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Civic Integration through Commissioned Communities: On the Cross-Sector Co-Production of Conditioned and Clientised Participation

RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Policymakers across Western welfare states increasingly make full citizenship contingent on refugees adapting to liberal democratic values and practising active citizenship. Simultaneously, the new public governance paradigm has reinvigorated policymakers' belief in civil society as a crucial partner for tackling societal challenges like integration. Consequently, cross-sector co-production of civic communities is increasingly perceived as a model for amplifying the participation and integration of refugees. The practices and outcomes of cross-sector co-produced integration remain underexplored. Based on a three-year qualitative study of four cross-sector integration projects in a Danish municipality, this article contributes knowledge to this important issue. We explore how volunteers and municipal staff co-produce civic communities to enhance the participation and integration of refugees. We find that a recurrent way of co-producing communities is through public agents commissioning communities from voluntary organisations. Next, we identify two recurrent forms of participation available to refugees through those commissioned communities. In the first, *conditioned participation*, the commissioning of communities is characterised by inter-sectoral distance and knowledge gaps, conditioning participation on the resources of each refugee. In the second, *clientised participation*, the inter-sectoral collaboration resembles a commissioner/service–provider relation, with refugees as clients referred to voluntary services.

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INTRODUCTION

> The government believes that successful integration takes place, among other things, by adopting a country's norms and values. One of the ways to ensure this knowledge is through civil society, because it represents some of the fundamental values of Danish society: personal responsibility and voluntary engagement. The government therefore wants to ensure better integration among new Danes by strengthening the connection among new immigrant children and adults to civil society and voluntary communities. (Regeringen [Government of Denmark] 2017: 9)

Over the past two decades, immigration and integration policies across Western welfare states have moved towards an increased responsibilisation of refugees, conditioning access to legal rights on individual conformity to liberal democratic values (Joppke 2007; Schinkel & Van Houdt 2010; van der Veer 2020). As Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010) argue, the right to obtain both formal and moral citizenship (concepts we return to below) is now in the hands of each holder of refugee status. At the same time, the new public governance (NPG) paradigm (Osborne 2006) promotes and legitimises network-based governance and cross-sector solutions to today's public problems (Verschuere, Brandsen & Pestoff 2012). At the intersection of these two important policy trends, voluntary organisations become legitimate public partners, and the integration of refugees via civic communities emerges as an attractive and innovative policy solution (OECD 2018; Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad 2008). What makes voluntary organisations particularly attractive in the eyes of policymakers is their expected capacity to form inclusive communities while being 'schools of democracy' that impart liberal values and civic virtues to all participants (Lichterman 2006).

By focusing on the integration of refugees as a cross-sector endeavour after the refugee crisis in 2015, this article brings together the notion of a 'civic turn' in integration policy with the idea of a 'collaborative turn' in welfare policy (Skelcher, Mathur & Smith 2005). Numerous studies have already dealt with each sub-theme. The ramifications of the civic turn have been studied at both the individual and societal levels (Ahlén & Boräng 2018; Bonjour & Duyvendak 2018; Borevi, Jensen & Mouritsen 2017; Goodman 2010, 2012; Howard 2009; Joppke 2007, 2017; Koopmans, Michalowski & Waibel 2012; Mouritsen, Jensen & Larin 2019). Likewise, immigration scholars have explored the role of non-profit organisations in building bridges between the government and migrants in integration work before the refugee crisis (De Graauw 2016). The large influx of refugees from Syria and elsewhere in 2015 has also been subject to multiple studies from across the disciplinary spectrum. A large proportion of these studies covers the role of voluntary organisations and grassroots communities in welcoming and integrating refugees during the hectic first years after their arrival (Bygballe Jensen & Kirchner 2020; Carlsen, Doerr & Toubøl 2020; Meyer & Simsa 2018; Sandberg & Andersen 2020b; Simsa et al. 2019). Moreover, several studies have examined cross-sector collaborations during the immediate welcoming and integration stages after 2015 (Hesse, Kreutzer & Diehl 2018; Schmid, Evers & Mildenberger 2019; van der Veer 2020). However, except for a few recent publications (Fehsenfeld & Levinsen 2019; Grubb & Frederiksen 2021; Strokosch & Osborne 2016), cross-sector co-production as an enduring structure for the integration of refugees 'in the aftermath of the spectacle' (Sandberg & Andersen 2020a: 5) remains understudied. Thus, while civic integration and integration through civil society have been examined

as separate phenomena, this article contributes knowledge on how the civic turn in integration policy intersects with the collaborative turn in public welfare governance. Moreover, we contend that the notion of civic integration has thus far been studied mainly in terms of public integration measures, whereas the role of civil society has been largely ignored; see Suvarierol (2021) for an exception. We find it pressing to rethink the notion of 'civic' in civic integration by explicitly focusing on the involvement of civil society in cross-sector integration. This paper, therefore, explores the forms of participation made available to refugees in the context of cross-sector co-production of civic communities.

Drawing empirically on policy documents, two years of participant observation among cross-sector projects targeting refugees in Denmark, and interviews with 19 informants, we examine the puzzles arising when actors from the public sector and civil society co-produce communities to enable participation for refugees. We find that municipal agents typically assign civil society organisations the task of integrating refugees into local communities through something we call *commissioned communities*. Ongoing changes complicate the commissioning of communities, making two forms of participation available to refugees: *conditioned* and *clientised participation*. With conditioned participation, the commissioning of communities is characterised by inter-sectoral distance and knowledge gaps, conditioning participation on the resources of each refugee. In clientised participation, inter-sectoral collaboration resembles a commissioner/service–provider relation, with refugees as clients referred to voluntary services.

First, we unpack the three interdependent tendencies: civic integration, NPG and the responsibilisation of civil society in a Danish policy context. Then, we describe the study's setting and design, followed by an analysis in four parts. Part one describes how municipal actors are incentivised to commission communities from voluntary organisations. Part two examines the ongoing changes challenging the commissioned communities, whereas parts three and four unpack the mechanisms relating to conditioned and clientised participation. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings.

THE CIVIC TURN AND THE RESPONSIBILISATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DENMARK

In Denmark, the geopolitical context of this paper, we observe a trend towards assigning civil society a share of the responsibility for integrating refugees as active citizens. We consider this trend to be a variation of what Joppke (2007) called 'the civic turn' in Western immigrant integration politics. Joppke argues that over the last two decades, Western countries have increasingly focused integration efforts on incentivising and socialising immigrants into specific liberal values and forms of citizenship, thereby realising the ideal of liberal, responsible, democratic and actively participating citizens. The civic turn reflects a general shift towards a neo-liberal welfare ideology from rights to duties, which places increased responsibility on individual immigrants for their own integration (Borevi, Jensen & Mouritsen 2017; Goodman 2010, 2012; Howard 2009; Joppke 2007, 2017; Koopmans, Michalowski & Waibel 2012; Meer et al. 2015; Mouritsen, Jensen & Larin 2019).

Scholars have identified the trend towards civic integration in hard-line instruments such as tests, contracts, courses and oaths designed to condition immigrants'

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access to various legal statuses on meeting certain requirements that reflect their new country's civic virtues (see also Goodman 2010, 2012; Howard 2009; Joppke 2007, 2017; Koopmans, Michalowski & Waibel 2012). In Denmark, increasingly strict integration policies place demands on refugees in the shape of formalised, mandatory integration goals regarding language, knowledge and employment. These requirements condition access to entry, permanent residence, family reunification and citizenship on the efforts of individual refugees (Borevi, Jensen & Mouritsen 2017). According to Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010), this development reflects a greater governmental emphasis on immigrants and refugees assuming proper moral citizenship alongside formal citizenship. While the latter denotes 'civic, political, social and cultural rights and duties' (Schinkel & Van Houdt 2010: 697), moral citizenship refers to a 'normative concept of what the good citizen is and/or should be' (698). In the current Danish context, being a good citizen and making a claim to moral citizenship increasingly means participating in civil society and showing an active interest in adapting to liberal civic virtues.

In Denmark, as in other Western welfare states, the NPG paradigm is gaining momentum (Brandsen, Steen & Verschuere 2018; Torfing & Triantafillou 2017). In a context of strained public welfare budgets, widespread fatigue with the New Public Management paradigm and faltering levels of trust in the political system, the NPG paradigm has captured the minds of policymakers across the ideological spectrum. Key to the NPG paradigm is the notion of network-based collaboration and the idea that engaging civil society in solving social problems will entail innovative, efficient and democratic policy solutions (Torfing & Triantafallou 2017). Consequently, cross-sector co-production has come to the forefront of solutions to what are known as wicked problems, including the integration of refugees (Fehsenfeld & Levinsen 2019). While co-production can be roughly defined as users participating in developing and implementing public services (Osborne, Radnor & Strokosch 2016), cross-sector co-production implies some involvement of civil society organisations (Brandsen & Pestoff 2006). Accordingly, voluntary organisations are being called on to collaborate in increasingly formalised partnerships with public actors in targeting specific social challenges like integration (Ilcan & Basok 2004). To be sure, the recent political interest in cultivating cross-sector co-production is not entirely novel. In the Danish and wider Nordic contexts, cross-sector co-production is merely the latest stage in a process by which policymakers for decades have sought to incentivise organisations across sectors to engage in partnerships (Ibsen 2021; Trägårdh et al. 2013). What arguably sets co-production apart from similar collaborative efforts is that it implies a closer and more egalitarian collaboration between public and voluntary actors in handling tasks for which the public sector has traditionally had the main responsibility (Ibsen 2021). When actors label their activities co-production, they are thus not simply putting old wine in new bottles. Instead, co-production implies a promise of closer cross-sector collaboration, complementarity and equality in problem-solving (Ibsen 2021). At the same time, the novelty of co-production as a policy strategy leaves it open to different interpretations and practices. This study explores how the governance ideals associated with cross-sector co-production are manifest in practices by which actors make sense of the concept through concrete organisational forms in everyday life.

Three ideals sustain the current political ambition of bringing civil society closer to public integration services. First, engaging volunteers in social work is expected to encourage an egalitarian and authentic sociality (la Cour 2019). This expectation, in turn, casts voluntary organisations as settings cultivating inclusive, strong and

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meaningful communities for marginalised citizens like refugees (Eliasoph 2011; Hustinx 2010). Second, related to these expectations, voluntary organisations are perceived to be prime arenas for building participants' networks or 'social capital' (Putnam 2000), thereby increasing the chances of job market integration for refugees (Handy & Greenspan 2009). Third, politicians of all stripes adhere to the notion of voluntary associations as 'schools of democracy', in the Tocquevillian sense, by which participation imparts civic virtues and competencies for practicing active citizenship (Lichterman 2006).

In interdependency, the turn towards civic integration, the faith in cross-sector arrangements to integrate refugees and a reinforced belief in civil society as the realm of inclusive, democratic communities grants voluntary organisations a key role in a multi-sector integration alliance.

SETTING AND DESIGN

In Denmark, as in other Nordic social democratic regimes, collaboration between the state and civil society has a long and mostly amicable history regarding several welfare state challenges, including the integration of refugees (Ibsen 2021). Within the Danish context, we selected a large municipality that has actively pursued and promoted cross-sector collaboration as a policy tool in response to challenges like elder care and integration.

The case municipality is among the three largest municipalities in Denmark and includes a large rural area and one of the country's five largest cities, at about 120,000 inhabitants. By conducting in-depth studies of integration projects in this setting, all of which were labelled co-production by the participants, we were able to explore how an increasingly popular policy vision materialises as concrete organisational practices and puzzles.

The research project, from which this article is derived, covered two important fields of welfare production: service provision for the vulnerable elderly and for refugees. Although the overall focus was inter-sectoral boundary work, friction and innovation related to co-production in practice, this article investigates four initiatives of co-production in refugee services. All four projects self-identified as co-production and shared an ambition to enhance possibilities for refugees to perform active citizenship through civic communities produced in cross-sector collaboration. These projects were 1) an initiative to integrate young adult refugees into youth housing offers, 2) an integration café, 3) a service for refugees relocating from temporary to permanent accommodation and 4) a social activity for refugees in a Christian congregation.

We base this analysis on data derived from a mix of qualitative methods. To understand how the political and public ideals inherent in the notion of co-production came across as symbolic support and political discourse production, we scrutinised *policy documents* on topics such as the integration of immigrants, co-production and volunteer strategies. To capture how cross-sector co-production materialised as everyday practice, we conducted *fieldwork* over two years among volunteers and municipal staff engaged in the co-production of civic communities (Luhtakallio & Eliasoph 2014). Finally, to grasp the verbalised meaning-making relating to cross-sector co-production, we conducted 19 *interviews* with volunteers (n = 6) and public employees (n = 13) affiliated with the projects under scrutiny. The volunteers were either affiliated with a large non-governmental organization (NGO) carrying

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out advocacy and voluntary work targeting refugees or part of a local religious congregation providing activities for refugees and other community members (Appendix A presents an overview of all informants). The public employees were part of the job and integration administration. All informants gave informed consent to being interviewed and for their accounts to figure as anonymised quotations in future publications. In this paper, the names of all informants have accordingly been anonymised.

The analytical themes presented below were developed inductively through a process in which central patterns identified during fieldwork served as the basis for vertical and horizontal readings of field notes, interview transcripts and organisational documents to assess their prevalence. The analysis presented next comprises the four key findings stemming from this iterative coding process.

COMMISSIONED COMMUNITIES FOR REFUGEES' ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Echoing national integration policy, municipal policy and key local actors in the case municipality portrayed voluntary associations as platforms for active citizenship offering inclusive communities that sustained refugees' integration into a liberal democratic society. The municipal strategy for refugee reception emphasised voluntary associations' role as bridge-builders between individual refugees and local communities:

> The objective is to support the establishment of networks surrounding individual refugees and assist their introduction to the local community and the many offers and opportunities that exist here. [The municipality] wants to involve local actors such as voluntary associations, the library, local councils, and tenant associations. (Municipal strategy for refugee reception)

In everyday parlance, municipal actors repeated the conviction that voluntary associations equal strong civic communities with the ability to reach and educate citizens below the municipal radar or beyond municipal responsibility. This ideal arose frequently, such as during an interview with a top municipal manager:

> We want stronger communities [because] strong communities can do unimaginable things. They can educate, they can integrate, they can create language development [for our] new citizens [...] because the bridge-building they can provide is far more than what we [the municipality] can manage. (Appendix A, #4)

Another quality routinely attributed to voluntary organisations was being particularly knowledgeable about the local community, as the municipal volunteer coordinator explained:

> The [volunteers] possess enormous knowledge about the local community, knowledge which none of us have, neither the social worker nor the integration centre [...] they [volunteers] know the local karate club [...] they *know* the local culture. They can include [...] invite into networks and that sort [...] things that we [the municipality] would never be able to do. (Appendix A, #5)

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The firm belief that voluntary organisations were necessary for a holistic and democratic integration spurred the municipal motivation to engage in cross-sector co-production and practise what we define as the commissioning of communities. The term 'commissioned communities' below denotes the phenomenon of municipal actors mobilising or collaborating with voluntary organisations to cultivate inclusive and civically educative communities for refugees. Voluntary organisations, for their part, often used cross-sector meetings to promote their special relational capacities and local connections. At a meeting between volunteers from a large NGO and the municipality, the volunteers stressed how they could 'handle them [the refugees] with love' and 'relate to them with empathy' or 'be their friends'. During an interview with a volunteer from the same organisation, the volunteer pointed out how the NGO's role in a potential cross-sector collaboration could be to do the 'outreach work' or facilitate 'networking'.

Given how actors from both sectors embraced and nurtured the ideal of voluntary organisations as masters of sociality and outreach, one might think that cross-sector co-production of civic communities had favourable conditions. However, as we document next, organisational and contextual changes hampered these shared ambitions.

ONGOING CHANGES IN REFUGEE INTEGRATION AND VOLUNTARY WORK

As it turned out, group-level, organisational, inter-sectoral and institutional changes significantly impeded attempts at cross-sector co-production of civic communities and active citizenship for refugees. First, with constant global turmoil and changing national policies, the group in focus, refugees, constituted a population in constant fluctuation. As one municipal integration manager explained, the arrival of refugees had gone from none to 850 people in 2015, after which the numbers decreased dramatically each month. These fluctuations in refugee arrivals entailed a constant restructuring of municipal contingency plans, which drained organisational resources. The intra-organisational instability left few resources for inter-sectoral collaboration or developing an understanding of the potentials and limitations of possible voluntary partners. While all informants insisted on the existence of co-produced integration activities, concrete examples of projects that realised these ambitions were difficult for municipal staff to identify to the research team.

Second, as documented in previous studies on volunteer participation inside and outside the Nordic welfare states, the engagement of volunteers in local integration activities was volatile (Eliasoph 2011; Sandberg & Andersen 2020a). This volatility became obvious throughout the two-year period of fieldwork, as gatekeeping volunteers disappeared from the integration activities before the researchers had even met them. While some fluctuations in volunteer participation could be attributed to individual or organisational factors, such as changing life circumstances or organisational restructuring (Hustinx & Lammertyn 2003), volunteers in the field of refugee integration seemed susceptible to the additional contextual feature of fluctuations in the public and political sentiment towards refugees (Sandberg & Andersen 2020a):

> At one point, it was actually not that easy to find [Danish] network families [for refugees]. We saw that the sympathy faded [and that] stories [began

> circulating] that some [of the refugees] could not behave properly. [...] Stories on how much public money was spent began to appear [leading to sentiments like]: 'Well, now we don't feel as sorry for them as we did in the beginning'. (Appendix A, #1)

Third, the legal framework was characterised by constant modifications. National integration policies and laws changed between September 2015 and April 2019, as the Danish Minister of Integration and Immigration implemented no less than 114 restrictions, 46 of which directly concerned asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet 2019). One major revision was the introduction of a new status of protection, the 'general temporary protection' aimed at Syrian refugees, which granted refugees fewer rights and was more temporary than other forms of protection. These legal restrictions put refugees' lives in a state of increased precariousness and instability. According to NGOs, the parliamentary opposition and scholars, this instability was intentional (Vitus & Jarlby 2021; Pedersen & Rytter 2011), as the political measures were explicitly aimed at deterring asylum seekers from pursuing protection in Demark (Folketing Hansard 2015–2016: 8). Moreover, the restrictions created instability in the public institutions that were mandated to implement the shifting integration framework (Vitus & Jarlby 2021).

In short, the ongoing changes were a transversal circumstance caused partly by geopolitical turmoil and partly by national and local politics, and reinforced by the volatility inherent in voluntary work. Navigating these constant changes drained the organisational resources of public and third sector organisations and hampered inter-sectoral communication and comprehension. Unsurprisingly, the changes significantly challenged the ability of voluntary communities to act as educative bridges between individual refugees and the wider community. Nevertheless, volunteers and municipal agents insisted on pursuing the co-production of civic communities. This led to two predominant forms of participation available to the refugees: a conditioned and a clientised one.

CONDITIONED PARTICIPATION

The project most illustrative of conditioned participation was called Young Adult Refugees (YAR), in which municipal integration staff sought to cultivate local civic communities in three youth housing projects to make young male refugees join the local associations and refrain from causing problems. The young refugees had recently moved from temporary accommodation into their own apartments in one of the housing projects. According to the housing association (HA) responsible for running youth and student accommodations in the municipality, some of these refugees harassed other residents and vandalised both private and common spaces. As the alleged troublemakers were over the age of 18, they no longer fell under municipal jurisdiction in terms of assistance. Therefore, the municipal managers maintained that the trouble-making at the housing facilities was not strictly a municipal concern but rather a complex integration issue to be dealt with 'between sectors' and 'beyond municipal boxes'.

The municipal aspiration to cultivate and commission civic communities in response to integration issues was apparent at the meeting initiating the YAR project. The meeting was called by the HA, and the atmosphere was tense. The attendees were two top municipal managers, a volunteer consultant from the municipal integration

administration (MIA), and the chairperson and five janitors from the HA. In a diplomatic yet critical tone, the leader of the HA expressed intense frustration with insufficient municipal oversight and assistance to refugees settling into their own apartments and criticised the lack of municipal response to previous complaints. In response, a team leader from the MIA explained how the group allegedly causing trouble were beyond the reach of the municipality:

> We are talking about some young people who belong outside our traditional municipal boxes. This is why we need to start something new – launch new collaborations. (Field notes)

Although none of the meeting participants could provide the number, identity and location of the 'troublemakers' who 'belonged outside the municipal boxes' and the trouble allegedly ranged from setting a stove on fire to harassment of female tenants, the municipality suggested the solution was 'community building' for all tenants, including the young refugees. At this point, the hitherto silent municipal volunteer coordinator was invited to speak. The following dialogue reflects the common collocation of integration and inclusive, civically educative volunteer communities that fuel integration policy inside and outside the case municipality:

> Volunteer consultant, MIA: Well [...] should I start by mentioning co-production. [...] We must find out what exists out there in terms of communities. We must build bridges to the strong communities [...] look at those voluntary refugee associations who are good at that. Perhaps invite the youth divisions of the Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Red Cross on board? [...]
> Chairperson, HA: I was thinking about the sports associations, couldn't they be of help?
> Volunteer consultant, MIA: Yes! They could. All voluntary Danish associations are good at integration. (Field notes)

In transmuting a diffuse problem of scattered reports of harassment and vandalism by unidentified troublemakers into a universal problem of a lack of community among residents in general, the municipal integration team relocated the problem from being within the municipal realm to a matter for 'new collaborations' that involved the 'strong communities' offered by 'any Danish voluntary association'. The solution was to co-produce integration with voluntary organisations to create 'meaningful communities' for all residents, especially those 'beyond municipal boxes'; that is, those young refugees residing outside the financial, legal and normative jurisdiction of the municipality.

The second project illustrative of conditioned participation was the Welcome to the Neighbourhood Café (WNC). WNC was a weekly café targeting refugees and other new residents in a part of the municipality with a high percentage of inhabitants with non-Western backgrounds. The WNC was a continuation of a previous municipal effort at mobilising citizens and voluntary organisations in the area to accommodate refugees from Syria around 2015 and 2016. Due to the aforementioned changes in the local voluntary organisations, the café was now run by a volunteer from one of the large NGOs in the field in municipal locales, using modest municipal funding to supply participants with coffee and cake. Once again, what motivated the co-production of civic communities was the ideal of cross-sectoral complementarity (Frederiksen & Grubb 2021), nurtured by the notion of voluntary organisations as knowledgeable

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gatekeepers to local communities and schools of democracy conducive to active citizenship.

Both the WNC and the YAR projects faced at least two significant challenges. First, the volunteers engaged in cultivating the civic communities often came from outside the local communities. Despite their categorical affiliation with a sector branded by insiders and outsiders as the realm of outreach expertise, volunteers often lacked local grounding and knowledge about residents. Second, the volatility inherent in voluntary engagement and the civic landscape more broadly meant that the commissioned communities were often temporary, which complicated the task of using them as platforms for routine interaction in the community. In interdependency, these circumstances complicated refugees' access to the co-produced communities and conditioned participation on individual resources, such as motivation, network, knowledge and mobility. It has been widely documented that access to voluntary communities in general tends to correlate with the socioeconomic status and resources of prospective volunteers (Carlsen, Doerr & Toubøl 2020; Eliasoph 2011). Moreover, studies on volunteer participation document how institutionally induced turbulence among voluntary organisations makes for an increased differentiation and individualisation of voluntary participation (Hustinx 2010). This circumstance tends to benefit those with the network and competencies for navigating changes while excluding the less resourceful, such as refugees (Carlsen, Doerr & Toubøl 2020).

In the case of vulnerable refugees, the likelihood of accessing and actively participating in civic communities (as either volunteer or user) was not merely challenged by their significant lack of network and other resources but also by the ongoing changes pertaining to integration in general. Consequently, it came as little surprise that those populating the temporarily cultivated voluntary communities were mostly resourceful citizens and rarely people from the target group. In the case of YAR, observations during three of the local meetings in the youth housing communities revealed modest attendance by 'the usual suspects' (well-educated, resourceful students), whereas no one from the primary target group (at risk refugees) attended. Even the municipal volunteer consultant who took part in the first meeting was aware of this bias and described the participants as 'resourceful' and volatile, as their residency at the youth housing depended on their studies. Correspondingly, as documented by the volunteer in charge of the WNC, café visitors were mostly university students on exchange or resourceful expatriates who visited the café to learn Danish.

The second circumstance causing conditioned participation was that the voluntary and municipal actors involved in the cross-sector collaboration kept a mutual distance and engaged in a minimum of communication about the content and progress of their respective activities. In early conversations with the research team, the municipal volunteer consultant was only able to point to a few cross-sector co-production activities in the municipality. Moreover, projects labelled cross-sector co-production by the consultant or other field inhabitants were often in the process of closing due to shifts in the refugee population's needs or in volunteer interests. When the researchers enquired about the WNC, the volunteer consultant stated that the café was operating and well attended. However, both before and after this optimistic account, the researchers noticed a steady decline in participants, and shortly after the conversation, the café was closed due to the limited attendance. In both cases presented here, the municipality was only facilitating the activity: it was not directly involved in everyday operations. Therefore, the volunteer consultant had limited insight into the actual status and outcome of each project. Conversely, it turned out

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that the volunteers in charge of running the various 'community-developing' activities lacked insights into the municipal system and gallery of actors. When asked whether municipal staff participated in the WNC, the volunteer in charge appeared puzzled and replied:

> 'The municipality?' The volunteer looks bewildered and explains that sometimes people from the volunteer management are present at the café. 'But the municipality? [...] No'. (Field notes)

The mutual distance and consequent ignorance across sectors left the voluntary associations alone to face the difficult challenge of attracting and retaining citizens from the target group. The inter-sectoral distance and municipal interest in maintaining its identity as a competent integration authority and facilitator of co-production provided voluntary organisations with the possibility of maintaining their identity as local gatekeepers and (therefore) suitable partners in the community-based integration of refugees. This mutual impression management, however, blurred the picture of how well the voluntary communities were actually including and integrating refugees, and this worked to the detriment of the refugees. We term the potential participation stemming from this kind of distant co-production as 'conditioned participation'; accessing these semi-civic commissioned communities was conditioned on individual refugees' resources and the ability to navigate a cross-sectoral landscape undergoing continual change. This unintended selective dynamic appeared to sustain other civic integration requirements, 'applied so as to select those expected to integrate smoothly, while denying entry or stay to those considered unlikely to "fit" in the host society' (Bonjour & Duyvendak 2018: 882).

CLIENTISED PARTICIPATION

Several activities in the data resembled the clientised form of participation in which voluntary organisations delivered communities on demand while transforming both the idea of civic action and active citizenship in the process. The two cases most illustrative of clientised participation were also the two cases of co-production most often pointed to as exemplary by municipal agents. The first project, Refugees on the Move, was a moving service offered by volunteers from the local congregation to help refugees relocate from temporary accommodations to permanent housing. A municipal team manager explained her fondness for Refugees on the Move as follows:

> We prefer that the refugee move on his or her own [since] we must work on making these citizens as self-reliant as possible, because that supports their integration. This is part of the municipal policy. But they cannot move themselves: they don't have the money or the social relations to do it, and they don't know anyone with a car or a trailer. And this is where the congregation has suggested that they [rather than the municipality] do the moving, thereby taking on a task that I find to be neither a public nor a municipal responsibility, but which I find extremely important. (Appendix A, #7)

The municipal team manager described moving with assistance from the congregation as a process involving knocking on doors and asking the refugees' new neighbours to help or donate food, tools or furniture, thereby initiating the process of

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local community integration in accordance with the municipal strategy. One reason for the municipal fondness for the voluntary religious organisations was thus that they provided invisible, free assistance in handling the discrepancy between official integration policy and what could realistically be expected from refugees. The municipality could, in other words, *commission* integration into local communities by using the voluntary religious organisations.

The second popular case of cross-sector co-production was an international café, Love Your Municipality, established by the youth of the local congregation. What seemed particularly valuable to municipal staff regarding both cases was how the voluntary services were crucial to successful integration yet beyond the legal, financial and normative authority of the municipality. In both projects, the inter-sectoral gap discovered in relation to 'conditioned participation' was bridged by personal relations between specific people from the voluntary and municipal organisations. The Love Your Municipality project leader explained how a municipal social worker would personally escort refugees, who made up one-third of the participants, to the voluntary community building:

> The caseworker asks us, 'Are your opening hours still this and that? And could you make an extra effort to accommodate this citizen, or could we come by for a visit with this citizen?' Then the caseworker comes by with this citizen, and they take a look at the place together; perhaps the social worker stays for the first hour. These citizens have a special need for becoming part of a social community in order to regain their mental strength and become ready to find a job. (Appendix A, #17)

Through this system of directly referring and escorting refugees to the volunteer communities, volunteers could take charge of the integration work that fell within the municipal responsibility for integration but was beyond the municipality's resources and normative realm. While this practice minimised the risk of vulnerable refugees falling between sector gaps, these service-like commissioned communities relied on individual contacts and personal rather than institutionalised cooperation across sectors. Moreover, it produced several puzzles. First, the role of refugees in finding their way to the voluntary communities came closer to that of clients referred to a service by caseworkers than that of active citizens engaging in civil society (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014). Second, the role of the voluntary organisations in these cross-sector collaborations had stronger affinities with private service providers who pitched their services in public tenders and filled gaps in the municipal offerings (Jegermalm et al. 2020) than with a civic organisation practising and teaching liberal democratic values to all participants. This service provider logic was apparent in several situations, including during the initial contact between the volunteers and the municipality. In the following quote, the volunteer project leader recalls how the first meeting, which the project leader had requested, went:

> I remember our agenda was to present what we wanted and ask if they had any advice. 'How would this [activity] fit the best with your [the municipality's] citizens? How can we make our offer better for them? [...] And we had like 10 to 15 minutes. (Appendix A, #17)

During the 10-minute pitch, the voluntary religious organisation eagerly demonstrated its readiness to fill gaps and customise its services to better meet the needs of the

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municipality. Finally, the interview with the same project leader profoundly challenged the political ideal of all voluntary organisations representing civically educative communities. The following excerpt shows how the project leader responded when a Syrian refugee wanted to mobilise other citizens to voice dissatisfaction with the current integration subsidy:

> Shortly before our meeting, there had been a Syrian who asked me, 'How do you set up an association?' 'Well, I cannot explain that over the phone. We can meet'. When I met with him, he told me that he would like to set up an association because he had found out that as an individual, you could not complain about the municipality, but they [a group of refugees] would like to complain that the integration subsidy was too low. Then I said to him, 'Do you know what, Munir, now you simply have to [...] if you have the energy to complain about it, why not use that energy? You are 50 Syrians. Why not create some jobs instead of complaining that you get too few benefits?' (Appendix A, #17)

Instead of supporting the refugees' idea of taking collective action by initiating an association – a clear example of active citizenship – the project leader turns the problem into a matter of taking personal responsibility for job creation. Rather than teaching the refugee to practice civic action and active citizenship (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014), a capacity routinely associated with voluntary organisations, this project instead promoted the notion of individual responsibility, which was very much in tune with Denmark's prevalent integration and job market policies.

Summing up, while bridging the inter-sectoral gap to the benefit of (selected) vulnerable refugees, the role of refugees in this case came closer to clients referred to private services by the municipality and thus taught them clientised participation. Moreover, the role of the voluntary communities resembled service providers rather than communities dedicated to and composed of civic action. In particular, what this kind of personalised, service-like commissioned communities succeeded in co-producing was legitimacy for a political agenda, which holds that all refugees, no matter their resources and linguistic capacity, are able to be active, self-supporting citizens not long after their arrival. The dynamics of clientised participation identified here raises the question of whether civic integration is designed to produce tangible, long-term integration change by equipping immigrants with civic skills or whether the policies serve instead to reposition the state closer to immigrant lives (Goodman & Wright 2015): in this case, with voluntary organisations and actors as intermediators.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

At the intersection of two important policy trends – civic integration and co-production of public service provision – the phenomenon of cross-sector co-production to enhance integration and active citizenship among refugees has appeared on policy agendas across Western welfare states. This paper has explored this recent phenomenon by asking what forms of participation are made available to refugees in the context of cross-sector co-production of civic communities. We found that actors across the public and voluntary sectors engage in cross-sector co-production of civic communities, making two forms of participation available to refugees: a *conditioned* and a *clientised* one.

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Conditioned participation was the unintended outcome of public sector agents commissioning communities from civil society actors without sufficient inter-sectoral insight and understanding of all the parties. This distanced form of collaboration created an inter-sectoral void, as neither sector considered the task of locating and recruiting refugees to voluntary communities to be within its capacity or mandate. The possibility of practising active citizenship through these communities was, therefore, conditioned on each refugee's resources and network. Instead of co-producing avenues for participation and integration into society, this form of commissioned communities reproduced the well-documented inequality in access to volunteering (Carlsen, Doerr & Toubøl 2020). Moreover, it made the obtaining of moral citizenship, an increasingly pressing demand under the civic turn, an inherently unequal endeavour (Bonjour & Duyvendak 2018). Finally, it reproduced a mutual misrepresentation of sector-specific competences, allowing the ideal of sectoral complementarity to remain uncontested.

Clientised participation was the unintended outcome of voluntary organisations taking on the role of supplementary service providers, ready to handle selected integration tasks beyond the financial, juridical and normative realm of the municipality. Under current integration policy, which expects refugees to be self-reliant and active in society as quickly as possible, it is inappropriate for the municipality to assist refugees with moving into a new apartment or building a network. For these practical and social tasks, voluntary – often religious – organisations pitched in, offering their services in response to municipal demands and inputs. Through clientised participation, voluntary organisations thus became service providers, bringing the state closer to immigrant lives by escorting selected refugees into their communities. In the process, both the notions of 'active citizenship' and 'civic communities' were altered.

By focusing on the role of civil society in civic integration, this paper demonstrates the caveats relating to cross-sector co-production of integration and active citizenship of refugees through commissioned communities. The identification of conditioned and clientised participation points to several problematic aspects of the current neo-liberal policy that responsibilises both individual refugees and civil society organisations (Ilcan & Basok 2004; Mouritsen, Jensen & Larin 2019; Schinkel & Van Houdt 2010). The lack of inter-sectoral dialogue and openness about competences and limitations enables inter-sectoral myths to prevail while hampering the development of viable organisational forms. An unreflective commissioning of communities is therefore problematic in at least three ways. First, as regards the integration of refugees, neither form of participation observed and reported here seems conducive to learning and practising an active liberal citizenship, which has become a requirement for obtaining full moral citizenship (Schinkel & Van Houdt 2010). Second, the inter-sectoral distance observed in relation to conditioned participation may mean that legitimacy and resources from both sectors are invested in projects with little chance of accomplishing what they claim to do: integrate and educate refugees through local voluntary communities. Finally, from a democratic point of view, the service provider role of voluntary organisations observed in relation to commissioned communities in general and clientised participation in particular is highly problematic. In an increasingly competitive field, where civil society organisations depend on municipal collaboration to secure funding, the role of co-production partner that pitches in to fill gaps in public services may come at the price of advocating against counterproductive and inhumane policies.

APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF INFORMANTS

Nineteen people were interviewed in 17 interviews (corresponding to the numbers in the left column).

NR	ORGANISATIONAL AFFILIATION OF INFORMANTS	DURATION MINUTES	TITLE/FUNCTION OF INFORMANTS	ROLE IN CROSS-SECTOR CO-PRODUCTION/PROJECT AFFILIATION
	Inter-sectorial organisations			
1	House of volunteers (municipal organization)	75	Project leader and consultant	Responsible for a cross-sector collaborative forum
2	Municipal voluntary council	45	Chairman of the board	Background info on municipal co-production strategies and ongoing projects in the municipality in general
3	The administration of Health, Culture and Leisure	90	Consultant on voluntary associations	Background info on municipal co-production strategies and ongoing projects for refugees
	Municipal staff			
4	Centre for Interdisciplinary Prevention	60	Head of centre	Info on municipal concerns regarding co-production. Involved in 'YAR'
5	Centre for Interdisciplinary Prevention	90	Two informants: Informant 1: Municipal volunteer consultant Informant 2: Head of section: 'The family and employment unit'	Informant 1: Inter-sectorial project leader. Oversees all cross-sector projects/forum Info on municipal concerns regarding co-production
6	Centre for Interdisciplinary Prevention	75	Two informants: Informant 1: Head of secretary Informant 2: Consultant and coordinator of refugee matters	General information on the development of the project YAR
7	Centre for Social Integration	90	Team leader	Temporary housing for refugees
8	Centre for Social Integration	50	Case worker and job coach	Information on municipal integration policy and collaboration with civil society
9	Centre for Social Integration	55	Team leader	Information on municipal integration policy and collaboration with civil society
10	The Centre for Co-production (Municipal centre)	70	Two Informant(s): Two project leaders	Local volunteer centre: knowledge on cross-sector co-production for refugees in one part of the municipality
	Volunteers (Refugee)			
11	Danish Refugee Council, Local chapter	60	Regional consultant	Overview and oversight of several projects. Info on NGO roles in cross-sector co-production

(Contd.)

NR	ORGANISATIONAL AFFILIATION OF INFORMANTS	DURATION MINUTES	TITLE/FUNCTION OF INFORMANTS	ROLE IN CROSS-SECTOR CO-PRODUCTION/PROJECT AFFILIATION
12	Danish Refugee Council, Local chapter	75	Volunteer and chairman of the board	Co-initiator of The Job Club and Cafe Welcome to the Neighbourhood
13	Danish Refugee Council, The National Secretariat	45	Chief of development, Volunteer department	Info on strategic concerns and NGO roles in cross-sector co-production
14	Danish Refugee Council, Local chapter	90	Volunteer 1	Involved in running Cafe Welcome to the neighbourhood and the temporary housing for refugees
15	Danish Refugee Council, Local chapter	30	Volunteer 1 – follow-up interview	Follow-up interview with volunteer in interview nr. 14
16	Danish Refugee Council, Local chapter	45	Volunteer 2 (refugee background)	Volunteer at DRC local chapter
17	The Municipal Congration, Youth Chapter	120	Volunteer and project coordinator	Background info on cross-sector co-production. Participates in a cross-sector forum and in the project on 'Young Adult Refugees'

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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