

## Child Immigration Detainees: Sociological, Socio-Legal, and Legal Approaches

*Katherine VITUS (2010). "Waiting Time: The de-subjectification of children in Danish asylum centres." Childhood 17(1): 26 - 42.*

This article employs sociology, political theory, ethnography, and childhood studies to make sense of the experiences of children in Danish asylum centres as they contended with waiting for their ordeals to end. After 5 months of fieldwork with children aged 6–17 living in 2 centres, Kathrine Vitus finds that the greatest impediment to the children’s healthy experiences of detention is its devastating impact on their senses of the future and its potential prospects; Vitus refers to this state as “the unbearable temporality of [a detained child’s] life.” (39) Indeed, Vitus argues that the open-ended waiting time overshadowed the lives of the children, some of whom had been living in the asylum-seeking process in a range of European countries for 4–8 years, some for a shorter period, and the majority for 2–8 years in Denmark (31 - 32)

Drawing on Bourdieu and Heidegger, Vitus characterized the relentless boredom felt by the children as a capacity to “colonize our state-of-mind and our being in the world, creating – like other moods – a basic framework for the understanding and experiencing of being and time.” (34) The future was no longer a viable reference point and compromised the children’s visions of future versions of themselves. (40) The children expressed their boredom through restlessness, fatigue, and despair; waiting created powerlessness for them, particularly if the existential value of time is lost along with the denial of a residence permit. (39 – 40) Vitus therefore captures the children’s feelings of waiting as a process of de-subjectification of “no one” in “no place”. (41)

### Further reading:

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