Community Sponsorship in Europe: Taking Stock, Policy Transfer and What the Future Might Hold

Nikolas Feith Tan*

Senior Researcher, Danish Institute for Human Rights, Copenhagen, Denmark

This article explores the recent emergence of community sponsorship of refugees in Europe, an approach which shares responsibility between civil society and the state for the admission and/or integration of refugees. Originally a Canadian model developed to support the resettlement of Indochinese refugees, the model has gained momentum in Europe, with a number of states piloting or establishing community sponsorship schemes. This proliferation, while generally seen as positive for international protection of refugees, has led to conceptual confusion and a significant range of approaches under the "umbrella" concept of community sponsorship. As a result, community sponsorship today may be understood both as a form of resettlement and a complementary pathway to protection. While interest and momentum around community sponsorship is high, little work currently exists mapping and analysing how jurisdictions adopt the community sponsorship model. With reference to existing work on policy transfer, this contribution takes stock of community sponsorship models in Europe; analyses how community sponsorship may become a viable policy option in European states as a form of transnational policy transfer; and sets out a number of challenges for the future development of community sponsorship in Europe.

Keywords: refugees, community sponsorship, Europe, responsibility sharing, international protection

INTRODUCTION

Community sponsorship is touted as one of the solutions to the grave global refugee situation as a means to support plummeting resettlement numbers, improve integration and change hearts and minds in Global North asylum states (Bond and Kwadrans, 2019). One of the Global Compact on Refugees' four objectives is expanded access to "third country solutions" through resettlement and complementary pathways, a suite of controlled avenues to refugee admission which includes community sponsorship.[1] In Europe, the fallout of the 2015 migrant and refugee crisis has driven a search for innovative approaches to refugee protection, including significant interest in the development of community sponsorship schemes in European Union (EU) member states.

While the term "community sponsorship" has no uniform definition, the essence of the concept *is shared responsibility* between civil society and the state for the admission and/or integration of

---

[1]Global Compact on Refugees paras 7 and 95. Complementary pathways identified in the Compact are family reunification, private refugee sponsorship, humanitarian visas and labour and educational opportunities for refugees. For a conceptual overview of resettlement and complementary pathways, see Garnier and Hashimoto in this special issue.

refugees (European Commission, 2018, 37). Community sponsorship has been described as "programmes where individuals or groups of individuals come together to provide financial, emotional and practical support toward reception and integration" of refugees (UNHCR, 2019a, 8).[2] While there is no substantive difference between the terms, the Canadian approach is often referred to as "private sponsorship," while "community sponsorship" is usually used in European countries, possibly to avoid negative connoations associated with privatisation of public functions.

Community sponsorship originated in Canada 40 years ago and has led to the resettlement of more than 327,000 refugees in that country (Bond and Kwadrans, 2019). A rich level of scholarship on the Canadian model now exists,[3] covering the risks and opportunities posed by the private-public nature of community sponsorship, the principle of additionality (Labman, 2016; Hyndman et al., 2017; Ritchie, 2018), integration outcomes for sponsored refugees (Hynie et al., 2019; Kaida et al., 2020), the profile and experiences of sponsors (Macklin et al., 2018), and the exportability of the Canadian model to other jurisdictions (Kumin, 2015; Lenard, 2016; Ugland, 2018).

This contribution joins recent scholarly interest in "active" refugee admission policies by honing in on the rapid development of community sponsorship models in Europe (Welfens et al., 2019). In recent years, programmes have been piloted or established in Germany, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom. At the first Global Refugee Forum, held in December 2019, Belgium, Malta and Portugal pledged to explore pilot community sponsorship models (UNHCR, 2020). Broader interest in community sponsorship is reflected in a 2018 European Commission feasibility study (European Commission, 2018) and individual scoping studies undertaken in Denmark (Tan, 2019), France (European Resettlement Network, 2018) and Sweden (Tan, 2020).

This contribution addresses three primary questions. First, it seeks to define the concept of community sponsorship as it is currently practiced and suggests a number of elements fundamental to the concept. While this analysis includes a mapping of current community sponsorship models in Europe, it also includes a normative claim to maintain the focus on community sponsorship on providing refugee protection. Second, as little work currently exists mapping and analysing how jurisdictions adopt community sponsorship models (see, exceptionally, Fratzke, 2017; Bertram et al., 2020), this paper investigates how the recent emergence of community sponsorship in Europe can inform policy transfer in new jurisdictions. The paper uses the literature on transnational policy transfer to understand how to assess the uptake (or not) of community sponsorship models in new European

jurisdictions. The contribution is thus interested in which conditions or factors render the uptake of community sponsorship models more or less likely. Finally, the paper identifies a number of legal and policy challenges facing the future development of community sponsorship in Europe.

This contribution proceeds in five sections. First, the article defines the concept of community sponsorship as both a form of resettlement and a complementary pathway, its broad scope thus offering flexibility but also potential confusion. Second, the article grounds the discussion within policy transfer literature, outlining how community sponsorship has rapidly emerged as an example of transnational policy transfer. Third, it takes stock of community sponsorship models in Europe, tracing the emergence of pilot and permanent models since 2015. Fourth, the article analyses how community sponsorship may become a viable policy option in other European states, as a form of transnational policy transfer. Finally, the article looks to what the future may hold in the development of community sponsorship models in Europe.

DEFINING COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP

From the outset, it is worth defining community sponsorship as precisely as possible, as the concept has been "rather ill-defined" (European Commission, 2018, 1) and is best understood as an "umbrella" term encompassing several different modalities (Hueck, 2019). This section firstly demonstrates how community sponsorship models straddle the categories of resettlement and complementary pathway, before setting out several core elements of the concept.

Between Resettlement and Complementary Pathway

Conceptually, community sponsorship may be understood as both a form of resettlement or a complementary pathway. Community sponsorship models that involve civil society-led *admission and integration* of asylum seekers and refugees create a standalone complementary pathway. Where community sponsorship involves the entry and protection of "named" refugees pathway for specific individuals is created independent of other channels to admission (UNHCR, 2019a, 8). Such programmes are firmly separated from state-run resettlement as an "initiative by private associations with recognized expertise in the field to provide for an alternative, legal, and safe pathway" (Ricci, 2020, 273). The Humanitarian Corridors model pioneered in Italy, discussed below, is a classic example of community sponsorship as complementary pathway. Community sponsorship may also form a complementary pathway for the purposes of family reunification, but this strand is not the focus of this paper as it is not explicitly protection-focused.

In contrast, resettlement is one of the three internationally-recognised durable solutions and a discretionary policy choice allowing for responsibility sharing brokered by UNHCR (UNHCR, 2011, 3; de Boer and Zieck, 2020). Community

---

[2]A similar definition provides: 'private or community-based sponsorship of refugees combines legal entry and protection with settlement support, using private means' (Solano and Savazzi 2019, 5).

[3]See, for example, the recent special issue of *Refuge* on community sponsorship in Canada, available at https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/issue/view/2321 accessed 7 April 2020.

sponsorship as resettlement focuses solely on *integration* support for resettled refugees matched with civil society sponsors. Rather than creating a pathway to admission, this model of community sponsorship uses existing UNHCR and state resettlement channels (including selection, referral, health checks, etc.) to admit refugees. Civil society involvement is largely limited to the provision of support *after* arrival and focused on the successful integration of refugees. Moreover, community sponsorship as resettlement generally benefits UNHCR-referred refugees, rather than "named" individuals, although practice varies between jurisdictions.[4] The recent German Neustart im Team (NesT) programme is a good example of community sponsorship as a resettlement tool, with 400 sponsored refugees admitted from Germany's overall resettlement quota of 5,500 (Government of Germany, 2020).

Core Elements of Community Sponsorship

Notwithstanding the potential duality of community sponsorship as both an approach to resettlement and a standalone complementary pathway, community sponsorship should have a set of core, relatively stable protective elements. Most of these are present in existing practice. First, and most fundamentally, inherent to community sponsorship is the *sharing of responsibility* for financial and social support between government, civil society and individuals, for a defined period.

Second, community sponsorship involves the *controlled arrival* of refugees, either as asylum seekers holding humanitarian visas or as recognised refugees. In contrast to spontaneous asylum, community sponsorship entails the orderly movement of refugees across international borders often considered more politically palatable in asylum states in the Global North (Van Selm 2004; Hashimoto 2018). Moreover, as with resettlement, community sponsorship allows for the allocation of quotas to predetermine how many refugees are admitted in a given year.

Third, in principle community sponsorship models should be *additional* to state resettlement programmes. In essence, the argument holds that additional community sponsorship expands refugee protection, while community sponsorship that replaces resettlement allows the state to outsource its responsibility (Ritchie 2018). This question has historically been the key issue in Canada, but is less pronounced in Europe (European Commission, 2018, 6). For example, pilot programmes may be undertaken within the existing resettlement quota, with the aim of becoming additional over time ("additionality in principle"), an approach reflected in the United Kingdom's model (Fratzke, 2017, 10).

Fourth, *government authorities retain ultimate responsibility* for sponsored refugees. Community sponsorship is premised on shared responsibility between government authorities and sponsors, however ultimate responsibility remains with the state, for example in the case of breakdown of the relationship between sponsors and refugees (European Commission 2018, 4).

---

[4]New Zealand's community sponsorship pilot, for example, accepted both civil society nominations and UNHCR referrals, though all sponsored refugees had to be recognised by UNHCR.

As is clear from the above, the concept of community sponsorship offers a flexible model that can be adapted to specific policy settings. As discussed below, there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach, rather policymakers should modulate the various elements of community sponsorship to local context, drawing on lessons learned from other jurisdictions (Bertram et al., 2020).

TRANSNATIONAL POLICY TRANSFER

Policy transfer is widely understood as "a process by which knowledge of policies in one political system" are used in the development of similar features in another (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000, 5). The recent spread of community sponsorship from a solitary, longstanding practice in Canada to multiple European jurisdictions is a classic example of policy transfer. More specifically, the voluntary uptake of community sponsorship models may be conceptualised as a form of "lesson-drawing" between jurisdictions (Rose, 1991).

In terms of the quality or intensity of policy transfer from one jurisdiction to another, Dolowitz and Marsh identify four different gradations of transfer: copying (direct and complete transfer); emulation (transfer of the basic ideas with adjustments for different circumstances); combinations (transfer of policies and programs from several different jurisdictions); and inspiration (policy in one jurisdiction is used as an intellectual stimulus, but the final outcomes do not actually draw upon the original). Non-transfer is also an option, where policymakers find that an idea is unworkable for technical or political reasons (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000).

While national governments play a uniquely important role in community sponsorship, given their sovereign prerogatives to control migration, the proliferation of community sponsorship is in fact a case of *transnational* policy transfer, involving a multitude of state and non-state actors. Government actors influencing community sponsorship in Europe policy range from the supranational European Commission, national governments (notably the Canadian government, with its "exporter jurisdiction" advocacy Reynolds and Clark-Kazak, 2019) and municipal governments. Non-state actors in this context include international organisations, international and national NGOs and civil society, notably faith-based groups. In particular, UNHCR, the GRSI, Amnesty International and Caritas have emerged as "transnational transfer agents," advocating for community sponsorship across jurisdictions and, in some cases, playing important operational roles in the rollout of programmes (Stone, 2010). Perhaps most notably, the GRSI established a European office in 2020 in Brussels to advocate for the uptake of further community sponsorship schemes.

Ghezelbash, in his work on policy transfer on deterrence policies in the migration context, synthesises reasons for transfer into three broad categories: efficiency; prestige; and coercion (Ghezelbash, 2014; Ghezelbash, 2018, 20). Applied to community sponsorship, efficiency here potentially refers to establishing new legal channels to protection and/or improving integration outcomes, depending on the model. Of course, a states' reasons for establishing new legal pathways to admission can vary between increasing protection space to establishing

more control over their borders, including at the expense of the right to seek asylum (Hirsch et al., 2019).

With respect to prestige, the prevalence of community sponsorship at the Global Refugee Forum is notable, with both pledges and good practice examples showcasing existing and planned community sponsorship models. Other less positive motivations may also be observed. For example, Australia's Community Sponsorship Program only supports refugees who are "job-ready" with "functional English" and sponsors exorbitant costs related to visas, administration and integration (Hoang, 2017, 74).

European governments are no longer drawing solely on the Canadian experience. As Bertram et al have recently argued, direct copying from Canada to other jurisdictions is unlikely to succeed, while "an adaptation approach to lesson-drawing and policy transfer seems to be more suitable since it usefully adjusts a policy for contextual differences" (2020, 254). No longer is Canada the only "exporter" jurisdiction, rather European governments can draw on "proximate transfer" models to import community sponsorship (Stone 2004, 552).

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN EUROPE: TAKING STOCK

The following provides a snapshot of European community sponsorship models, demonstrating the rapid rise of the concept and range of objectives and modalities across jurisdictions.[5] In 2013, a comparative study on best practices on the integration of resettled refugees found no community sponsorship models in the EU, while by 2020 pilot or permanent community sponsorship models were in place in Ireland, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom (Papadopoulou et al., 2013).

Since 2015, when the arrival of spontaneous asylum seekers reached unprecedented levels in the EU, there has been significant interest in community sponsorship (Solano and Savazzi, 2019). The crisis brought both a surge of interest in controlled admission among policymakers and an outpouring of civil society groups helping asylum seekers and refugees (Fratzke, 2017, 3). In May 2015, the European Agenda on Migration identified safe and legal pathways as a priority (European Commission, 2015) and, in 2017, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) launched a pilot project on community sponsorship with interested EU states (EASO, 2018). A 2018 European Commission feasibility study found that "sponsorship could contribute to meeting the goal of promoting safe and legal channels of admission" (2018, 11). A recent Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Action Grant funded projects launching new or developing existing community sponsorship schemes.

Momentum around community sponsorship is not limited to the European crisis. The 2016 New York Declaration calls for new and expanded resettlement and complementary pathways, including community sponsorship.[6] In the margins of the New York Declaration, the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) was created with a mandate to "encourage and support the adoption and expansion of refugee sponsorship programs around the world." As noted above, the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees calls for expanded access to resettlement and complementary pathways (Carrera and Cortinovis, 2019). In June 2019, UNHCR released its *Three-Year Strategy (2019–2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways*, which envisages the drastic scaling up of resettlement and complementary pathways globally, including community sponsorship (UNHCR, 2019b). At the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, at least nine state pledges relate to existing or new community sponsorship programmes (UNHCR, 2020).

Germany's Federal Länder Sponsorship Scheme (FLSS), in place between 2013 and 2018, was a family reunification programme focused on Syrians that admitted 23,500 persons. The scheme was criticised for placing onerous requirements on sponsors, with sponsorship lasting up to 5 years (European Commission, 2018, 130), and restricting the rights of sponsored refugees.

Between 2015 and 2018, Portugal implemented a temporary community sponsorship scheme to assist in meeting its relocation targets.[7] More than 1,500 people were admitted under the model, with sponsors taking on responsibilities for 18 months in relation to accommodation and other support services. Sponsors were community organisations matched with refugees by the state (European Commission, 2018, 28). At the Global Refugee Forum, the Portuguese government pledged to explore the establishment of a new pilot "inspired by the Canadian experience and the movement of other countries that adopted it, namely in Europe" (UNHCR 2020).

In 2016, the Humanitarian Corridors project began in Italy as a protection-focused response to the horrific death toll in the central Mediterranean, where Italy is the primary destination state. Smaller scale models were launched in France in 2016 and Belgium in 2017. Humanitarian Corridors is a complementary pathway coupling admission and integration of refugees by faith-based organisations under memoranda of understanding with central governments (Ricci 2020). The model involves almost complete devolution to faith-based organisations. Beneficiaries are nominated, screened, granted an entry visa, apply for asylum upon arrival and are provided reception and integration support by faith-based organisations, who bear all costs related to integration. Since its inception, Humanitarian Corridors has sponsored around 3,000 people (Collyer et al., 2017).

The United Kingdom's Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) was launched as a strand of the country's resettlement quota in 2016. The initial focus of the CSS was on improving integration, with

---

[5]This section draws on Tan, "A Study on the Potential for Introducing A Community Sponsorship Programme for Refugees in Sweden". Beyond Europe, community sponsorship models currently are currently in operation in Argentina, Australia and New Zealand. For an overview of community sponsorship outside Europe, see (Fratzke et al., 2019) *Refugee Sponsorship Programmes: A global state of play and opportunities for investment* (2019) 13–14.

[6]New York Declaration, GA Res 71/1, UNGAOR, 71st Session, UN Doc A/Res/ 71/1.

[7]The intra-EU relocation scheme in place between 2015 and 2017 transferred likely refugees from Greece and Italy to other member states. Under the scheme, 34,323 people were successfully relocated.

refugees referred by UNHCR for resettlement. Sponsors must be registered charities and provide financial and social support for 1 year and housing for 2 years (European Commission, 2018, 60). Between 2016 and 2019, approximately 400 refugees were sponsored under the Scheme. Initially, the CSS resettled refugees within the UK's quota but from 2020 the Scheme is additional. An initial evaluation found the scheme was functioning well, despite some start-up challenges (Phillimore and Reyes 2019).

In March 2019, Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI) was launched. The scheme is focused on providing protection and supports refugees identified by UNHCR for resettlement within the quota of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, though the government has committed to additionality in the medium to long-term. The CSI aims to resettle 50 refugees during the initial development phase. During this period, infrastructure will be developed to allow for the programme to be scaled up for the full implementation phase. Sponsors provide social and financial support for 18 months and housing for 2 years (Department of Justice and Equality 2019).

In 2019, the Basque region piloted a small community sponsorship project within Spain's National Resettlement Program. The Basque regional government bears all financial costs, with sponsor groups formed and supported by the Ellacuria Foundation and Caritas providing housing and operational support. The pilot sponsored five Syrian families (29 people) referred for resettlement by UNHCR, with sponsor groups providing social support (Manzanedo, 2019). At the first Global Refugee Forum, Spain pledged to expand the programme to 500 sponsored refugees in the Basque region and other Autonomous Communities by 2022 (Manzanedo, 2019).

Most recently, the German NesT programme, launched in May 2019, is additional to the state's resettlement program and was designed jointly by UNHCR, civil society and the government to expand protection and improve integration. Refugees are selected from UNHCR resettlement referrals and are granted refugee status before admission. The pilot sponsors 400 refugees, with sponsors (termed "mentors") responsible for providing integration support for 1 year and housing for 2 years.

In sum, there is an emerging base of practice on community sponsorship of refugees, in Europe and globally. A number of trends can be observed. First, existing and recent programmes may be roughly divided into the two categories outlined in the previous section: community sponsorship as a tool to expand or improve resettlement (Germany's NesT model, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Spain); and community sponsorship as an autonomous complementary pathway (Humanitarian Corridors in Belgium, France and Italy, and Germany's FLSS).

Second, despite significant variation with early models, more recent models are more focused on the provision of refugee protection. Germany's FLSS, for example, was sponsored family reunification, while the new NesT scheme targets refugees referred for resettled by UNHCR. Equally, Portugal's programme was focused on intra-EU relocation, while the recent Spanish and Irish models are more resettlement-focused. This renewed focus on the protection of refugees is welcome.

Third, the question of additionality is becoming increasingly complex. While a couple of European sponsorship models are outright additional to the state's resettlement quota, Humanitarian Corridors has provided a safe and legal pathway to protection for 3,000 refugees since 2016, in addition to Italy's annual resettlement programme of 1,000 places, other programmes have been within the resettlement programme on the basis of "additionality in principle." The United Kingdom CSS, for example, started out within the state's resettlement quota, with the government subsequently pledging additionality at the Global Refugee Forum (UNHCR, 2020). While ideally community sponsorship schemes should be additional to existing resettlement programmes from the outset, pragmatic considerations may require that initial community sponsorship models take place within existing resettlement quotas. In such cases, a shift to additionality in the short to medium-term must remain a focus.

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP AS TRANSNATIONAL POLICY TRANSFER

The emergence of the varied and multiple European community sponsorship models, outlined above, point to community sponsorship being adopted on the basis of emulation and combination. European governments are no longer drawing solely on the Canadian experience when considering and designing community sponsorship programmes. Rather, European policymakers adapt the overarching concept to the national context, drawing on the experiences of jurisdictions geographically proximate and at similar policymaking stages.

Transferring Community Sponsorship in New Jurisdictions

The feasibility or "transferability" of a community sponsorship model depends on local settings. Thus, any potential transfer must be tailored to the national context, adapting the flexible concept of community sponsorship. The following section highlights four key elements necessary to import a community sponsorship model, based on recent feasibility studies in Denmark and Sweden (Tan 2020).

First, community sponsorship must be legally feasible. In general, community sponsorship schemes operate within existing legal frameworks (Bond and Kwadrans 2019). In the case of community sponsorship as complementary pathway, two existing legal mechanisms are used. Sponsors select beneficiaries and use Article 25 of the EU Visa Code to support the issue of a 90-day visa for humanitarian reasons as a means to gain admission to EU member state territory. Upon arrival, beneficiaries are supported through the national asylum system by sponsors, in all cases so far receiving international protection and thus a secure legal status (Ricci, 2020, 269–70). This two-step process employs existing legal mechanisms to create a new complementary pathway.

With respect to community sponsorship as a tool for resettlement, the legal framework is simpler. Community sponsorship paired to resettlement often employs precisely the same legal channel as state-run resettlement. In Germany (NesT), Ireland and the United Kingdom, refugees supported through community sponsorship are admitted under the same legal conditions as refugees resettled under the state resettlement

programme, with selection, screening and the granting of legal status undertaken by UNHCR and national authorities. Adoption of community sponsorship models purely at the policy level is thus common, with a recent article concluding "community sponsorship programs do not require significant, dedicated legislative infrastructure" (Bond and Kwadrans, 2019, 95).

Second, perhaps the decisive question is that of political will. On the one hand, European national governments still managing integration and return challenges of 2015 may be reluctant to establish new channels for admission.[8] On the other hand, policymakers are clearly interested in admissions that avoid apparent loss of control over borders, contribute to responsibility sharing and improve integration outcomes. A possible solution to political sensitivity around community sponsorship is an "incremental approach," comprising a small-scale municipal or regional pilot before a permanent national model is adopted (Fratzke 2017, 10). Such a piecemeal approach is reflected in pilot programs in Ireland and Spain, for example.

Equally, the increased number of geographically, legally and culturally "proximate" jurisdictions introducing community sponsorship schemes may shift policymakers' positions (Bertram et al., 2020, 254). The growth of European models of community sponsorship, with a significant number of national variations, has the potential to render the adoption of new combination models easier with each new programme launched. Thus, each new model can be modulated drawing on lessons drawn from the recent experiences of proximate jurisdictions (Benson and Jordan, 2011).

Municipal and regional governments may be more positively disposed to the admission of refugees than national authorities. Recent work on the role of cities in refugee protection has argued for the adoption of community sponsorship as "the path of least resistance to more far-reaching reforms of the EU migration governance system" (Sabchev and Baumgärtel 2020). The Spanish pilot in the Basque region is a recent example of sub-national authorities taking the lead with respect to community sponsorship (Manzanedo, 2019).

Third, civil society capacity is a key component to any new community sponsorship model. It is noteworthy that the involvement of civil society actors varies significantly, ranging from complete responsibility for all aspects of admission and integration (for example, Humanitarian Corridors), to a complementary role focused on discrete aspects of integration, such as housing (German NesT and the United Kingdom). Notwithstanding the intensity of involvement, all models rely on an active civil society in at least two respects. Civil society actors on the ground play a vital "gatekeeper" role in deciding whether to advocate for community sponsorship. Established NGOs and faith-based groups may provide the impetus for a dialogue around importing a community sponsorship model that transnational actors are unable to generate. Civil society actors also often play a key operational role in training and supporting sponsors and liaising between governments and beneficiaries.

CONCLUSIONS: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN EUROPE

The development of community sponsorship in Europe stands at a key juncture. Can the momentum created in the wake of the 2015 crisis, the Global Compact on Refugees and nascent European models translate to widespread policy transfer in accordance with the protective core of the model? This final section identifies a number of challenges to the development of community sponsorship in Europe and suggests how to address them.

Maintaining the Protective Core of Community Sponsorship

The proliferation of new community sponsorship models since 2015 bring both risks and opportunities. On the one hand, the rapidly crowding community sponsorship "space" means policymakers may quickly be informed of the various models implemented in multiple jurisdictions. On the other hand, the inherent flexibility of the concept may leave it open to co-option where, for example, governments use community sponsorship models to replace resettlement quotas, or discriminate by protecting only particular religious groups.

To mitigate these risks, further work on the core principles of community sponsorship should define a set of protective standards, drawn from refugee and human rights law and lessons from practice. For example, community sponsorship models should not be discriminatory, and future models should avoid previous schemes operating in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia providing admission only to Christians (European, 2018, 61). In Australia, the costs of community sponsorship are exorbitant and the scheme supports refugees who speak English and are deemed ready for employment who, thus morphing into a form of labour migration rather than refugee protection (Hirsch et al., 2019).

The Relationship Between Community Sponsorship and State Resettlement

Relatedly, questions of additionality should remain at the forefront of discussions on community sponsorship, to avoid the effective outsourcing of government responsibilities to civil society actors. The overall objectives of community sponsorship may influence the importance of additionality. Where a primary objective is better integration of refugees or allowing family reunion, additionality may be less important (European Commission, 2018, 40). Where the primary aim is to expand refugee protection, additionality becomes more important. Additionality is not a straightforward concept, and pragmatic considerations may require that initial community sponsorship models take place within existing resettlement quotas. In such cases, a shift to additionality in the short to medium-term must remain a focus, with the realistic understanding that some government may seek to dilute or reverse-engineer additionality.[9]

---

[8]Return rates of rejected asylum seekers in the EU have hovered around 40 per cent since 2013. See European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration* COM(2015) 240 final, 13 May 2015 9; European Migration Network, *The effectiveness of return in EU Member States* (Synthesis Report, 2017).

[9]States may nominally label community sponsorship quotas "additional" while lowering formal resettlement programmes. *See*, for example, Labman, "Private sponsorship: complementary or conflicting interests?" 73.

Bottom-up or Top-Down?

Despite being a bottom-up approach when implemented, establishment of new models are often top-down. European pilots have been announced by governments without significant evidence of civil society advocacy, notably in Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain. There are counter-examples, too, with the Italian Humanitarian Corridors model being driven by the Community of Sant'Egidio. Nevertheless, the somewhat counter-intuitive top-down tendency of new community sponsorship programmes suggest that government exchanges, study tours and lesson-learning may be the most effective vehicle for policy transfer.

Proving Efficiency

Finally, community sponsorship is often assumed to provide better integration for refugees than traditional, government-run programmes. There is agreement in the Canadian literature that community sponsorship models positively influence refugees' integration (Solano and Savazzi 2019, 6). In Canada, sponsored refugees are faster than government-resettled refugees in respect of gaining employment and language acquisition (Solano and Savazzi 2019, 6, European Commission 2018, 5).

In Europe, there is thus far a lack of a clear evidence base establishing the central claim that community sponsorship improves integration outcomes. While evidence is understandably scant, it suggests that sponsored refugees receive enhanced access to employment, language skills and social capital through immediate contact with a dedicated group of welcoming individuals (SHARE, 2019, 35). Proving its efficiency in enhancing integration will be key to the ongoing development of community sponsorship in Europe.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/Supplementary Material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

REFERENCES

Benson, D., and Jordan, A. (2011). What have we learned from policy transfer research? Dolowitz and Marsh revisited. *Political Stud. Rev.* 9 (3), 366–378. doi:10.1111/j.1478-9302.2011.00240.x

Bertram, D., Maleki, A., and Karsten, N. (2020). Factoring in societal culture in policy transfer design: the proliferation of private sponsorship of refugees. *J. Int. Migr. Integration* 21, 253–271. doi:10.1007/s12134-019-00738-0

Bond, J., and Kwadrans, A. (2019). Resettling refugees through community sponsorship: a revolutionary operational approach built on traditional legal infrastructure. *Refuge Canada's J. Refugees* 35 (2), 86–108. doi:10.7202/1064822ar

Carrera, S., and Cortinovis, R. (2019). The EU's Role in Implementing the UN Global Compact on Refugees. Contained mobility vs International Protection, CEPS Paper in Liberty and Security in Europe 2018-04.

Collyer, M., Mancinelli, M., and Petito, F. (2017). *Humanitarian corridors: safe and legal pathways to Europe.* University of Sussex Policy Briefing.

de Boer, T., and Zieck, M. (2020). The legal Abyss of discretion in the resettlement of refugees: cherry-picking and the lack of due process in the Eu. *Int. J. Refugee Law* 32, 54–85. doi:10.1093/ijrl/eeaa005

Dolowitz, D. P., and Marsh, D. (2000). Learning from abroad: the role of policy transfer in contemporary policy-Making. *Governance* 13, 5–23. doi:10.1111/0952-1895.00121

European Commission (2015). *A European Agenda on Migration COM 240 final* (Accessed May 13, 2015).

European Asylum Office (EASO) (2018). *'EASO-GRSI workshop on private sponsorship programmes,'* (Accessed April 19-20, 2018). Malta.

European Commission (2018). Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes as a possible pathway to safe channels for admission to the EU, including resettlement: Final Report (October).

European Resettlement Network. (2018). "Private sponsorship feasibility study - towards a private sponsorship model in France."

Fratzke, S. (2017). Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection: The Potential of Private Sponsorship in Europe, Migration Policy Centre policy brief, September.

Fratzke, S., Kainz, L., Beirens, H., Dorst, E., and Bolter, J. (2019). Refugee Sponsorship Programs: A Global State of Play and Opportunities for Investment, Migration Policy Centre policy brief, December.

Ghezelbash, D. (2018). *Refuge lost: Asylum law in an interdependent world.* England, UK. Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108349031

Ghezelbash, D. (2014). Forces of diffusion: what drives the transfer of immigration policy and law across jurisdictions? *Int. J. Migr. Border Stud.* 1 (2), 139–153. doi:10.1504/ijmbs.2014.066306

Hashimoto, N. (2018). Refugee resettlement as an alternative to asylum. *Refug. Surv. Q.* 37, 162–186. doi:10.1093/rsq/hdy004

Hirsch, A. L., Hoang, K., and Vogl, A. (2019). Australia's private refugee sponsorship program: creating complementary pathways or privatising humanitarianism? *Canada's J. Refug* 35 (2), 110–123. doi:10.7202/1064823ar

Hoang, K. (2017). Human rights: private sponsorship of refugees and humanitarian entrants: risks and rewards for Australia. *Law Soc. NSW J.* 37, 74. doi:10.3316/INFORMIT.072344585431053

Hueck, P. (2019). Community based sponsorship programmes in Europe: what next? *European Insight.* doi:10.1628/978-3-16-158214-1

Hyndman, J., Payne, W., and Jiminez, S. (2017). *The state of private refugee sponsorship in Canada: trends, issues, and impacts.* Toronto: Centre for Refugee Studies, York University.

Hynie, M., McGrath, S., Bridekirk, J., Oda, A., Ives, N., Hyndman J., et al. (2019). What role does type of sponsorship play in early integration Outcomes? Syrian refugees resettled in six Canadian cities. *Canada's J. Refug.* 35, 36–53. doi:10.7202/1064818ar

Kaida, L., Hou, F., and Stick, M. (2019). The long-term economic integration of resettled refugees in Canada: a comparison of privately sponsored refugees and government-assisted refugees. *J. Ethn. Migr. Stud.*, 1687–1708. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2019.1623017

Kumin, J. (2015). *Welcoming engagement: how private sponsorship can strengthen refugee resettlement in the European Union.* Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute.

Labman, S. (2016). Private sponsorship: complementary or conflicting interests? *Canada's J. Refug.* 32 (2), 67–80. doi:10.25071/1920-7336.40266

Lenard, P. T. (2016). Resettling refugees: is private sponsorship a just way forward? *J. Glob. Ethics* 12 (3), 300–310. doi:10.1080/17449626.2016.1247290

Macklin, A., Barber, K., Goldring, L., Hyndman, J., Anna, K., Labman, S., et al. (2018). A preliminary investigation into private refugee sponsors. *Can. Ethn. Stud.* 50 (2), 35–57. doi:10.1353/ces.2018.0014

Manzanedo, C. (2019). *Community-Based Refugee Sponsorship in Spain: What Are the Experiences?.* Bonn, Germany: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Papadopoulou, A., Treviranus, B., Moritz, T., and Fandrich, C. M. (2013). *Comparative study on the best practices for the integration of resettled refugees in the Eu member states.* Brussels: European Parlement.

Phillimore, J., and Reyes, M. (2019). *Community sponsorship in the UK: from application to integration*. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham.

Reynolds, J., and Clark-Kazak, C. (2019). Introduction: special issue on private sponsorship in Canada. *Canada's J. Refug.* 35 (2), 3–8. doi:10.7202/1064815ar

Ricci, C. (2020). The necessity for alternative legal pathways: the Best Practice of Humanitarian Corridors Opened by Private Sponsors in Italy. *German Law J.* 21 (2), 265–283. doi:10.1017/glj.2020.7

Ritchie, G. (2018). Civil society, the state, and private sponsorship: the political economy of refugee resettlement. *Int. J. Lifelong Educ.* 663–675.

Rose, R. (1991). What is lesson-drawing? *J. Pub. Pol.* 11 (1), 3–30. doi:10.1017/s0143814x00004918

Sabchev, T. Y., and Baumgärtel, M. (2020). The path of least resistance?: Eu cities and locally organised resettlement. *Forced Migr. Rev.* 63, 38–40.

SHARE Network. (2019). *Fostering community sponsorship across Europe*. ICMC Europe and Caritas Europa publication.

Solano, G., and Savazzi, V. (2019). *Private sponsorship programmes and humanitarian visas: a viable policy framework for Integration?* Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute.

Stone, D. (2004). Transfer agents and global networks in the 'Transnationalization' of policy. *J. Eur. Public Politcs* 11 (3), 545–566. doi:10.1080/13501760410001694291

Stone, D. (2010). Private Philanthropy or Policy Transfer? the Transnational Norms of the Open Society Institute. *Policy Politcs* 38 (2), 269–287. doi:10.1332/030557309x458416

Tan, N. F. (2019). "The feasibility of community-based sponsorship of refugees in Denmark." in Working paper commissioned by Amnesty International Denmark. Available at:

Tan, N. F. (2020). "A study on the potential for introducing a community sponsorship programme for refugees in Sweden." in Scoping report prepared for UNHCR Regional Representation for Northern Europe. Available at:.

Ugland, T. (2018). *Canada can – can we? Sponsoring integration of refugees the Canadian way*. Stockholm: FORES. doi:10.3138/9781487517373

UNHCR. (2019a). Complementary Pathways for Admission of Refugees to Third Countries: Key Considerations.

UNHCR. (2019b). The Three-Year (2019-2021) Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways.

UNHCR. (2020). "Pledges & contributions dashboard." Available at: (Accessed April 8, 2020).

UNHCR. (2011). *Resettlement Handbook*.

Van Selm, J. (2004). The strategic use of resettlement: changing the face of protection? *Canada's J. Refug.* 22–39–48. doi:10.25071/1920-7336.21316

Welfens, Natalie., Engler, Marcus., Garnier, Adele., Endres de Oliveira, Pauline., and Kleist, J. Olaf. (2019). Active refugee admission policies in Europe: exploring an emerging research field. *FluchtforschungsBlog*. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-21784-6