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Building Social Bridges
by entrepreneurial thinking



Role models Germany



„I am not a migrant!“

Kass Kasadi, founder and director of baobab – zusammensein e.V.

My name is Kass Kasadi, born in Congo in 1960. I used to speak 11 languages, now I speak 9. I studied medicine in Congo for two years. We organised demonstrations, then the university was closed. I was flown out of Congo to Angola by the UNHCR. That I came to Germany is a coincidence of history: We wanted to go to Spain, but on the day we went to the embassy, it was bank holidays in Spain and the embassy was closed. The next



embassy was the German embassy, so we went there and got a visa and had to leave on Saturday. So in just 4 days my life changed. We came to Angola from a kidnapping, were freed and then had to leave the country. Germany made this journey possible for me. Germany is my first home. I have lived here longer than in Congo, so I am no longer a migrant. My bond with Germany is more than prosaic, it is a deep passion. I am not a migrant.

The journey

The journey has been very long, very rocky, but also very encouraging, because: every step I have taken has been a gain for society, and also for myself. I started 34 years ago with the commitment to the community and society. I was in language school, then university, graduation, Congo, starting a family and finally at baobab. The work I do is a continuation, call it chameleon. It always changes colour but the animal remains the same.

Overcoming obstacles

I come from the student movement in Congo, then Zaire. That's how I knew that students can organise. In Hanover, I graduated in sociology and linguistics. When I was at university I joined the ASTA (Student Union). That means getting informed, developing a strategy, winning over fellow campaigners or joining in yourself and then asserting yourself. But that's not easy. We are a society that is first of all individual, I have to be the best. And if you're a migrant, it's not easy. Many who were on the way have given up.

Qualities and skills that help

In the case of working with migrants, one big quality is patience. Secondly, selflessness. This selflessness is very important. Thirdly, you also have to be partly driven by the environment. That is the philosophy of baobab. I can sit here as Kass Kasadi, but what I say and do is always corrected, that is, I am shown ways and then I use my qualities.

Tips

First know what he or she wants. Know concretely what one wants and then develop concepts yourself to achieve the goal. Secondly, acquire knowledge, read, learn, ask. We haven't reinvented any wheel at baobab, everything already existed. What we have added to the society is the other point of view. And that is the struggle. You have to have this strength and for this you also need good friends and political commitment. Everything you can find in migration in a positive sense, you have to sniff it out, you have to take a taster course. It's not easy, but it can be done. Thirdly, get away from the cliché. You will rarely see a photo of baobab drumming. These are continuations of the clichés from colonial times. This is what we are fighting against in our work. We have to complement the traditional methods with the perspective of the people concerned. The person seeking advice must be encouraged to do something. Society only lets these people be help-seekers. That is why the word help is not used at baobab.

Networks

Through the 34 years I have a network. Hanover is my city, Lower Saxony too and Bremen anyway. That doesn't mean that everything has become better, but we join in. Surprisingly, the best friends and supporters I had were German. In the early 80s there was no refugee social work like there is today. That was a lot of struggle, so my respect to the many German colleagues who moved with us, to this day. They set me on my path. A great honour.

Making social contacts

What works is a double story. The supporters saw me as someone who needs to be helped. But I don't need help, I just need people to understand that I tick differently and understand my community through me.

What hasn't helped until now is, little empathy, very little empathy. That is the new challenge. Baobab was founded partly because of this, also with the support of political friends who said: "Kass do something yourself". After more than 30 years in this work, I have realised: if we are not self-employed, we will always be driven - especially women.

Entrepreneurial Thinking

The founding of baobab in itself is the implementation of a way of life with the hope that many migrant women in particular will get into work, office work. We are looking for female colleagues who are independent, think for themselves, work independently, develop projects on their own. Who have goals in life and are role models for their own children, their family and also their family in Africa. In particular, their commitment should be a learning process for the so-called dominant society. They should learn that there is another way.

Role models

My mother, from whom I learned patience and hope. My mother, who always fought for us. She didn't go to school and organised a language school for herself and her colleagues. The language courses of baobab come from my mother. That means she is the most important person in my life.

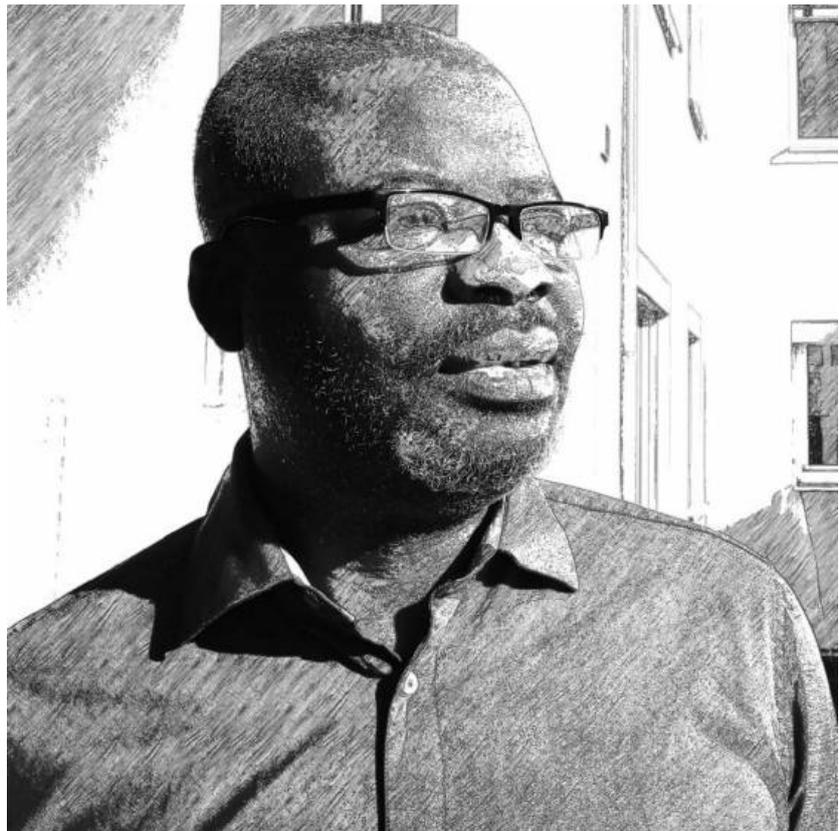
Lumumba, hero of Congo and partly of Africa in the 60s.

My wife. She is a strong support for me until today.

And the Enlightenment as an era. The Enlightenment made me want to fight for freedom even back then in Congo. I joined the liberation movement.

Plans for the future

My plan is to further expand baobab - our network - and to continue networking with colleagues. Maybe to get into the field of publications in the near future. All the work needs to be documented. To have more women in baobab. What we have achieved so far is a lot in its various facets; we need to build on that.



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