8 ‘Go fund me’

LGBTI asylum seekers in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

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Introduction: coming to Kenya

In an interview with world-famous artist Wolfgang Tillmans for *Vice* in 2019, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI)¹ refugees in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya were asked a series of questions about what would help their community, what resources might be provided and what actions or strategies might assist them. Their responses to every question seem to be directed towards a global audience: they are most strikingly comprised of a repeated and singular emphasis on the need for resettlement.

J: Resettlement to countries that recognise the rights of LGBTI people is all that would help.

R: We are still failing to convince Africans to accept LGBTI people. The UN’s hands are tied when it comes to finding security for us, or resettlement, but it’s trying to do everything it can. We can speak through people like you, people who come and listen to us, we can make noise in foreign countries and hopefully change minds.

(Tillmans, 2019)

Established in 1992, Kakuma is located in north-western Kenya, near the Kenya–Sudan border in the semi-arid desert environment. Not only is Kakuma near the Sudanese border, but – as pointed out by the camp’s LGBTI residents, many of whom are Ugandan – it is also nearer to Uganda than it is to Kenya’s capital, Nairobi (Mbaziira, 2018). Comprised of Kakuma 1, 2, 3 and 4, the camp has an estimated population of 180,000 people. The governance of the camp, along with humanitarian aid, is administered by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Due to restrictions on refugee movement, the overall arid environment, the distance from Nairobi and the lack of available employment, the population of the camp is almost entirely reliant on aid for survival. Since the 2013 passage of Uganda’s now infamous Anti-Homosexuality Bill (AHB), the number of African LGBTI people on the move and seeking sanctuary has increased.² Given it contains one of the five largest UNHCR-mandated operations in

the world, of which Kakuma is a part, Kenya has long been a hub for refugees and asylum seekers in the region (Garlick et al., 2015: p. 97). Although homosexuality remains criminalised within Kenya's borders, these refugees and asylum seekers have, since 2013, increasingly included LGBTI people from the region. This is largely due to a somewhat peculiar role played by the UNHCR, which has run what we might understand as a parallel legal regime within the country (Nanima, 2017) – one in which they provide legal protection to those the Kenyan state criminalises, or considers illegal: LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers.

Given this tenuous legal position, resettlement has been the only durable solution available to LGBTI refugees in Kenya. Utilised in situations where there is a special need for protection, resettlement is defined as: 'the transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them "as refugees" with permanent residence status' (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.). It is an extraordinary experience of spatial and temporal uncertainty, marked by the not knowing when (and if) departure might take place and where one might end up. In her work Nadia El-Shaarawi (2015: p. 39) describes this temporal and spatial uncertainty as a type of suspension, being 'stuck between places and between past and possible future lives.' This uncertainty is coupled with, following Bissell (2007) and Rotter (2016), what I propose is the event of waiting or a waiting event – an event-to-come which necessitates and brings about the 'experience of waiting' (Bissell, 2007: p. 282). In such waiting events 'the individual plays a small part and exercises limited control in complex, interdependent processes' (Rotter, 2016: p. 80). For refugees, resettlement is a complex lottery where vulnerability remains a key comparative that sets some groups, as more vulnerable, apart from and therefore more in need, than others. The places made available for resettlement are few and the numbers of refugees are many. Given the 'kaleidoscopic nature of subjectivities,' Bissell (2007: p. 278) entreats us to pay particular attention to the spatial and temporal enmeshments of waiting experienced within specific mobilities.

Almost as soon as LGBTI refugees entered Kakuma, a series of fundraising campaigns started by LGBTI refugees calling themselves 'Refugee Flag Kakuma' on the donation-based platform *GoFundMe*, with titles like 'HELP LGBTI REFUGEES IN KAKUMA,' began to circulate online (Mbaziira, 2017). *GoFundMe* pages are of a standard format, comprised of a title banner such as 'HELP LGBTI REFUGEES IN KAKUMA CAMP,' under which appears an image or a set of images specific to the campaign, a share counter indicating the number of times the campaign has been posted on social media, followed by a description of the campaign and its leaders. To the right of this information, adjacent to the images, appears a blue cash bar indicating donations made towards the goal set by the campaign (although money can be withdrawn without reaching said goal). Below the cash bar are the names of donors and at the very bottom of the page any messages

from donors. These Internet campaigns called on countries, groups and individuals in the Global North for assistance, and, crucially, accelerating the resettlement process from not just Kenya but, specifically, from Kakuma.

In this chapter I provide a close reading of several of these online campaigns, considering the framing of their calls in relation to the supportive commentary from donors and the work of the temporal markers of the donation bar. I argue that for those who are both criminalised and paradoxically legally protected in Kenya – LGBTI refugees – these online campaigns, by their very nature as active platforms of engagement, transform what Aren Azuira (2018) might call the ‘temporal suspension’ of this waiting event. This chapter explores what these digital campaigns, in their global circulation via the Internet, can tell us about the ‘temporal and spatial enmeshments’ of waiting for resettlement as an event from within Kakuma for LGBTI refugees. I suggest that LGBTI refugees’ prolific self-publication and use of *GoFundMe* projected from the waiting space of the camp, specifically counters some of the adverse spatial logic of refugee camps. In reaching out to a perceived global public beyond the confines of the camp, LGBTI refugees appeal directly to a donor public who might witness both their existence and their waiting time thereby crafting a temporality online. This access to the virtual means that they are not solely confined to the physical space of the refugee camp but are actively projecting themselves into their future goal of resettlement thereby transforming the experience of waiting in their present.

Refugees in Kenya

In 1991, the Kenyan refugee system faced a total crisis and eventual collapse when the war in Somalia, in combination with the arrival of ‘The Lost Boys of Sudan,’ stretched to breaking point a structure based on processes of individual case determination overseen by the Kenyan government and not designed to deal with an unexpected influx of large numbers of people.³ To secure resources necessary to address this situation, the Kenyan government accepted the assistance and guidance of the UNHCR and set aside land that would soon be partitioned into camps, among these is Kakuma Refugee Camp (Verdirame, 1999). The UNHCR then contracted non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as implementing partners, to assist with the provision of basic necessities in these camps which, as a response to an emergency situation, were to act as temporary shelters. At the same time, all camps and status determination came under the administration of the UNHCR. Along with the establishment of the camps came the legal requirement, described by Guglielmo Verdirame (1999: p. 6) as ‘bureaucratic jargon of the post-1991 refugee regime in Kenya.’ This demanded that ‘refugees *have* to reside in camps until a durable solution is found’ (Verdirame 1999: p. 6). From this moment on, the government began to understand Kenya’s role as a ‘transit country where refugees are allowed to remain provided that they receive assistance from the UNHCR in the camps’

(Verdirame, 1999: p. 7). The structure of the refugee regime in Kenya is such that refugees' ability to participate in broader society is limited. In addition to being encamped, refugees have no right to work in the formal sector and no access to social services. Camps attract international assistance (Crisp & Jacobsen, 1998: p. 28), and the provision of international aid allows the Kenyan state to ensure that its own resources and benefits remain focused on Kenyan citizens. To this end, the government provides little assistance in terms of humanitarian aid – and the encampment policy provides little incentive to do so.

The Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) is the bureaucratic department within the Kenyan government, which deals with refugee issues. Strategically, it is actively separated from all other spheres of government in order to ensure that the refugee regime is cordoned off from the immigration system and other arms of the state, by extension thus also keeping perceived financial burdens separate from financial possibilities. This separation is critical on another count: there are no explicit protections relating to gender identity or sexual orientation in Kenya's 2010 constitution and, furthermore, the Kenyan Penal Code actively criminalises LGBTI people, carrying a 14-year sentence for sodomy and a 5-year sentence for 'sexual practices between males' termed 'gross indecency'.⁴ Kenya, much like its neighbours, has been known to use these laws to actively harass and arbitrarily detain Kenyan LGBTI individuals (Zomorodi, 2016: p. 92). In terms of societal homophobic attitudes, Kenya differs little from Uganda and indeed many of its neighbours. The 2013 Pew Survey, for example, noted that 96% of Ugandans and 90% of Kenyans questioned do not believe society should accept homosexuality (Pew Research Center, 2013).

The first visible group to move across the border from Uganda into Kenya arrived at the UNHCR offices on 11 March 2014 (Wesangula, 2017). Because they were the first to arrive in Kenya following the passage of the AHB, and because of the illegality of same-sex sexual activity in Kenya, these 23 LGBTI Ugandans were treated as exceptional cases. Asylum seekers in Kenya usually wait for months to be notified whether they qualify for official refugee status, and then several more years for consultations on the possibility of resettlement. In this particular case, however, the UNHCR decided to fast-track the group's claims while providing them with special protection, safe housing and financial support: an almost unprecedented level of support and attention. That the group's housing in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, was funded by the UNHCR for the duration of their stay indicates an acknowledgement, on the part of the latter, that the standard practice of waiting for resettlement in Kakuma Refugee Camp would put the group's lives at risk – their ability to remain outside the camp, meanwhile, was dependent on the ongoing lax enforcement of the Kenyan law requiring all refugees to live in the camps (Kushner, 2016). At that point, it was not yet known what long-term impact the AHB would have on movement and migration in the region.

At the time of the arrival of the first group of LGBTI refugees, Kenyan men who were assumed to be gay were being forced by the legal system to undergo anal examinations (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Given this, we might wonder why the Kenyan state would allow, or at the very least ignore, the presence of LGBTI people seeking asylum from its neighbour. The DRA, as a cordoned-off entity, allows the Kenyan state to recognise the refugee status of LGBTI people – through the UNHCR and under its international obligation ratified in the country's Refugee Act – without directly recognising the rights of LGBTI people. Moreover, as Marijke Kremin (2017) argues, because resettlement has from the outset been the proposed option, the Kenyan government has been more willing to turn a blind eye. In essence:

Its robust resettlement program, with an emphasis on expedited resettlement for LGBTI means that the government and local communities are not as concerned with the lasting cultural impact of recognising people as refugees on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

(Kremin, 2017: p. 68)

Following the reintroduction of Uganda's AHB in November 2014, the numbers of LGBTI Ugandans seeking safety began to rise, so much so as to be considered a visible population group seeking asylum in Kenya (Zomorodi, 2015: p. 12). This increase in movement coincided with two distinct occurrences. The first was a belief on the part of LGBTI refugees in Kenya, that resettlement would be swift, given the tenuous nature of their legal right to be in Kenya as LGBTI people (criminalised by the Kenyan state) *and* as refugees (protected by the UNHCR). This belief was fuelled by rumours of housing, a stipend and fast-track processing. According to Gita Zomorodi (2015: pp. 13–14), one new arrival to Kenya in February 2015 stated that they only expected to 'be in Kenya for three months and be resettled to the West.' The second, distinct occurrence was the Kenyan state's implementation of 'Operation Usalama Watch,' which drastically shifted conditions of reception and possibility for refugees within the country. The arrival of larger groups of LGBTI people seeking asylum coincided with increased fears, within Kenya, relating to terrorism and, in particular, the terrorist group al Shabaab. In response to these fears, the Kenyan state issued a strict directive requiring all refugees in Kenya to move back to the camps – in essence, reissuing the government's encampment policy making it illegal for refugees to live outside of designated camp areas (Millo, 2013: p. 16).⁵ The majority of LGBTI refugees in the country were remanded to Kakuma.

Encampment and discretion

Kakuma authorities usually give refugees construction materials to build their own houses (Kushner, 2016). In an effort to protect the LGBTI arrivals

from the almost immediate hostility of other refugees in the camp, the UNCHR set the group up with a plot of land and worked with a partner organisation to construct a set of small huts for them to reside in. A makeshift border was created around the compound with thorny shrubs; it is unclear if this was to keep the LGBTI refugees in, or the threatening elements of the wider refugee population out. And, presumably in order to further limit interactions with other refugees, a tap with running water was placed near the enclosed area. All of this was largely unheard-of treatment. The UNHCR explicitly intended to assist the group in acclimating to the camp while causing the least amount of upheaval for both LGBTI refugees and the camp's already existing population (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019: p. 3). This was a space created with the protection of the group in mind, a space constructed with the express intention of having LGBTI refugees await resettlement while encamped within it.

The designers of this solution thus obviously hoped that being cordoned-off, the LGBTI group might be better able to remain inconspicuous. Since the arrival of LGBTI people in the camp, however, there have been numerous incidences of reported violence and targeted harassment. In response to this, LGBTI members of the camp mounted protests while accusing both the police and the UNHCR of negligence, incompetency and abuse. Meanwhile, handwritten signs appeared periodically around the camp, stating, for example – 'If you don't leave the camp, we are going to kill you one by one, and we mean it. Enough is enough' (Power, 2018b). The former director of resettlements for the UNHCR, Inge De Langhe, noted in a 2015 interview that, as an organisation, the UNHCR simply did not 'have the capacity to protect each and every individual' (Kushner, 2015). Instead, she stressed that it would be best if those LGBTI people encamped within the camp maintained a certain level of discreetness while waiting for resettlement (Kushner, 2015). A controversial request, discretion has often been used historically as a basis to reject asylum claims, due to the belief that persecution can be avoided if an applicant would only hide or conceal their sexual or gender identity (Spijkerboer & Jansen, 2011: p. 13).

Refugee camps like Kakuma are a particular spatial and temporal manifestation. They are bounded entities, existing somewhere between the temporary and the permanent (Turner, 2015: p. 140), which do not appear on the official maps of countries (Agier, 2008: p. 44). In this sense they occupy space – they are spatial configurations – but remain sites hidden from view; they are, in a sense, non-places. For Michel Agier, those within camps become agglomerated, via administrative labels such as 'refugee,' into a homogeneous whole representative of the non-place (Agier, 2017). Lisa Malkki (1992) argues that camps impose 'refugeeness,' a term which she posits 'denotes an objectified, undifferentiated mass' (p. 34). She proposes that the ways standardised discursive and representational forms are used to discuss refugees and the 'refugee problem' have made their way in mainstream journalism, and media have had far-reaching, cross-border implications for refugees

globally, including ‘the systematic, even if unintended, silencing of persons who find themselves in the classificatory space of “refugees”’ (Malkki 1996: p. 386). Furthermore, she suggests that when refugees become objects of care to organisations, such as the UNHCR, they essentially enter into an ‘anonymous corporeality and speechlessness’ (Malkki, 1996: p. 386).

Indeed, camps in their ‘temporal and spatial architectures’ (Keshavarz, 2016: p. 239) are such that, though intended to do otherwise, they actually impede rather than foster human rights by ‘limiting, controlling and regulating the life of undesirables’ (Keshavarz, 2016: p. 239). For Svetlana Sytnik this is built into the very nature of the camp and ensures that as an undifferentiated mass, whose time in this non-place becomes one of protracted waiting, the only human right that refugees eventually find themselves left with is a right to life (Sytnik, 2012: p. 26). Those living in camps, classified as refugees, thus find themselves in a perpetual waiting for resettlement, return or host country integration. Camps are not built with the intention of being a permanent solution; rather, they are explicitly designed as temporary waiting spaces. This is the main reason they remain unmarked on maps – they are not meant to stay. Yet, though they are treated as temporary solutions, increasingly, refugee camps are becoming permanent fixtures (Mohdin, 2015). According to statistics, the ‘average duration’ in waiting ‘is now well over twenty years’ (Do & Devictor, 2016).⁶ This waiting, in the camp specifically, as a site of restricted spatial ability, can also according to Rotter (2016: p. 89) facilitate ‘a sense of suspension of movement in time.’ Camps then can be understood both in their spatial manifestation as non-places and their temporal construction as waiting zones, as indicative of a kind of suspension.

It is arguable that, encamped within the camp, LGBTI refugees became the undesirable of undesirables. In relation to Kakuma, Jansen (2008: p. 570) argues that when they are unable to access available humanitarian structures, refugees who are considered vulnerable are overlooked. The request for LGBTI people to practice discretion and concealment can be understood as an expectation that they actively enter the camp’s structure of ‘anonymous corporeality and speechlessness’ (Malkki, 1996: p. 386). The UNHCR is clear in its guidelines that discretion should never be a requirement in the process of asylum (UNHCR, 2012). Since discretion entails blending into the masses, coupled, in this instance, with the very real possibility of being subsumed into the forgotten space of the camp, many could not acquiesce and many more actively refused (Kushner, 2015). Seemingly paradoxically, by corralling LGBTI people in a singular area, this encampment rendered the group increasingly visible to threatening elements of the camp. At the same time, this encampment increased their vulnerability to broader invisibility, as just another group of vulnerable refugees, waiting in Kakuma. As one refugee explained, to be discrete would be to become ‘invisible, as if you cease to exist ... you know we need the visibility so much because if you’re just there ... [in the camp] ... you’re just there no one knows

anything that is happening here' (Camminga, 2020). When one ceases to exist while waiting, suspended between resettlement and nowhere, as one among the masses, in a 'radically disparate' system such as resettlement, one runs the risk of a wait without end.

Go and fund me!

Aren Aizura (2018: p. 20) argues that occupants of a space designated for waiting can 'push on the space and invent temporalities that refuse the suspension of waiting.' As LGBTI refugees entered Kakuma, campaigns started to appear online, aiming to raise money for food, medication, clothing and other emergency items while consistently underlining that these were needs to be provided for in having to wait for resettlement. Based in the USA, *GoFundMe* is the largest crowdfunding platform on the Internet, generating as much as \$140 million a month in donations – what Ainsley Harris, in a review of the company, calls 'flickers of hope – in the form of digital payments' (Harris, 2017). *GoFundMe* is described by its CEO as a 'digital safety net – with more than 25 million donors eagerly holding it up' (Harris, 2017). Visitors to a campaign page are given three options: Donate, share on Facebook or tweet. Automated emails acknowledging donations encourage donors to share the campaign 'by telling people how much their promotion could be worth, in dollar terms, based on analyses of past campaigns' (Harris, 2017). Campaigns are monitored for interesting content or for spikes in donations. These are then pitched as stories to news media in the US, including popular digital media outlets such as *BuzzFeed* (Harris, 2017). The platform has been praised for 'democratising help – with a few clicks a person can now mobilise their family, friends, community and even the world to help anyone, anywhere' (Solomon, 2016). This geographical dispersion of investors is considered one of the platform's most 'striking characteristics' (Agrawal et al., 2010: p. 1).

The key to crowdfunding on *GoFundMe* is creating a campaign, telling a story, providing photos and sharing it widely. Campaigns 'walk a careful line between revealing an extremely vulnerable situation [...] and indicating the worth of the person or people in need' (Paulus & Roberts, 2018: p. 66). In a narrative analysis of *GoFundMe* campaigns, Paulus and Roberts note that actual requests for funds typically emerge as secondary to the discursive tactics used to 'manage identity and present the person in need, and situation, as worthy of support' (Paulus & Roberts, 2018: pp. 66–67). According to Paulus and Roberts, the biggest contribution of sites like *GoFundMe* are, perhaps surprisingly, not their financial possibilities but their ability to emphasise and bring attention to personal struggles, which may otherwise would have remained unknown or invisible (Paulus & Roberts, 2018: p. 70). Donations are, relatedly, empathy-based, offering no 'perk' beyond the purely affective. The 'Tell your story' section of a *GoFundMe* page is where campaign creators are expected to explain the reason for these campaigns.

Here, LGBTI refugees virtually project their needs and experiences of waiting as an event in relation to resettlement. For instance, the ‘7 LGBTs need to raise the roof’ campaign:

Please help the Kakuma 7 build the plastic housing the UN cannot provide. These donations will build the new shelters and leftover money will be reputable over the counter medicine for common camp ailments like diarrhoea (sic) and headaches [...] Every human deserves a safe, secured, dry place to sleep. Until the Kakuma 7 can travel to their American Dream, let's be the ones who send it to them.

(Mbaziira, 2017)

Across campaigns, then, the core call is a virtual projection of the needs and experiences of waiting while consistently underlining the necessity for resettlement. Crucially, as evidenced by ‘*their American Dream*,’ this is an investment in a future horizon where the needs of having to wait, which make explicit the event of waiting in the present, are investments in survival until that future moment. In another campaign entitled ‘We Stand with LGBT refugees,’ the campaigns creator explains:

I am humbly begging for funds for shelter, medication, and food for myself as well as my brothers and sisters here at the center (there are 5 of us). This fundraising goal will help us sustain ourselves for two months. We all hope and pray for the day where we are resettled and have a chance at a future where we are able to love our selves (sic) and each other.

(McGaughey, 2019)

These campaigns through their ‘share counters,’ indicating the number of times the campaign is shared across social media, and rising bar of donations, indicating cash donations given, can therefore be understood as active markers of this waiting time. Indicators such as ‘help us sustain ourselves for two months,’ when they appear alongside the rising cash bar, act as temporal markers of need. Moreover, the engagement by campaigners suggests a kind of active waiting, one which is projected into the future space of the ‘American Dream,’ a time where campaigners might be able ‘to love our selves and each other.’ The engagement in the form of donations and the subsequent messages from donors, which often accompany donations, help to cultivate connection beyond the physical space of the camp. Donors’ messages include such statements as: ‘We are all a family, global and we need to stick together’ (sic) (Patton et al., 2019); ‘please stay strong and know you have people thinking of you!’ (Dumford, 2018); and – ‘Queer solidarity from the UK. You deserve a home. You deserve to have your humanity recognised and celebrated. You deserve to feel safe’ (McGaughey, 2019). These campaigns refuse suspension by actively and intentionally bringing to life

the contours of the waiting event via the Internet (Bissell, 2007). It informs a would-be audience for the needs of which this waiting is comprised in relation to their particular subjectivities, as LGBTI people, and their desired mobility, a desire for resettlement.

Those interviewed on various media platforms also punted their funding pages. In Tillmans' (2019) interview, for instance, Refugee Flag Kakuma, an LGBTI organisation established in direct response to their encampment within the camp called on readers to visit their Facebook-linked *GoFundMe* page and make contributions should they feel 'sympathetic enough' (Tillmans, 2019). According to Bram J. Jansen, 'representing vulnerability and using identity to negotiate access to opportunities is the essential resource for refugees, because many other resources are lacking' (Jansen, 2008). Vulnerability, which is a precondition of resettlement, is also a critical resource on the Internet. The very names of these campaigns – for example, 'HELP LGBTQ+ REFUGEES IN KENYA' (Bossa, 2017), 'Uganda LGBT Refugee Assistance Fund' (Wood, 2018), 'LGBT Refugee Emergency Safe Shelter' (Nathan, 2018), 'Help LGBT in Kakuma Refugee Camp' (Mariadas, 2018), 'LGBTI Refugee Coalition in Kenya' (Clark, 2018), '7 LGBT refugees need to raise a roof' (Borden, 2018) – consistently mark the connection between geographical regions (Kenya or Kakuma, or both) and the acronym 'LGBTI.' The latter is invested in as an indicator of the group's vulnerability and difference from other refugees, and, by extension, their needs.

These campaigns map life in Kakuma often in the very way in which they are titled, for instance 'Help LGBT in Kakuma Refugee Camp' (Mariadas, 2018). They transform the non-place of the camp, and the suspended experience that is the event of waiting for resettlement, by making their waiting, themselves and the camp, visible to a global public, and thus countering the precarious position of encampment within the camp. Lastly, and perhaps most critically, the online campaigns are used as a way to restructure time by informing the world of the duration of their waiting, the temporal flow of which is marked not by the ticking away of 'clock time,' but by the rise of the money or donation bar and the increase in the number of 'shares' on social media a campaign garners. It is less about the actual marking of the bar climbing upwards in value than it is about the ticking over of both financial investment and social media interest of a readership that is global, already waiting in the future time and space of resettlement. This crowd of readers and donors thus becomes a veritable lifeline beyond the camp and encampment. These campaigns can consequently be read as a direct refusal of discrete waiting; one which is not only a structuring experience of time but an event that has material effects. Centrally, it brings their plight to a global public, which, given the tenuous legal position of the relevant groups, would have remained largely unaware of the experiences of LGBTI refugees in a country that does not recognise LGBTI people, without the power of the Internet.

A Google search of ‘LGBT refugee Kakuma Kenya’ yields 42,800 results spanning funding sites, articles, books and reports. The Internet is synonymous with visibility. Due to ongoing criminalisation in combination with particular religious and cultural beliefs, the visibility of the LGBTI population in Kenya creates social tension. It is often the case that this tension leads to challenge and persecution. Zomorodi (2015: p. 13) reports that these crowdfunding initiatives raised more than \$125,000, seemingly redistributed to LGBTI refugees in Kenya, although this is difficult to verify. The campaigns brought to a global audience what we might, following Aizura (2018), describe as the ‘temporal suspension’ of being both criminalised and legally protected as a recognised refugee waiting in Kakuma for resettlement. The campaigns constitute a refusal to inhabit this suspension. A refusal to remain discrete and fade into the fabric of the camp.

This is not to say that actual experiences of the time of waiting are not tedious or, as some refugees have stated, ‘unfulfilled...useless, oppressive even’ (Nusbaum, 2016). Much like trans people’s use of crowdfunding websites to seek funds to assist with affirming healthcare, as discussed by Megan Farnel (2015), it would seem that calls for assistance by LGBTI refugees in Kakuma create conditions under which groups who are not refugees, primarily based in the Global North, ‘are deemed not only capable, but righteously able to define life and life-saving’ for these population groups (Farnel, 2015: p. 12). One of the appeals of crowdfunding is the degree of agency it gives to individuals. LGBTI refugees punctuate the time of waiting with stories of displacement, turning their vulnerability, their waiting, into a media event on a global platform.

Conclusion: the virtual and the real

Camps like Kakuma, which the UNHCR runs as protected spaces, fade into a kind of obscurity within their host countries (Verdirame, 1999: p. 18). Though they might be diverse internally, within the context of the host country those in the camp become a singular assemblage – ‘refugees.’ This can make differentiated protection needs extremely difficult to manage. The situation in Kakuma for LGBTI people is such that the request for their concealment and discretion alongside their particular encampment within the camp suggests that they should simply assimilate into the ‘objectified, undifferentiated mass’ (Malkki, 1992: p. 34). In requesting funding from a public located outside of the camp and particularly in the Global North, LGBTI refugees not only refused invisibility they also put Kakuma on the map. In doing so, they garnered interest from a foreign media, of which Tillmans’ article is but one example, telling their stories of waiting in the camp (see Kushner, 2015; Buchanan, 2016; Paperny, 2018). Tillmans’ article, which opened this chapter, can be understood as indicative of the reach and scope of these campaigns. Tillmans, a world-famous artist and contemporary photographer whose work adorns the walls of museums, galleries and

night-clubs such as the famous Berghain in Berlin, is not generally known for being a journalist. His article nevertheless featured across several widely read mainstream digital media platforms including *Vice* and *I-D*. Critically, the article ends with Tillmans' (2019) plea to readers 'To learn more about the situation in the Kakuma Refugee camp and how can you help (sic), please visit the Refugee Flag Kakuma Facebook page.' This plea also includes a request to 'please help spread the word' (Tillmans, 2019). Importantly, Tillmans is not alone. The various *GoFundMe* campaigns have appeared in articles describing life in Kakuma for LGBTI refugees in mainstream news websites such as the Washington Blade (Rosendall, 2018), as well as in more niche LGBTI publications such as MambaOnline in South Africa (Ntsabo, 2018) and the UK-based GayStarNews (Power, 2018a). More broadly, Kenyan LGBTI refugees have received coverage across numerous platforms in the wake of their self-publication through these campaigns (Naluzze, 2018; Bhalla, 2019; Newman, 2019).

These campaigns have arguably brought the spatial structures of encampment to a public beyond the confines of the camp. Had the group acquiesced to discretion it is unclear whether, given the improbability of a group of LGBT refugees claiming asylum in a country that does not acknowledge LGBT people, the wider global public would even be aware of their existence, let alone their needs or their wait for resettlement. Returning to Aizura (2018), the campaigns are in fact constituting a possible donor public defined by a virtual affective relationship to the LGBTI refugees; those situated beyond the fenced bounds of Kakuma who are 'sympathetic enough.' Appeals on *GoFundMe* are both a virtual projection of the LGBTI refugees' desire for a secure future and a refusal to experience their present as a time in which they can only passively wait because they are encamped. Their campaigns request funding for necessities while always directing the focus towards resettlement. In this way, they are a means through which this waiting event, which here distinctively relates to LGBTI people, is made public via its publication on the Internet. They project needs and desires which override the spatial and temporal rhythms that mark camps as non-places and refugees as undifferentiated masses. The very names of these campaigns insist on geographical legibility – 'Kakuma,' 'Kenya.' They also facilitate a temporality, in which the passing of time spent waiting within the space of the camp is measured through need: 'Transport, Accommodation, Food, Medication/Nutrition Supplements, Basic needs/Refreshments, Venue, Emergency Fee' (Patton et al., 2019). This is marked by the rising bar of donations '\$670 raised of \$3,500 goal' and the number of shares, '351' via other social media platforms orientated always towards resettlement: 'Kenya is no safe a place to live in by LGBTI's and all efforts should be made to solicit for more resettlement slots for them to third countries' (Patton et al., 2019). As Paulus and Roberts (2018: p. 65) note, the scaffold provided by *GoFundMe* is, inherently, temporal. It must be stressed here that the point however is not the number of times a campaign is shared but about

achieving active engagement from an interested and financially invested public, 'anonymous' persons who pledged '\$50 9 days ago' living in the future space of possible resettlement. Campaigns function as markers of time spent towards resettlement.

On 11 December 2018, LGBTI refugees in Kakuma staged a public march to the UNHCR offices protesting their insecurity, lack of provisions and the abuse and discrimination they experienced in the camp. En route, they were attacked by several other members of the camp. Some of the LGBTI refugees suggested that police also took part in the attack, although the police denied this accusation. Several protestors were severely injured and had to be hospitalised. In December 2018, following the march and the subsequent attack, the UNHCR began to facilitate a process of moving LGBTI refugees out of the camp, which was no longer considered safe for them, into safe houses on the outskirts of Nairobi (Refugee Coalition of East Africa, 2018). The UNHCR admitted that the LGBTI contingent of the camp would be far safer in and around Nairobi rather than in the camp (Ahmed & Mohan, 2018). In a press statement, a UNHCR spokesperson noted that while the UNHCR had undertaken great efforts to protect LGBTI refugees in the camp, arguing that 'the Kakuma context does not provide a safe environment for LGBTI refugees and asylum-seekers [...] UNHCR believes that the LGBTI refugees who were involved in this incident would be better protected outside Kakuma. The necessary measures have been taken to facilitate their removal' (Bhalla, 2018).

One of the key demands of those encamped, articulated on their placards, was 'quicker resettlement process before we all die in this hostile environment' (Ahmed & Mohan, 2018). If there is one thing that is abundantly clear, it is that a visible contingent of refugees within the camp, as evidenced by the words 'we will kill you one by one,' did not want LGBTI people among them and were emboldened enough to state that openly. Faced with this threat, LGBTI refugees called for assistance beyond the borders of their encampment within the camp, beyond Kakuma and beyond Kenya. That this call was contingent on their visibility as LGBTI required putting consistent energy, even at the expense of their safety within the camp, into LGBTI visibility. This chapter is an outcome of that very visibility work, drawing from the campaigns and by extension the labour of 'LGBTI' as a marker of waiting time on the Internet. Through the campaigns, members of the group define themselves as not only LGBTI but LGBTI *and* refugees *and* waiting. Their campaigns highlighted their time in the camp and put the camp on the map, as a place unwelcoming to them. This was achieved via the signalling done by the request to 'go fund me' alongside the rising money counter on the website, in relation to the visibility work of 'LGBTI' and the mapping of 'Kakuma' online. Returning to Tillmans' interview, the campaigns not only aim to secure a future of resettlement beyond the camp and Kenya but also work to change the temporal structure of the present within the camp. The LGBTI refugees' eventual relocation, the rescinding of their encampment within the

camp, can be read as the fruits of this refusal to merely become part of the waiting, speechless, anonymous, undesirable and undifferentiated masses – the refugees of Kakuma – on the grounds that to do so would be deadly.

Notes

- 1 Campaigns mentioned in this chapter use both 'LGBT' and 'LGBTI' to refer to their members. Where this chapter refers to the name of a campaign or references a particular campaign, I have followed the campaigns choice of acronym in all other cases I have used LGBTI.
- 2 The Anti-Homosexuality Bill (AHB) was ratified by the Ugandan parliament in December 2013, signed into law in 2014 and struck down by the Constitutional Court of Uganda in August 2014.
- 3 In the 1980s, war in Sudan forced young Sudanese children, many of whom were boys, to flee the country, crossing the Savannah desert into neighbouring Ethiopia. In 1991, those same children, an estimated 25,000, were expelled from Ethiopia and fled to Kenya arriving at the Kakuma Refugee Camp seeking shelter and safety (Geltman et al., 2005: p. 586).
- 4 Section 162 of Kenyan Penal Code states that any person who has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature or permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for 14 years; Section 145 of Ugandan Penal Code provides that any person who has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature or permits a male person to have carnal knowledge with him or her against the order of nature commits an offence and is liable to imprisonment for life (The Republic of Kenya, 2009).
- 5 Given the previously lax implementation of Kenya's encampment policy, it is unclear whether this decision simply coincided with the sudden arrival of new LGBTI refugees, or a considered move on the part of the Kenyan state to justify the increased suppression of refugees and asylum seekers at large.
- 6 For a disaggregation of numbers and the difference between median and average, see Do and Devictor (2016).

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