the first place. I have argued that a political diaspora emerged due to exclusion from the national political citizenry. They organized politically and thus shifted the point of gravity of the political field outside the national borders.

In the case of the Burundian diaspora of the 1970s and 80s, they were making claims to citizenship in/through exile. When excluded from the political field in Burundi – de facto loosing citizenship – they moved to Belgium and elsewhere to claim their rights as citizens. However, citizenship always contains two dimensions, on the one hand claims to certain rights, on the other hand, it always includes an aspect of belonging. This has been the central tenet of the nation-state – always connected by the hyphen, making rights to the state and belonging to the nation inextricably locked together, albeit in a state of tension.

There are two important theoretical conclusions to be drawn from this. Firstly, the two aspects of citizenship have their (negative) equivalents in diaspora – with citizenship being what diaspora lacks. Secondly, the shifts in the point of gravity in Burundi's transnational political field lead to shifts in the nature of the diaspora as identity politics takes over where claims making lets go.

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While citizenship arguably is about rights and belonging, diaspora is concerned with making claims and longing. Diaspora identity revolves around loss and longing, as is well established in the literature on the subject. However, linking it to citizenship and to the nature of the political field might help us understand the nature of diaspora vis-à-vis other transnational practices. Being linked to forced exodus, being linked to exclusion from the political field at home, diasporic identities attempt to recreate the link to the lost nation – which is exactly the location of ideology. Ideology attempts to cover the gap between the real experienced world and longing – it creates political ideologies. However, these ideologies of longing for the homeland translate into very concrete claims made on the state. The Burundian diaspora claims the right to be included in the political citizenry of the nation-state, in this sense conflating longing and claims-making.

When the first wave of Hutu arrived in exile in the 1970s and 1980s, a strongly politicized diaspora emerged due to the political system in Burundi. This first cohort remained effectively outside political influence and hence could indulge in radical identity politics without any connections to real-politics. We must remember, however, that their position – however radical it may appear today – was in fact very realistic at the time. Given the nature of the political field in Burundi at the time, a Hutu nationalist discourse was the only viable alternative to the one party state's dominant ideology. Exiles were politicized in both senses (claims making and longing), and their political opinions were determined by the nature of the political field at the time. In the 1990s, the political field was less bipolar and less split between inside and outside the country.

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Inside and outside merged and the point of gravity moved to the outside. In this period, the diaspora was heavily politicized but more engaged in claims making than in identity politics. In recent years, the point of gravity has gradually shifted back inside, and those left in exile have no more claims to make on the state. So they remain in exile with their 'longing'. In the post-conflict situation, they need no longer make claims to rights from abroad. They are granted full political citizenship inside Burundi. However, 'longing' remains for those who remain in exile – for whatever reasons. They are involved in identity politics while excluding themselves from real politics.

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[1] Thus Guarnizo and Smith (1998) launched the concept 'transnationalism from below', while Levitt (2001b) launched the concept 'transnational villagers', trying to find a level between below and above and Tyner and Kuhlke (2000) talk of 'pan-nationalism'. Finally, a growing number of studies explore why some migrants engage more in transnational activities than others exploring factors such as sending and receiving state policies (Faist 2000; Levitt, DeWnd and Vertovec 2003; Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003a).

[2] Eva Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) distinguishes in a similar manner between the usual question of 'why' and her own interest in the 'how' and the 'then what' of transnational political engagement.

[3] Most recent literature actually shows that it is the most 'integrated' and 'succesful' immigrants that engage in transnational activities. They are in other words not forced into it due to lack of rights and opportunities in the host society (Kleist 2007; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001).

[4] See Clifford (1994), Cohen (1997) and Van Hear (1998) for an overview.

[5] For a discussion of this concept see Anderson (1994), Appadurai (1996), Ellis and Khan (2002), Fuglerud (1999): Schilller, Basch and Blans (1995), Sheffer (1986), Skrbis (1999) and Wayland (2004).

[6] See Lemarchand (1970, 1996). However, while scholars like Ndikumana claim that 'governments engineered ideologies to deny the existence of ethnicity in order to mask the amplitude of ethnic discrimination.' (Ndikumana 1998, p 33), I have argued elsewhere that we must comprehend these apparent double standards as part of a larger anti-colonial ideology (Turner 2001, 2005).

[7] For a detailed analysis, see Lemarchand and Martin (1974).

[8] This is based on reading his manifesto and on numerous interviews with Burundians of all political observations. Of particular value were interviews with his co-founders in Belgium and Denmark, Joseph Murengerantwari and Etienne Karatase. Karatase was vice-president of Palipehutu and took over the leadership when Gahutu died in 1989.

[9] Interestingly, this was the camp where Liisa Malkki (1995) found her fascinating 'mythico-histories' about the essential differences between Hutu and Tutsi since time immemorial. Although she does not

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focus on politics, it is remarkable how much these mythico-histories are in line with Palipehutu ideology. See also Turner (1998, 2001) for a critique of her work.

[10] For an analysis of these various 'cohorts', see Turner (2007a).

[11] For a thorough analysis of these factions, see Turner (2007a).

[12] In Brussels and in Antwerp I have been to bars where I was the only white person, everyone else being from the Great Lakes region. However, Hutu and Tutsi would rarely frequent the same places.

[13] The main contenders in the election were CNDD-FDD and Frodebu, which had previously been by far the largest 'Hutu' party in the country and had won a landslide victory in the previous elections in 1993. Thus, for the first time, political competition was between Hutu rather than between Hutu and Tutsi. Feeling the pressure, Frodebu launched a smear campaign, accusing CNDD-FDD of collaborating too closely with the Tutsi (Reyntjens 2006).

[14] Exploring contemporary politics in Burundi is like exploring a moving target. When research was initiated, Burundi was still engulfed in a bloody civil war. When much of the fieldwork for this article was gathered, the country was in the process of implementing a transition process. At the time of writing, the political landscaped has transformed dramatically once more, creating new conspiracy theories, new lines of tension and a new public political imagination.

[15] For issues of conspiracy and secrecy in Burundian politics, see also Turner (2005, 2007b).

[16] Most of the refugees in Europe, whether Hutu or Tutsi are from the elite and are used to comfortable lives with servants at home.

[17] Pseudonym. Given the small size of the Burundian elite where 'tout le monde se connait', I have also changed other details in the life stories.

[18] It is beyond the scope of this article to explore the various groups in Europe and North America. However, it seems that the Burundian diaspora is more politicized in Belgium than anywhere else. In Denmark, for instance, interaction between Hutu and Tutsi is much more common. Many Burundians say that going to Belgium is like not leaving the country, in the sense that the conflict follows you. In other countries it is easier to make a new beginning. While the diaspora is less politicized and more concerned with being successful in the host societies in USA and Canada, it is still divided along ethnic lines. Thus, Tutsi tend to settle in New Jersey while Hutu settle inside New York.

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