Digital Communication Practices around the Experience of Resettlement from Kakuma Refugee Camp to Germany

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Abstract

Kakuma refugee camp, one of the biggest refugee camps in the world, lies very marginalized in Northwestern Kenya. People living there are restricted in mobility, access to resources and work. While Kakuma has become a vivid city and home, the majority of people just want to get out. Resettlement means the chance to start a new life in places like the USA, Canada or Europe, it is everybody's dream. With the use of social media and access to wider transnational networks and information, the perception of resettlement has undergone major transformations. Based on conversations with people resettled, field work and online ethnography, I want to analyse how the journey of resettlement is personally experienced vis a vis its presentation on social media. Following this analysis, I will show, how resettlement is perceived through pictures and texts and what is shown and what is hidden of the journey to a new life abroad.

Keywords: Kakuma refugee camp, resettlement, social media, Kenya, Germany

Introduction

Kakuma Refugee Camp is located in northwestern Kenya, with a population of around 200,000 people from various places in Eastern Africa and beyond. During its 30-year existence it has become an "accidental city" (Jansen 2018) with its own social organization, politics, culture and economies. It is a marginalized, restricted place but also a vivid hub, a home, a place of hope and dreams for its inhabitants. Resettlement has always been one of the most preferred ways to leave the camp and start a new life in destinations like the USA, Canada, Australia or in Europe. However, as participation in resettlement is restricted, inhabitants do not know when, and if they might be resettled; the chances of getting resettled resemble that of winning a lottery. Several studies have looked at resettlement from Kenya with different foci, such as the implementation of resettlement programs on a regional or national scale as one of the durable solutions (Mbae 2007, Murithi 2012, Mwalimu 2004, Shutzer 2012) or focusing on specific refugee

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groups, for example Somali and/or Sudanese refugees (e.g. Balakian 2020, Horst 2006a, b, Ikanda 2018a, b, Marete 2011). The psychological effects on refugees have been well described by Cindy Horst in her research with Somali refugees in Dadaab. The desire to leave the camp via resettlement is described as a suffering, named *buufis*. *Buufis* can be so all-encompassing and forceful that it can have severe psychological effects on refugees, causing mental health issues and suicide. As Horst argues, these resettlement dreams have to be understood in the frame of Somalis' "culture of migration", in their far-reaching transnational networks and transnational practices, such as flows of remittances, information and imaginations (Horst 2006a, b). Jansen (2008) has described the different effects of resettlement especially for the Kakuma refugee camp community, the rising demand for resettlement as well as refugees' strategies to achieve it. Sophia Balakin (2020) has looked at the administrative process of resettlement, based on her research with Somali refugees in Nairobi. She describes it as a "patchwork of governance of non-citizenship" of diverse state and non-state actors with different overlapping and contradictory interests and practices through which refugees have to navigate. Therefore, refugees (here Somali) are forced to apply certain strategies in activating their social networks, sharing knowledge and resources to accomplish the resettlement process. Other authors have studied resettlement retrospectively, from the perspective of refugees who have already arrived in the destination countries (Marete 2011, Muftee 2015).

Not much is known about the experience of the whole resettlement process from a refugee perspective, starting in the refugee camps or urban settlements to the new life in the resettlement countries. Studies that have looked at the relationship between social media and resettlement, mainly focused on its role after arrival in the host country. However, Jay Marlowe (2000) has worked out the relationship of social media with regard to the integration of refugees in New Zealand and Andrade and Doolin (2016) with regard to their social inclusion. Ahmed, Veronis and Alghazali (2020) and Veronis, Tabler and Ahmed (2018) have focused on the use of social media by resettled Syrian refugees in Canada. The authors show how social media provide a transcultural virtual "contact zone" (Pratt 1991) for the resettled Syrian refugees after their arrival in Canada, where they can meet people of the host community, exchange information and ideas and in this way learn from each other. Social media can thus be interpreted as "borderlands" (Anzaldúa 1999) through which refugees can negotiate cultural differences during resettlement (Veronis et al. 2018).

All these studies focus on the role of social media after arrival in the host country with a main focus on integration. The emphasis of this paper is on the individual refugees' experiences and their representation of the whole process of resettlement, from being invited to a first interview to arriving and settling in the host country.

As I will argue, with the use of social media and the access to wider transnational networks and information about possible future homes, the dream of resettlement has undergone a major transformation. I investigate how resettlement is currently discussed among Kakuma inhabitants in the camp and in relation to that how resettlement is presented, discussed or visualized on social media platforms. With these insights into refugees' digital representations of resettlement, I want to contribute to a better understanding of resettlement from a refugee's perspective and show how social media has transformed the idea and imaginations of resettlement.

The article is based on online ethnography and research at distance since 2020, as well as field-work on the ground with Kakuma Refugee Camp inhabitants in August and September 2021. Online ethnography required communicating with refugees via WhatsApp and Facebook messenger and the collection and analyses of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp status posts. During fieldwork in Kakuma refugee camp, I talked to refugees informally and formally in interviews and accompanied refugees during their daily activities. I regularly communicated with refugees who succeeded in their aim of resettlement to Germany, establishing friendly and trust relationships. In this way, I was able to follow up their digital representations of their journey to Germany. Additionally, I was able to visit one family and one young man from Kakuma, who were transferred to places not too far from my hometown.

First, I will introduce Kakuma Refugee Camp as a temporal or permanent home for its inhabitants and as my site of fieldwork. In addition, I will review the history of resettlement in the camp as well as some general facts and figures on resettlement from Kenya. Based on my fieldwork in the camp in August and September 2021, I want to present and discuss some initial findings, which provide insights into recent resettlement programs. And I will show how resettlement is received, discussed and practiced and explore the effects of this organized form of migration on the chosen ones as well as the ones who stay behind. Since resettlement to Germany was in progress during my stay in Kakuma, a special focus will be on the German implementation of the program. I will especially look at the role of mobile phones and social media for refugees and how these media influence and change the communication about resettlement. In applying a temporal perspective, I want to show how resettlement communication changes over time, depending on if resettlement is a future dream, a present practice or a past experience. Using examples of refugees' participation in the German resettlement program and communication with them, I want to give insights on how refugees digitally represent and reflect on their journeys.

Kakuma as unintentional home and the dream of resettlement

Kakuma Refugee Camp was established in 1992 to give shelter to the arriving 'Lost boys of Sudan', young boys and girls who were orphaned and displaced during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005). Other refugees came from Ethiopia, Somalia and the Great Lakes region due to the political instability in their countries.[2] Over the years, the camp's population from diverse nations has increased tremendously. As of the end of July 2020, the camp counted a population of about 196,666 people from the Horn of Africa and Eastern Africa (UNHCR Kenya 2020). The camp consists of four parts – Kakuma 1 to 4 – with different zones within those parts. The oldest of those, Kakuma 1, was built in 1992 and is subdivided into different national or ethnic communities. Kakuma 2/Zone 7 was built in 1997 and is subdivided into parts inhabited by different Somali and Sudanese communities. Kakuma 3/Zone 8 from 1999 consists of a mixed international community (with a majority of Sudanese) and the reception center. Kakuma 4/Zone 9 was added to the camp when Somali Bantu arrived from Daadab (Jansen 2018: 72-

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[2] This includes countries like Burundi, Congo Brazzaville, DRC Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Southern Sudan, Sudan, Somalia and Rwanda.

76). The Kalobeyei settlement was designed as an alternative and innovative form of accommodation. Refugees should be able to live more or less self-sustained in three villages (Betts/Omata/Sterck 2020). The camp is under administration of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the jurisdiction of the Kenyan Government and the Department of Refugee Affairs. Furthermore, a wide range of humanitarian organizations[3] is active in the camp (KANERE 2022).

Kakuma Refugee Camp is situated in north-western Kenya on the outskirts of Kakuma town in the Turkana West District of Turkana County. It lies about 120 km from the next bigger city Lodwar and 130 km from the border to South Sudan. The camp is surrounded by a harsh semi-arid desert environment with dust storms occurring regularly, high daily temperatures of 35 to 38 degrees Celsius, and regular outbreaks of malaria and cholera during floods and in the rainy season (UNHCR Kenya, 2020). Around the camp, the majority of the local population is made up of the nomadic pastoralists of Turkana. They are themselves a marginalized group of people who depend on (missionary) aid to access education and health services. As access to water and pastureland is restricted, the area has become a place of regular intergroup and cross-border violence with the neighboring Pokot, Karamojong, and others. Although the local population also profits from the camp, the relationship with the refugees is ambivalent and marked by envy. This is often expressed in sayings such as 'It is better to be a refugee than a Turkana in Kakuma' as well as in violent conflicts between the two groups (Aukot 2003: 74). In recent years, however, the relationship between refugees and hosts has improved due to increasing trade and business between Turkana and the refugees and by means of development projects that also target the host community (Jansen/de Bruijne 2020).

Like other refugee camps, Kakuma is a place where most people stay for several years, a whole life, or even several generations. Over the decades of its existence, it has become a city-camp (Agier 2002) with its own urban structures and social organizations. It is a geographically defined, ruled, and restricted place but also a place of hope and individual chances for success in- and outside of the camp. Life in the refugee camp is marked by restrictions of resources like water and food and limitations in movement and social mobility. Refugees are not allowed to leave the district without official permission from camp management and working possibilities are limited as organizations in the camp pay only a small salary. Within the camp there is a lack of security and regularly occurring violence, with conflicts between camp inhabitants as well as with the neighboring Turkana. People living there feel as if the refugee label has been stamped on them, hiding their personal identity (Amina 2017). In this negative in-between presentness, dreams and hopes for change and a better future outside the camp are all-encompassing.

Possible ways to leave the camp are education in the camp and a subsequent scholarship at a university in Kenya or abroad, a job opportunity outside the camp in Kakuma and in other Kenyan towns or living in an urban settlement if one is financially able. Another option is the UNHCR resettlement program, which allows selected refugees to be accommodated in a country abroad (see also Jansen 2018). The further possible and defined durable solution for refugees is repatriation to their countries of origin, which is occasionally promoted by the UNHCR,

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[3] Like the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Food Program (WFP), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), Windle Trust Kenya (WTK), Film Aid International, and Salesians of Don Bosco in Kenya (KANERE 2022).

when the situation in the countries seems to be stable. But for many refugees, repatriation is not an option. Firstly, they might have never been to the countries of their parents. Therefore, they don't really feel connected. Secondly, although there might be peace, the difficult living conditions and lack of job and business opportunities and social networks have even caused refugees to return to the camp after they have been repatriated (see also Jansen 2018: 165-190). The last option which some refugees also take into consideration in their despair is the "safari mbaya" (the bad voyage), the illegal onward migration to Europe or other places with the help of a smuggler.

As Jansen has shown, the implementation of resettlement programs has huge effects on the camp population. Resettlement dramatically raises expectations and hopes for leaving the camp and has become a "pervasive wish" and goal in itself. Many refugees believe resettlement can be achieved by certain strategies, like claiming insecurities and negotiating their vulnerabilities (Jansen 2008: 1-2, 7-16).

Obtaining reliable data on resettlement from Kenya is difficult, as numbers for certain years are missing or vary between sources. Between 1992 and 2006, 84,240 refugees have been resettled to third countries from several locations in Kenya (Jansen 2008). According to UNHCR statistics, from 2007 to 2013, approximately 15,320 refugees left Kenya for third countries through a resettlement program (UNHCR Global report).[4] From 2014 to 2020, numbers were published in a regular manner, totaling 30,273 refugees who were resettled from Kenya to third countries, with an average of 4,325 resettled refugees per year. The numbers range from as low as 443 in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, to a peak of 7,359 in 2016. For 2021, 3,000 refugees have been resettled from Kenya.[5]

As Jansen (2008) reports, larger numbers of refugees from Kakuma Refugee Camp were first resettled within the framework of two resettlement programs, which were aimed at the Sudanese inhabitants of the camp. The first one was the United States Refugee Program (USRP), which at the end of 2000 had resettled 3,800 Sudanese "unaccompanied minors". These refugees were part of a large group of 20,000 young Sudanese arriving in Kakuma in 1992 who had been expelled from Ethiopia and arrived on foot. The next large group were 15,000 Somali Bantus[6], the largest group ever resettled from Africa. According to Jansen's calculations, it is estimated that between the years 2001 and 2006, about 25,000 refugees have been resettled from Kakuma Refugee Camp to third countries (Jansen 2008: 3). The effects that Jansen (2008) describes for the first resettlement programs from Kakuma were manifold especially regarding the financial situation, mental wellbeing and social life in the camp. The remittances of resettled refugees transferred back to the camp inhabitants brought capital for them, making an important part of their income. As Jansen reports, the remittances contributed to the economy and lifestyle in the camp as well as the possibility of informal local integration as refugees could afford to live and work in Kenyan towns (Jansen 2008: 4, FN 9). Sudanese refugees came back to the camp

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[4] Numbers for 2007, 2008 and 2012 are missing. In 2013 1356 refugees have been resettled from Dadaab and 1719 from Kakuma (UNHCR 2009; 2010; 2013).

[5] See respected websites of the UNHCR Global Report. For 2019 numbers vary between the data published by UNHCR and the welfare association Caritas Germany with 3941 and 2221 resettled refugees respectively. https://reporting.un-hcr.org/node/2537?y=2019#year; https://resettlement.de/kenia/ (last access 16.11.2021).

[6] Somali Bantus are a minority of non-Cushitic Somalis, who are victims of discrimination and insecurity in their homeland (Jansen 2008:3).

wearing suits and showing pictures of their houses and cars in the US or Australia, telling their success stories, and were able to select brides, offering dowries up to 75,000 USD. Many masked or lied about the failures and difficulties they faced, creating an idealized and untrue image of their countries of residence. Another effect described by Jansen (2008) was the interest and curiosity for resettled refugees' life histories in their new countries of residence. Therefore, many journalists, researchers and artists subsequently came to visit Kakuma Refugee Camp, resulting in quite a number of publications on the Lost Boys' life, migration and resettlement stories (e. g. the novel What is the What by Dave Eggers (2006)) or films like The Lost Boys of Sudan by Megan Mylan and John Schenk (2003). During the visits by church groups or NGOs, promises and attempts were made to invite people to resettle.

> *This added to the creation not only of the dream of resettlement, but also to the hope of seeing it realized, since the ongoing resettlements, visible in the planes taking off sometimes up to a few times a week, proved the possibility of it (Jansen 2008: 4).*

As Cindy Horst has shown for refugees living in Dadaab, Somali refugees call this constant and all-encompassing longing to go abroad and leave the camp *buufis*[7] (2006a). *Buufis* can have severe psychological effects like mental health issues and can lead even to suicide. According to Horst, buufis is fostered by transnational flows of remittances and information (Horst 2006a idem).

> *The multiplicity of examples of others leaving the camp, and the images they bring via the transnational connections that mobile phones and the Internet facilitate, as well as media such as satellite TVs, lead to an active imagining of the 'Western world', adding to the wish for resettlement of many refugees (Jansen 2008: 4).*

This active imagining of a possible future life in the Global North through resettlement as well as the communication with resettled relatives and friends has reached another dimension through the use of new and social media as I want to show in the following.

The influence of new and social media on resettlement in Kakuma

In the early 1990s, when the first refugees arrived, Kakuma town was just a small Turkana meeting hub, badly connected by road to Lodwar and South Sudan through the semi-desert. Long-term inhabitants told me that it was a horrible place. The first refugees had to live in tents in the unbearable heat without the shade of trees or protection from the wind, with scorpions or snakes, seasonal floods and insufficient provision and care. Moreover, fleeing meant disconnecting from family and friends at home and not knowing about each other's state of being. To call home via landline was nearly impossible and very expensive. Lemy[8] came to Kakuma as a small boy, fleeing the war in South Sudan. When the first refugees were resettled, relatives and friends who were left behind would lose contact with their loved ones. As he remembers:

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[7] *Buufis* is a Somali term that means 'to blow into or to inflate' (Zorc, Osman 1993 as cited by Horst 2006a: 143). It refers to air, *hawo*, which also stands for a longing or desire for something specific, an ambition, or a daydream. Thus, *buufis* can be understood as a longing or desire blown into someone's mind (Horst 2006a: 143).

[8] Names of interlocutors were changed.

The first group that was resettled from Kakuma, in 2000, included my elder sister. And when she left, I was a little boy, but I remember […] the whole event. And they left so many of them. The number that left in 2000 was really huge. So, the community I was coming in, there were about 48 individuals from our community. Some were my uncles, cousins and my sister. So, when they left nobody was sure, nobody was aware where this people are going to. So, it was a lot of chaos, a lot of disconnect. People were crying and all that. So, when they left, there were no phones in Kakuma (Lemy 2021).

As Lemy tells, in 2000 the usual mode of communication were letters and military radios that were used in the camp for business communication with South Sudan. At that time, most people's contacts were restricted to other Kenyan cities like Eldoret and Nairobi. Three years after Lemy's sister had left the camp, the first mobile phones came to be used in Kenya. They also soon reached the refugee camp and made communication with resettled relatives easier:

I think around 2003, in my community, we had one person that had the Nokia 1100. And he was the only one that had it, and there was no network. Around Kakuma people had to go to the hill Kalemtuch to climb up the hill and talk there. That guy was charging a lot of money at that time. So, his number was quickly circulated, and those who needed it had his number. And 2003 was the first time that we all spoke with my sister. It was very challenging like at that point, because this guy was charging money even if he is the one being called. The minutes that you are talking, with whoever you are talking to, he was charging that. […] So, at that point, you know, talking to someone on a phone was quiet unbelievable. It was something that is not normal, eh? And it felt really nice. Even if they have left and left me here in Kakuma, with the conversations that we were having on phone, the phone calls, I really felt connected with them (Lemy 2021).

Over the time, internet and mobile phones became available and widely used in Kenya. Since 2008, social media platforms like Facebook and Viber and later from 2014/15 WhatsApp and messenger and video calls became important. Also, the more affordable internet data made it possible for residents of Kakuma to call their relatives in their home countries and in their new homes in third countries like the US (Lemy 2021).

In 2016, UNHCR, with the support of Accenture Development Partnerships (ADP), carried out a global assessment of refugees' access to, and use of the internet and mobile phones. The aim was to develop the new UNHCR Global Strategy for Connectivity for Refugees. The report entitled: "Connecting Refugees", made several key findings, which indicate that refugees' connectivity is still restricted due to their place of location (urban or rural), affordability, literacy and language knowledge, societal and cultural challenges as well as gender and technical gaps in coverage. Despite affordability constraints, refugees place significant value on being connected. Access to the internet is crucial for refugees in communicating with friends and family, in both their home and host country, as well as for providing help and assistance. In this way, as the UNHCR states, mobile phones and internet connectivity have become part of the overall aim of increasing refugee well-being and self-reliance in refugee camps (UNHCR 2016: 22). In 2017, the UNHCR initiated an ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Boot camp

for Kakuma inhabitants. The plan here was to educate refugees on the technical skills of ICT, aimed at enhancing their abilities to find education or work (Otieno 2017). Within the vicinity of the camp, internet cafes and mobile phone shops have blossomed and service providers like Safaricom and mobile money services like M-Pesa offer their services. However, power cuts and financial resources still restrict media usage. In order to access the internet, camp inhabitants have to have properly functioning and charged smartphones and buy data bundles from the respective provider, which not everybody can afford. Unreliable and time-limited networks are another problem they encounter.

Kakuma's inhabitants use their mobile phones to access the internet and social media platforms very actively, especially WhatsApp, Facebook, FB Messenger, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram are important. Although they sometimes have difficulties with access or money to buy data bundles, social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are most important to them, as they can connect with people outside the camp and present themselves with a personal identity beyond their refugee status (Joyce 2017; Amina 2017; Böhme, 2019). Through WhatsApp, Facebook or LinkedIn refugees have built up large networks of contacts in Kakuma, Kenya, and abroad.

Today, Internet and social media make up a big part of economic activities as well as the visual landscape in the camp with painted phone shops, creative charging facilities and their advertisement boards all over the place. Since camp inhabitants use social media, they use it for their private and business activities and vividly take part in online communities not only different from offline groups in the camp but in global networks that go far beyond the borders of the refugee camp. Moreover, refugees are able to present themselves online with their own and alternative identities. The already existing camp specific negotiation of (ethnic) identities, the "ethnic chessboard" (Agier 2002: 334) was extended by a virtual dimension. On the internet, refugees can take up multiple and alternative identities and can display or hide themselves more freely (Witteborn 2015). As both off- and online activities influence each other, the negotiation of identities becomes highly dynamic and multidimensional. Kakuma refugee camp is presented on diverse different websites and all major social media platforms through pictures, texts and films.[9] But, more importantly, inhabitants can easily communicate with family and friends abroad. A friend or family member is now "just a phone call away" (Amina 2017). Lemy describes the possibility of virtual communication as another step to being even more connected among the family members:

> So when the family wants to talk to my sister, I call her using video call and we could see her, my children whom we have never met, but we are a family. So, we communicate, we talk as if we have met or we have been together. They know that we are their uncles, my mother is their grandmother so something of that sort, and it is through the video calls (Lemy 2021).

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[9] The UNHCR website, Kakuma Girls, a 'Welcome to Kakuma Refugee Camp' YouTube video by FilmAid, the Kakuma News Reflector KANERE.org, the online education project 'Kakuma Project' and several sites and chatrooms on Facebook like Kakuma, Project Kakuma, Kakuma Kenya, Kakuma, Kakuma R-camp K-town, two sites called Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kakuma Refugee Secondary School and Refugee Flag Kenya.

The new possibility of seeing each other also changed the modes and relations of trust and mistrust between the people who have left and those who had to stay behind in the refugee camp.

> *So, it has had a great impact in terms of trusting the other countries, you were not able to trust. Eh you don't believe, somebody is telling you that I am in the US, life is really good, but you are not seeing that. So, through whatever they are posting on Facebook, you are able to see that. Through the video calls, you are calling someone, they are in their house, they show you their house, they are showing you the city, if somebody is walking in the city. So, it matters you to believe certain places are really nice, certain places have developed (Lemy 2021).*

The internet and social media have made it possible for the residents of Kakuma not only to connect with their places of origin but also with possible future places to stay. On the internet, information and pictures of possible new futures elsewhere are distributed, received, and appropriated and influence favored places of destination as well as practices which aim at achieving resettlement goals. Social media also has a huge influence on the camp inhabitants' social and professional activities, which then might lead to important contacts abroad or enable careers in the camp. Through social media, refugees can publish camp related projects and events and connect to larger supporting networks to receive donations or even become famous. Social media in this way also functions as a motor of change (Amina 2017) and adds up to the strategies to receive resettlement.

From Kakuma to Germany: Recent Resettlement Practices and Discourses

In 2012, Germany became part of the resettlement program on a pilot basis, and permanently joined the international community of the more than 30 resettlement states in 2014.[10] In the years 2012 to 2014, Germany's admission quota was 300 persons per year. In 2015, this quota was increased to 500 people. In 2016 and 2017, Germany participated in the EU Resettlement Pilot Program with a total of 1,600 refugees, whereupon the national admission quota was taken into account (Baraulina/Bitterwolf 2018). Against the background of the challenges during the years 2015 to 2017, during which more than a million people sought protection in Germany, nearly no attention was paid to resettlement with its relatively small figures in the public debate. It has only been since April 2018, on the occasion of Germany's commitment to the EU to provide 10,200 places for the European resettlement program, that the sense and purpose of this admission program has been publicly discussed. Some commentators stress the regulated admission procedure in the context of resettlement with the hope that the program will become a real "alternative to the German asylum procedure". However, other actors criticize these projects as a "moral fig leaf". In contingent-based admission procedures like resettlement, they see

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[10] Germany's participation in resettlement programs is based on the resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers and Senators of the Interior of the German Federal States, from December 9, 2011, which "in the interest of further developing and improving refugee protection, 'advocated the permanent participation of the Federal Republic of Germany in the admission and resettlement of refugees from third countries in particular need of protection in cooperation with the UNHCR (resettlement)'" (Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat 2021).

the danger that refugees would be denied individual access to a fair asylum procedure on European territory. The human rights organization Pro Asyl for example calls for "the validity of individual asylum rights instead of collective acts of mercy" (Baraulina/Bitterwolf 2018). In 2019, the European Commission called on its member states to create new reception places for humanitarian admission and resettlement in the year 2020. The Commission also communicated, that at the time funds from the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) would be available to financially support 20,000 places across the EU with actual entries until 30 June 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this period has since been extended to 31 December 2021. Against the background of the coalition agreement of the 18th legislative period, Germany was said to make an appropriate contribution to admission quotas for persons in need of humanitarian protection. Germany has assured the European Commission of its support and promised to make a total of 5,500 places available for 2020, of which only around 1,200 entries could be realized due to the pandemic (Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat 2021).

Shortly after I arrived in Kakuma in August 2021, camp inhabitants were in the preparation process for resettlement to Germany. The resettlement to Germany came rather as a surprise to camp inhabitants and it was said that it was the first time that Germans have come to take people from Kakuma to their country. Germany was also not on the list of desired destinations. In first place for desired destinations abroad was and still is Canada, followed by the US. This was interrupted by Trump's presidency, as under the Trump government resettlement from Kakuma to the US was halted (Beers 2020). Trump was known for his anti-asylum politics and many refugees were disappointed and changed their opinion of the US being a desired destination. But when Joe Biden came to power in 2021, much hope was laid on the new government to take up resettlement cases again. After Canada and the US, Australia is also well known and highly appreciated by camp inhabitants although news circulate regarding the bad treatment of asylum seekers in the country. Europe, with resettling countries like Sweden, Norway or the Netherlands is not as popular but also desired. While most camp inhabitants had contacts in Canada or the US, Germany was not well known and almost nobody would have had any contacts there. In their discourses about desired destinations and resettlement, refugees would actively value and compare the living conditions in the different countries. Canada and the US were said to quickly enable a good and luxurious life of having a good place to stay, a house, a job and a car as well as earning a lot of money to send home. But by taking out loans many refugees would also fall into a debt trap. A similar picture would be described by people wishing to go to Australia, which was said to have quick business opportunities. Europe on the other hand was said to be difficult. Integration would take a long time due to bureaucratic regulations, the language barrier and access to the job market. People would struggle and sometimes regret being there (Benjamin 2021). The examples show how refugees actively acquire and share knowledge on different host countries and how discourses and myths about certain places create a ranking of popular destinations.

The process of being resettled – refugees' knowledge, challenges and fears

The resettlement process is a complex procedure with a mixture of interviews, check-ups, screenings and preparations, which can take several months. The process is shared knowledge,

which is passed on between refugees and camp inhabitants (cf. Balakian 2020). I therefore asked Kevin, a young South Sudanese who got resettlement to Germany to write down what he knows about the process and how he experienced resettlement. As Kevin explained, resettlement is already a topic during the first "eligibility interviews" conducted by the UNHCR, when refugees register in a camp with the purpose of collecting the person's data and creating a personal file. The eligibility interviews determine whether asylum seekers are granted refuge and given the mandate or sent back to their countries. Sometimes, the new arrivals spend many months or even a year at the reception camp located in Kakuma 3 until their cases are decided. Information such as contacts, educational level, skills are collected and sometimes people are also asked if they would consider being resettled to a third country (Kevin 2021).

When a foreign country proposes to resettle refugees, the UNHCR officials use these files to check the criteria required by the host country to determine who is chosen for the selection process. Then, the person is called for a "profiling interview" with UNHCR staff to decide his/her eligibility, which is currently done at the field post in Kakuma. The questions resemble the ones asked when one registers and are meant to cross check the information already provided. Also, they check the family background and security status. Among the questions asked are: Why did you leave your country? Why do you think that you can't go back? The questions differ by household members. This is followed by another interview at the UNHCR compound, during which information on eligibility is graphically shared (Kevin 2021). If the refugee passes this, he/she is invited to another round of interviews at the compound of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), conducted by representatives from the host country. While most refugees feel at that level as having already been accepted, their joy can be tempered, as the respective embassy still has to select candidates and might not opt for the person for unknown reasons. More interviews await the selected "lucky ones" and only upon passing those successfully will they move on to the next level: a medical interview by the IOM medical team with blood screening, X-ray and other medical check-ups such as eye test, pregnancy check and vaccinations. After three months, they will be informed of the flight schedule, followed by a cultural orientation of about three days. The cultural orientation course is meant to inform refugees on daily life in Germany. The topics include safety during the flight, the educational system, law, work, religion and cultural practices. Prior to this, refugees have to hand over their refugee card to the IOM and fingerprints are taken at the government led Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS) where one also has to return everything belonging to the government. The fingerprints carry the most weight in making somebody "free" and ready for resettlement. The deactivation of the UNHCR refugee status from the camp is done at the UNHCR office or at the Field Post. The RAS officials then come to the community with a clearance form to show that one has given back the house that was assigned to the person when being granted refugee status. After all this, one is officially cleared and ready for transfer to the Nairobi transit location, which is currently the hostel of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). During their one-week stay at the YMCA, the resettled refugees go through other different forms of medical treatment to ensure fitness for travel. Medication includes malaria tablets and other medicines. Due to the Covid-19 protocols, refugees also have to do a PCR test before they are allowed to travel. They also receive further travel information now. The information includes the weight

of the luggage, information on travel itinerary and arrival. At the airport, everyone is given their documents and awaits boarding, upon clearing the customs duty desk (Kevin 2021).

Kevin's account of resettlement shows the complex and multi-layered process, which involves multiple actors. This "patchwork governance" of resettlement (Balakian 2020) can lead to severe complications and backlashes for those chosen to enter the resettlement screening. While in Kakuma, I heard of many obstacles that could hinder refugees from reaching the final point of the actual departure. Persons' data would not appear, or would contradict information in the computer system, or fingerprints were lost (see also Jansen 2008: 6). In these cases, the persons' resettlement process was put on hold, without them knowing when and if their resettlement could continue. I also heard that when the RAS officers come to "take back" camp inhabitants' houses, they would ask for huge sums of compensation money for any damage or changes done to the houses. Refugees interpreted this practice as corruption, because camp officers could blackmail refugees into not clearing their cases for resettlement. These backlashes left many refugees, who had already felt safe for resettlement, confused and depressed. When I visited one of the Sudanese households of three women in the camp who had been chosen to be resettled to Germany, they were literally sitting on their ready-packed luggage, waiting for their cases to be processed. But as there was said to be something wrong with one of the women's fingerprints, their case was put on hold. When the travel dates passed without them being processed, they were deeply shocked and disappointed as they had already imagined and planned a life in Germany.

Other refugees chosen for resettlement were afraid that something could happen in the final process to prevent them from travelling. For this reason, most people would not publicly announce that they had been granted resettlement. As several research participants told me, Congolese and refugees from the Great Lakes region in particular would fear witchcraft from jealous neighbors or that acquaintances would hinder their resettlement. As they told me, many stories circulated about people being bewitched just before their resettlement. Other problems would be encounters with the police just before travelling, as happened to one of my interlocutors and his friends just the night before he was due to fly out of Kakuma, which resulted in paying bribes to the police to let them out of prison. When travel dates to Germany were announced, the news of the people chosen to go to Germany went round the camp. The news of resettlement divided camp inhabitants into those who had obtained resettlement, and those who had not. It was said that only (South) Sudanese and people from the Great Lakes region would have been offered resettlement to Germany and refugees understood this as ethnic and/or religious bias. Many times, refugees from Ethiopia and Somalia would ask me why Germany would not take them.

Sometimes relatives or friends were separated in the process of resettlement. While visiting the Kakuma Project Virtual Training Centre, I saw two young men in the classroom learning German on their laptops. They were watching a YouTube language training video with simple conversations in German, which they eagerly followed, listened and repeated. When I introduced myself, they were happy to know somebody from Germany, and we exchanged telephone numbers. Noah and Robert were in their late teens and going to school when they were called for the German resettlement scheme. Subsequent to our first meeting, both of them regularly greeted me in German and tried some simple conversations via WhatsApp. They both told me

that they wanted to become soldiers in the German army and inquired with me if that was possible. But while Robert progressed well through the medical and administrative preparation, there was a problem with Noah's case. As he told me later, his family would not have been allowed to leave as his aunt was pregnant and as it was the rule, if one of a registered group was not eligible, the whole group could not be resettled. He was totally disillusioned when he finally saw his best friend leaving for Germany without him.

As the example shows, refugees selected to take part in the resettlement process avidly make use of social media to learn the language and inform themselves about the host country and in this way already start preparing for integration. In the following, the communication patterns before, during and after resettlement will be illustrated with the example of camp inhabitants who received resettlement to Germany.

Before Departure: Imaginations, Worries and Hopes

Resettlement from Kakuma to Germany was originally scheduled for spring 2020 but the program was stopped due to Covid-19. At that time a Somali woman, with whom I had been communicating via WhatsApp and Facebook since 2017, told me via WhatsApp that she had already completed an interview and was nervously awaiting the answer. When resettlement was stopped due to Covid-19, her hopes were shattered. This year, I heard the news from Kevin, who got resettlement to Germany and at that time already had several interviews and medical check-ups. I got to know Kevin when he posted a photograph of a young boy in Kakuma and since then we regularly chatted or called via WhatsApp. Kevin came to Kakuma as a child together with his aunt, when he was 4 years old, fleeing from the war in South Sudan. One of the trainees of Filmaid, a program teaching refugees in filmmaking, he soon became very active in film and media production as well as on social media. He was chosen as a so-called Global Shaper[11] and was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in 2018. Since then, he would regularly participate in online webinars, meetings and discussions and present his life story and his work. As his friends told me, it is also since he has been in Switzerland, that he has changed his way of speaking. He was now known for speaking *tweng*, the imitation of an US American accent. As he had told me previously, he was hoping for a scholarship to attend a film school in the UK or in Canada. Germany was not on his radar. When talking about his resettlement he was rather cool and emotionless. However, because I am German, he would involve me in conversations and questions about Germany as well as send me WhatsApp messages during his ongoing cultural preparation class.

Due to the country's ambiguous public image, Germany was perceived by refugees as well with positive and negative attributes. While Germany was known for the reign of Angela Merkel and her refugee-friendly politics, discourses about the Hitler regime, the Holocaust and recent right-wing movements frighten refugees. One day I was invited to the home of Benjamin, a friend of my field assistant, who would be resettled to Germany. Benjamin came to Kakuma in

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[11] The Global Shapers community is a programme initiated by the World Economic Forum, which chooses young people under the age of 30 around the globe as drivers for dialogue, action and change who shall work together in a network to address local, regional and global challenges (Global Shapers Community 2022).

2011 from DR Congo. Since then, he had lived with his wife and two younger sons in a compound. Benjamin did his BA in Management and Public Administration online and was very active in education projects in the camp. As he told me, he was very worried as he had only limited, contradictory information about his possible future home. He had read about the history of Hitler and the Nazi regime and also that Nazis were still in the country. They would attack black people and there were some places people could not even go. On the other side, he had heard that there was good social and health care and education. He was worried about all the restrictions and regulations they were told about in the cultural preparation class like having to learn German before starting to work or study. He asked me about getting a place to stay, work and starting a business. Moreover, he had learned that to have children you had to be financially stable. Benjamin recently got a job opportunity with a rich businessman in Nairobi, so he was weighing up which way was best for the future of his family. As most people had no social networks at all in Germany, he said that all those currently selected would rather live another two years in the camp, if they knew that they would get resettlement to another country afterwards. The fact, that Germany was the least preferred option was also proven by the case of a Somali woman I spoke to. She finally rejected resettlement to Germany, when she got the chance to get a private resettlement sponsorship to Canada. Following our conversation, Benjamin was relieved and told me that now at least he was sure that they could start a new life there without too many worries.

Safari ya Ujerumani[12]: Staying connected and giving testimony via online communication

The first group of resettled refugees to Germany finally left on September 8th and 9th 2021. They had checked in their bags at IOM beforehand and went to Kakuma airstrip the next day. They would fly to Nairobi and be brought to a transit residence at the YMCA in Nairobi. There they had to stay in quarantine for another week doing another PCR test until they flew to Germany. Kevin posted a picture when arriving at Wilson airport in Nairobi walking from the plane captioned "#stride on#". With the airport and planes under the cloudy sky behind him, he was in a cool outfit of white sneakers and long socks, military trousers and a jeans jacket. Wearing a respiratory mask, he posed, putting his cap back on his head while walking. With this post, he portrayed himself as a traveler for whom this journey was just a continuation of what he was always doing. The next day he posted another picture from the airport of a small refugee girl he had travelled with, captioned #myfriend Jojo#. As expressed in the post, the resettled refugees had already become a community of chosen ones, who shared their experiences during resettlement. As pictures were not allowed at the YMCA, Kevin sent daily updates on how he was feeling or what he did. As it was very boring just staying there, Kevin was killing time, reading or chatting with friends via his smartphone.

Benjamin worriedly told me before departure, that the UNHCR had changed the reception center in Germany from a camp near a big city in mid-western Germany to a very small town in one of the eastern states. Every change of plan was strictly observed by the refugees, and they could only speculate as to why they would be brought to another accommodation. Via internet and social media, they tried to get as much information as possible about the new place.

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[12] The trip to Germany in Swahili.

After the week in quarantine, the journey would continue now finally to Germany. The flight was operated by Qatar airlines, and this was a major event for most of the resettled refugees, who had never before boarded such a huge plane or had never before travelled by air. The luxurious interior of the Qatar plane was a signifier of what they hoped to reach: a better life in Germany. Several refugees posted pictures of the flight on their WhatsApp statuses and Instagram. Kevin posted a picture of himself sitting in the plane and looking out of the window with the comment "It's been God since day #1", marking the event as a major achievement enabled by God. The picture was liked by 135 people and commented on by 15. The comments range from congratulations in words or using emojis (clapping hands, emoji with heart eyes), a recommendation to visit the #benzmuseum in Stuttgart or prayers to arrive safely. One commented "Yes it has always been 100" as a direct answer to Kevin's comment. The comment "On the promised land already [emoji of raising both hands in celebration]" points to the often religiously interpreted journey to a kind of holy land.

However, not all the refugees posted news of this journey and achievement at the same time. As some of the resettled refugees feared that something could still prevent the journey, they refrained from posting. As Glory told me, he observed a cultural difference in posting the events of resettlement. He has two friends, one from South Sudan and the other from Rwanda, who got resettlement at the same time. The one from South Sudan posted his journey as a live event with pictures of his boarding card and the itinerary map from the plane and a funny map of the airport in Qatar. The Rwandan friend first posted pictures 21 hours later after they had already arrived. As my contact told me, his Rwandan friend

> […] was not at ease revealing his information as fast as [his friend] were. This may be due to cultural expectations as people from the Great Lakes prefer keep their resettlement matters secret because they believe that bad people can influence their luck (Glory 2021).

The examples show how resettlement is presented online as a success story and major journey in life and embedded in local beliefs and discourses on success and failure, mistrust and envy (see Jansen 2008; Horst 2006a, b).

The Arrival: Digital commentaries on their new homes

The first cohort of refugees resettled to Germany arrived at the reception center in a small town in Eastern Germany in mid-September. Soon thereafter, I received WhatsApp messages from my contacts informing me about their arrival. Benjamin sent me a message saying: "Hello, yesterday at 8:00 am we landed in […] state where we will be for 14days quarantine". Further, he sent two pictures of him standing in front of the reception center. The picture shows a big, white, modern 5-storey building. On the pictures, Benjamin is smiling happily and proud of having made it to Germany. He then told me about another Covid-19 test they had to do before they were allowed to move around the small town. But Benjamin and his family had to realize soon that not everything worked well in Germany's refugee reception. While telling a friend in Kakuma, who I also know, that the bad food was a big issue, he would tell me that he had no complaints, and everything was fine. Possible explanations are that he either did not trust me enough or did not want to complain to a German. As soon as he knew to which state he was

transferred, he would tell me and inquire about if it was a good state. But when they brought the family to a shared facility in another city, he was confused and asked to call me for help. As he told me very anxiously on the telephone, since they had arrived in the new home in the late evening, they were not given any food, drinks or money and did not know what to do. When I called the management of the facility, the person told me that he was not responsible for their board nor their social money, and that they should address their "fellow Africans" for help. As the job center responsible for the payment of social money was already closed for the weekend, Benjamin and his family had to rely on other refugees' assistance. When I visited them some weeks later in the shared facility, I realized how disillusioned they must have been. The home was a rundown site of a former preschool in a quite marginalized and hidden area in one of the suburbs of the city. As a family of four, they had to share one room. Like in the refugee camp, they had to be inventive and used a sheet to divide the room into two spaces. At least now they had electricity, a heater and a fridge. A Nigerian woman in the home and the church community helped them with food and advice. They only received their social money 3 weeks after their arrival and now had to wait for the language courses as well as finding a flat.

Similarly, Kevin had sent me a picture in front of the reception center in the small town in Eastern Germany after his arrival. As the messages conveyed, he soon started to explore his new place to stay. He posted a picture of an acorn and videos from a bicycle trip with his friend through the forests nearby. The pictures and videos gave the impression of him being happy and enjoying his first days and weeks in Germany. After two weeks, Kevin was transferred to a major town in one of the southern states of Germany, but at this time did not know if he would be staying there. He was finally transferred to a very small town in one of the federal states. While en route on the bus, he proudly posted a video about heading to this place. He also commented ironically on a possible future while filming a very posh electric car riding beside the bus, writing "#One day". But soon, his posts and messages conveyed a change of mood. He posted pictures of himself lonely in his apartment, doing exercise, cooking or just hanging around. The only social post was a picture taken with a Russian neighbor he had met. When I visited him, he was living in a shared facility in a very small room, while in the winter it was grey and cold outside. German bureaucracy still prevented him from taking part in language courses or work. According to the residence obligation he is obliged to take residence in the local district for three years. Being used to his big social network, work and leisure activities in Kakuma, he felt bored and isolated in the small German town. His smartphone, laptop and social media platforms now were the only means to carry on his usual social and professional activities within his social networks as well as trying to navigate his new life in Germany.

Conclusion

Resettlement, besides repatriation and local integration, is regarded by the UNHCR as one of the three durable solutions for refugees. But as resettlement programs are dependent on certain countries' willingness and restricted to a certain target group as well as certain numbers of people to be resettled, only less than one percentage of refugees take part in resettlement programs (UNHCR 2021). For people living in refugee camps in the Global South, resettlement is the

ultimate dream as it means getting the chance to start a new, good and secure life in the respective host countries of the Global North.

Communication and media have always played a crucial role in resettlement. While until the early/mid 2000s people were literally separated by resettlement and communication with relatives and friends abroad was either impossible or very difficult, the digital revolution with mobile phones and smartphones has hugely transformed resettlement. Not only do resettled refugees and the family and friends left behind stay in contact and regularly communicate with each other. Also, those left behind can obtain more reliable proof of their new life abroad. Resettled refugees do report and digitally reflect on their journeys, arrival and new life in the host country via mobile phone and the internet, as well as on their former life back in the camp.

As shown in this paper, for people living in Kakuma Refugee Camp, the dream of resettlement can accompany them their whole lives. Resettlement has a huge influence not only for the resettled people, but also for those staying behind. Moreover, it has considerable effects on the economy, sociality and on individuals living in the camp. Resettlement is heard, seen and felt and raises many emotions. And, as shown, the sudden launch of resettlement programs leads to discourses, rumors and envy among camp residents.

The examples above tell us about the Kakuma refugees' experience of resettlement from the time they are selected, before and during their journey as well as after they have arrived in the host countries. They show refugees' knowledge and discourses of the process of resettlement, of receiving countries, through which they make sense of the resettlement process. Refugees vividly communicate and comment on their resettlement via mobile phone and social media. Moreover, as they also post about their past life in Kakuma, they also tell us about how they remember and miss "home" and keep up with their social networks in the camp. These messages not only reveal how refugees feel and experience resettlement, but also that it is a matter of individuality, cultural practices and trust regarding what is communicated and posted, when and to whom. Texts, pictures and videos are carefully selected, edited and presented in the way resettled people want to be seen.

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