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Models of Co-operation
between Local
Governments and Social
Organizations –
Migration: Challenges
and Solutions

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The Refugio Berlin

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The Research Project

Models of Co-operation between Local Governments and Social Organizations in Germany and China– Migration: Challenges and Solutions (LoGoSO Germany China) is a comparative research project of the Freie Universität Berlin, the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster and the Chinese Academy of Governance, funded by Stiftung Mercator.

This comparative research project looks at the co-operation between state and social organizations (SOs) in China and Germany. It focusses on social service delivery in the area of integration of migrating populations with special attention to the fields of education, employment, vulnerable groups and social assistance (incl. legal aid) as a crosscutting issue to all of the fields. Within this subject area, the project wants to identify different models of state-SO co-operation and analyze which models are successful and why and where this co-operation is problematic. It aims to capture the different models of co-operation in Germany and China, to analyze and compare the underlying structures and to show potentialities for development.

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1 Introduction

The Sharehouse Refugio is a co-housing project of the *Berliner Stadtmission* (Urban Mission Berlin). Under the slogan “Sharing makes you rich” (“*Teilen macht reich*”), it promotes the idea of a shared living space for people from various backgrounds, who benefit from their interactions. The idea is based on the experience of the founder Sven Lager and his wife in South Africa, where they lived for ten years. They were impressed by the idea of “Ubuntu”, which implies a strong sense of community and mutual help in the light of widespread need for support. The founder felt that this strong sense of sharing resources enriches everyone and ultimately creates a better society. Therefore, he developed the idea of the Sharehouse, together with his wife in South Africa, and founded the first one there (Tricarico 2015). After returning to Berlin, they decided to become active and establish a similar “experiment” in the city (Wuchold 2015). Together with employees of the *Stadtmission*, they further developed the idea; the project took shape and grew quickly. The Refugio is still evolving, depending on the inputs by its inhabitants and their collaboration with external actors. This makes the Refugio a good case for tracing the initial setup and development of a project that strives for no less than to provide a “place of refuge, of community and renewal”¹.

In the following chapter, the development of the managing organization *Stadtmission*, its internal structures, general activities and relationships to other actors will be briefly described. The second chapter then focuses on the Refugio in particular. In order to understand the project and its objectives, the context of refugee accommodation and housing in Berlin needs to be explicated. Therefore, the chapter starts by a short discussion of the situation and challenges regarding refugee accommodation in the city. In the following, the activities conducted within the project, and its relationships with the local government and other organizations, are described. Finally, the model of co-operation is analyzed and some conclusions regarding collaboration in the field of social assistance and housing are drawn.

2 Information on the organization

2.1 General information

The *Berliner Stadtmission* was founded in 1877 in reaction to the rising social emergency following the arrival of regional and international immigrants in Berlin after the German-French War. One of the Mission’s first endeavors was to establish Sunday schools for children. The activities of the *Stadtmission* multiplied in the late 19th and early 20th century, usually combining immediate relief – for instance in terms of providing food – and missionary work – e.g. through education or church services. They are guided by the principle “Seek the welfare of the city and pray to the Lord on its behalf” (Jeremiah 29:7), which is understood as seeking to enhance the welfare of the city’s inhabitants. The *Stadtmission*’s initial target groups were prostitutes, young single mothers, homeless persons and prisoners.

The *Stadtmission* opposed the Nazi regime during the Second World War, thereby losing influence and resources. The buildings and activities of the *Stadtmission* had to be recuperated and partly rebuilt after 1945. Moreover, the working of the Mission was hampered by the separation of Berlin into two parts by the Iron Curtain, even though the management tried to maintain a link between the two de facto separated parts of the organization. After reunification in 1990, rising homelessness led to the reinforcement of activities in homelessness relief and support. Until today, this field remains the

¹ <http://www.refugio.berlin/> (own translation), last accessed 26/10/2018).

Stadtmission's most well-known field of activity, even if it is also engaged in youth work and care for the elderly.²

2.2 Internal governance structures

The *Stadtmission* is an independent association under the umbrella of the Protestant Church Berlin-Brandenburg. It is also a member of the *Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg* (DWBO), which is a regional association of the Diaconia, the German social welfare organization of the Protestant Church. The regional DWBO is the umbrella organization (*Dachverband*) for more than 400 providers of welfare services with 52,000 employees in 1,600 facilities. The DWBO represents its member organizations' interests in the Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations (*Liga der freien Wohlfahrtspflege*) and vis-a-vis other actors.

Today, the *Stadtmission* itself has approximately 1,000 salaried and 1,500 voluntary workers who run 42 facilities in 70 locations in the fields of homelessness, housing, care, refugee support, religion, education, but also in the hotel and gastronomy sector.³ The *Stadtmission* is managed by an Executive Board that consists of two Executive Directors, one of whom is responsible for the theological and the other for the commercial aspects of the work. Moreover, there are four leading executives for the respective fields of the organization, comprising the Diaconia, the Mission, education and encounters. A board of seven trustees supervises and advises the Executive Board, decides on fundamental matters e.g. regarding funding or property management, monitors the implementation of the decisions of the meeting of members, and decides on the foundation of new societies.

The *Stadtmission* consists of an elaborate structure with various sub-organizations that are responsible for different fields of activity. They combine both nonprofit and for-profit endeavors (see figure 1.1). The *Stadtmission* currently owns the *Berliner Stadtmission Gemeinnützige Diakonie Betriebs-GmbH*, a company that has managed the guesthouses and accommodations of the *Stadtmission* since 1994. Moreover, the *Stadtmission* is the owner of the *Komm & Sieh gGmbH*, a nonprofit company that is fostering labor market integration, for instance by running secondhand stores. Furthermore, the *Stadtmission* owns the *Berliner Stadtmission Brandenburgische Diakonie gGmbH*, another nonprofit company that manages three facilities in Brandenburg. Lastly, it is the full owner of the commercial *Hospize-Betriebs-Gesellschaft mbH*, which also has two subsidiaries⁴ itself (Berliner Stadtmission 2017).

² https://www.berliner-stadtmission.de/fileadmin/media/Verein_BSM/Zeitachse/), last accessed 26/10/2018.

³ <https://www.berliner-stadtmission.de/>, last accessed 26/10/2018.

⁴ In addition, the *Hospize Betriebs-GmbH* and the *Stadtmission* jointly own the commercial *Berliner Stadtmission Servicegesellschaft mbH*, which provides e.g. catering and cleaning services for the facilities of the *Stadtmission*.

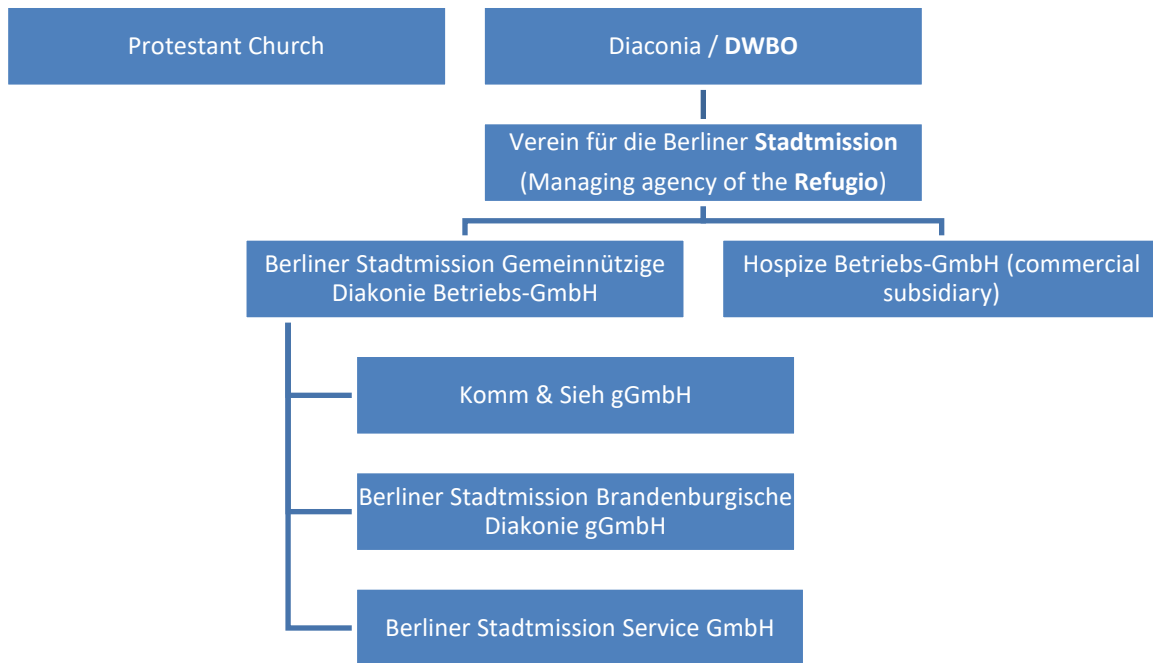


Figure 1-1: Organizational structure of the *Stadtmission*

Own representation based on Berliner Stadtmission 2017.

The Refugio is involved in these networks and therefore has a good connection to other service providers and counselling agencies for refugees. Thus, it can draw on a number of external experts within the umbrella of the *Stadtmission*, even if facilities such as childcare services of the Diaconia do not offer preferential access to inhabitants of the Refugio (REF_MA). Decisions that concern the house and its inhabitants are usually made by the management team of the Refugio, because they are ultimately responsible for the house and must justify their decisions to the Stadtmission (REF_MA). The management team consists of its salaried employees. They involve the inhabitants of the house in their decisions by consulting with speakers who represent the interests of the inhabitants of each floor, among other measures. In addition, the residents of the Refugio can communicate their ideas for the further development of the house to the management team individually: “It is easy to reach people here in the house, so it’s not a problem.” (REF_NU) In particular, propositions regarding activities are received openly. In addition, the residents are involved in the selection of new inhabitants when a room becomes vacant (REF_NU).

The activities of the DWBO are funded by a mix of grants and subsidies (4.2 million Euros in 2015), membership fees (3.7 million Euros), and other operating income (7 million Euros) (Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. 2017: 35). Part of this funding results from cooperation with Protestant communities, which co-fund some of the facilities or projects and use their alms collections for subsidizing the welfare activities of the DWBO. In 2015, the field of refugee counselling was expanded due to the rising needs and availability of public funding for such activities (Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. 2017: 18).

Despite the general use of public funding for welfare and refugee-related issues, no public funds were used for the establishment of the Refugio, whose beginnings were funded exclusively by donations (Knoch 2017; Böttcher 2015). Since then, the share of donations in the total funding of the project has declined, even if donations in kind such as washing machines or furniture are still contributed frequently. By now, the majority of funds stems from the general funds of the *Stadtmission*, which

owns the building and pays for the staff of the Refugio (REF_MA). Another part of the funding for the Refugio comes from contributions of the inhabitants. They either pay their rents from earned incomes or have their housing costs covered by public entities such as the job centers if they are unemployed or if their incomes are insufficient to cover living expenses.⁵

However, the funds provided by the *Stadtmission* cannot cover all the activities that are conducted and all the services that are needed for running the project. Therefore, the Refugio draws on volunteers, e.g. for the in-house café, for providing workshops or tutoring, for implementing arts projects or assisting with administrative procedures (Tricarico 2015). This engagement is carried out by inhabitants, outside volunteers or partly also by the salaried employees of the Refugio (REF_NU; REF_MA). Apart from volunteering in the Refugio, volunteers also support the general work of the *Stadtmission*. This concerns, in particular, the field of homelessness services, where students and retired persons work in emergency shelters or mobile services.⁶ The umbrella organization of the DWBO also involves volunteers in its work. Particularly, the DWBO administers the federally funded programs *Bundesfreiwilligendienst* (Federal Voluntary Services) and *Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr* (Voluntary Social Year). It manages the implementation of these programs by recruiting volunteers, administering the small allowance they receive and allocating the volunteers to the respective service providers (Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. 2017: 20). The large scale and strong institutionalization of volunteer engagement in the *Stadtmission*, and in the networks of the DWBO, allow for a closer accompaniment of, and stronger support for, the volunteers than is the case for independent and smaller organizations. For instance, the umbrella organizations provide supervision, qualifications or exchange activities for the volunteers in their networks (REF_MA).

2.3 Activities

The main goal of the DWBO is to achieve an open and solidary society in which individuals can participate equally in their entire variety (Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. 2017: 3f). Similarly, the *Stadtmission* seeks to respect the dignity of every human being, to release their respective potential and encourage people to dare a new start and acquire a higher quality of life. In order to support this, the *Stadtmission* strives for offering people a home (“*Heimat*”). Moreover, social challenges shall be accepted and addressed constructively. The goals are connected to the Christian basis of the organization, deriving from the belief in the equality and dignity of all people and the responsibility to cater to the welfare of others from this faith. Similarly, the Christian guiding theme to “love your neighbor” is also the basis of the Refugio. It thus promotes paying attention to the wellbeing of those surrounding you and contributing to it with your individual capacities (REF_MA). However, while the *Stadtmission* explicitly seeks to encourage everyone to find the Christian faith (Berliner Stadtmission 2013), the Refugio does not require anyone to become Christian or practice a religion (REF_MA).

The objective of enhancing the welfare of others, and contributing to their advancement, is pursued by the DWBO and its members, including the *Stadtmission*, by a variety of activities for different target groups. They include support and care for the elderly, working with disabled persons, operating hospitals and childcare facilities, youth welfare and psychosocial counselling. In the field of refugee integration, its members are involved in providing refugee accommodations, taking care of unaccompanied minors, supporting integration in child care facilities and schools and fostering

⁵ <https://www.berliner-stadtmission.de/refugio/refugio/refugio/der-ort>, last accessed 26/10/2018.

⁶ https://www.berliner-stadtmission.de/fileadmin/media/Verein_BSM/Zeitachse/, last accessed 26/10/2018.

integration into the labor market (Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. 2017: 3, 24). The role of the DWBO in these activities is to provide support for its members and represent them in the interaction with others, including public agencies. For example, the DWBO strives to acquire additional funding from “social lotteries” or public programs for the activities of its members. In addition, it provides training and counselling to the volunteers engaging in their work (Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. 2017: 18).

The activities of the *Stadtmission* focus on the fields of housing and care. As mentioned before, services for the homeless are an important part of it, but it also provides institutionalized care to the elderly, persons with disabilities and youth. Since 2014, it has also provided an emergency accommodation for refugees. Apart from merely offering a shelter, the *Stadtmission* is striving to advance the chances of their target groups further by offering counselling, leisure activities for children, youth and families, running educational facilities and involving their participants in their commercial activities such as the secondhand shops. These commercial subsidiaries also help with raising the revenue needed for the social activities of the organization, while at the same time striving to implement an economic model that focuses on the human beings involved rather than on generating profits.⁷

2.4 Networks

The description of the activities of the *Stadtmission* demonstrates the strong relationships and support provided by the umbrella of the DWBO and the connection to the Protestant Church. They generate the potential for synergies by raising, bundling and redistributing resources in terms of funding and knowledge. In addition, the multilevel structure of the organizations and their umbrellas is used strategically for gaining influence in policymaking while at the same time remaining in close contact with the respective target groups.

Cooperation between different providers and federations is a well-established practice in many respects. There is quite a number of instances of good collaboration between politics and public administration and the Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations in Berlin and Brandenburg, where Diaconia is currently taking the lead management. (Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. 2017: 3, own translation)

Due to the traditional corporatist German welfare regime, being a member of the Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organizations provides the DWBO and, through this umbrella, also the *Stadtmission* with good access to policymakers (Boeckh *et al.* 2017; Eyßell 2015; Freise and Zimmer 2019 (i.V.)). Apart from structural involvement of the federations in policymaking at the national level of government, the DWBO also engages in lobbying and advocacy at the local or regional levels. For example, it actively promoted the consolidation of funding schemes between the different districts in Berlin when the new coalition agreement was developed, in order to facilitate Berlin-wide activities and to reduce administrative costs (Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. 2017: 18).

In addition to the networks of its umbrella organizations, the Refugio also disposes of its own relations to other local actors. A number of organizations collaborate with the Refugio and/or have their offices in the building. They include, for instance, the award-winning agency and networking platform “Give Something Back to Berlin”, whose members call themselves “50 shades of immigrants”. They are actively engaged in fostering intercultural exchange, promoting volunteering and active participation

⁷ <https://www.berliner-stadtmission.de/>, last accessed 26/10/2018.

of various groups of migrants in their new society in Berlin.⁸ Similarly, the project “Berlin Artists Connected” (Berlin AC), funded by a foundation (*Stiftung Kunstfonds*), is providing studios to artists for several months, to foster exchange between artists of various cultural backgrounds.⁹

Moreover, the Refugio strives to open up to the surrounding neighborhood and to involve the neighbors in its own activities. For example, it provides a language café where anyone, irrespective of language capacities, nationality etc., can participate. The management team has also announced that it will open its regular Christmas Market to the public this year, to enhance the visibility of the Refugio in the neighborhood and engage surrounding residents. These networks are still under construction:

Exactly, so we are still working at it [the networking with neighboring organizations], because, of course, the house is only three years old. That sounds like a long time, but it is short for a project such as this one. And then you often fall back into such orientation phases. (REF_MA)¹⁰

Apart from institutionalized networking at the level of the Refugio or the *Stadtmission*, refugees shall also be empowered to speak up for themselves and represent their own interests. For example, the interviewed resident was a speaker in the network “citizens’ platform” (“*Bürgerplattform*”), in which a variety of organizations collaborate and engage in shaping their respective communities (REF_NU).¹¹

3 Information on the program and the co-operation with the local government

3.1 General information on the selected program and its development

3.1.1 Refugee accommodation and housing in Berlin

Accommodation and housing for refugees is one of the most challenging fields of integration in Berlin. The housing market is very tense and social housing, refugee accommodations and support services such as childcare facilities and schools must compete for the few available plots for new construction in the city (LAV_VER).

According to official public policy, accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees in Berlin should theoretically follow a stepwise procedure with increasing autonomy and decreasing social assistance, first at reception centers, then to group accommodations, and finally to independent living in apartments. However, the implementation of this policy stalls in practice due to the high number of new arrivals in recent years and the shortage of housing options. Until today, regular housing is so scarce that recognized refugees often remain in group accommodations even if they are legally entitled to enter decentral accommodation in regular apartments (SenIAS_KSFM; LAV_VER; Runder Tisch zur Versorgung von Flüchtlingen 2016; Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2018; see also the report on *Be an Angel* in this work package).

In 2015 and 2016, the high number of newly arriving asylum seekers required the rapid opening of new accommodation facilities, including emergency accommodations e.g. in sports halls (Gluns 2018b: 13f). Consequently, the number of providers increased, including both new for-profit and nonprofit

⁸ <http://gsbtb.org/de/about/>, last accessed 29/10/2018.

⁹ <https://www.berliner-stadtmission.de/refugio/kuenstlerprojekt>, last accessed 30/10/2018.

¹⁰ „Genau, da sind wir auch so ein bisschen dabei, weil natürlich das Haus jetzt erst drei Jahre alt ist, sage ich mal. Das klingt zwar lange, ist aber für so ein Projekt relativ kurz. Und man dann immer wieder in so Findungsphasen zurückfällt.“

¹¹ See also <https://www.buergergesellschaft.de/praxishilfen/community-organizing/beispiele-aus-der-praxis/berliner-buergerplattform-neukoelln/>, last accessed 29/10/2018.

organizations. The time pressure in opening facilities implied that the usual regulations regarding public tenders could not be respected. As a result, a number of difficulties regarding the awarding of contracts arose, because formal standards of tendering were not followed. In addition, some providers did not comply with the quality standards required by the public contracts (LAF_VER; SenIAS_KSFM). Now, the market of providers of refugee accommodations is consolidating. Some for-profit and non-profit organizations have withdrawn from the field, for example because they have based many of their activities on volunteer work, which cannot be sustained for over the course of many years. Others are trying to maintain their activities, which enhances competition. Currently, up to 20 bids are submitted for one call, i.e. competition is rather high (LAF_VER).

The tendering procedure has now become more formal (LAF_VER). However, despite the formal procedure, relationships and informal contacts between some providers and policymakers persist. Some providers argue for advantaged conditions, contending that they have supported the city in times of need and now should be recompensed for these efforts. However, if policymakers conceded to these demands and e.g. passed on information informally, this could inhibit the legality of the procedure, which is why the responsible department underlines the necessity of following the official regulations regarding the awarding of public contracts (LAF_VER).

The current local government is also trying to improve integration and enhance the quality of refugee accommodations through the tendering procedure. Therefore, the awarding of public contracts for accommodations managed by the LAF now imposes a number of quality criteria rather than basing the selection of the provider merely on the cheapest price. The price is now weighted by 30 percent, whereas quality criteria are weighted by 70 percent of the total points to be obtained. These criteria include the quality of the concept for the management of the accommodation, as well as the development of an integration concept (LAF 2018). The concepts shall include, for instance, information on how to ensure security for the inhabitants¹², how to involve the local civil society and how to achieve integration. Depending on the type of accommodation, providers are furthermore required to include social support, e.g. by employing social workers (LAF_VER). Some providers also offer psychosocial counselling or support for the residents of their accommodations if it is their organization's expertise. When a contract is awarded, these requirements and services are included in the contracts and compliance is then monitored by public agencies (LAF_VER). The specification of qualitative standards, and the respective monitoring procedures, have been increased recently due to some negative experiences with a few providers (Bachner 2017)

Moreover, the coalition agreement calls for the development of a centralized quality assurance management and a complaints procedure¹³ for the accommodations managed by the State Office for

¹² The topic of security had raised conflicts in 2015/16, when some negative experiences were made with sub-contracted security personnel (cf. Runder Tisch zur Versorgung von Flüchtlingen 2016).

¹³ This procedure shall supplement the regular complaints procedures that providers are required to provide. This additional and centralized procedure has been developed in collaboration with a university and is currently tested in a pilot project with five providers in four districts in Berlin. It was developed based on propositions by a grass-roots initiative of refugee women who proposed a peer-to-peer system where feedback on accommodation quality is collected by refugees according to a structured questionnaire and then passed on anonymously to an independent mediating body, a nonprofit organization, which forwards them to the respective public agencies who discuss the results in a multi-stakeholder advisory board involving providers and refugees (SenIAS_KSFM; see also „Kurzkonzept Pilotprojekt Unabhängiges Beschwerdemanagement in Flüchtlingsunterkünften – Modell und Anforderungsprofil“ (23.05.2018)). Between January and September 2018, 277 complaints were filed, most of them concerning problems that were already known, e.g. regarding the quality of the accommodations (Koordinierungsstelle Flüchtlingsmanagement 2018: 10–12).

Refugees (*Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten, LAF*) (SenIAS_KSFM). The development of this procedure and the improvement of the quality of refugee accommodations is managed by the Coordination Refugee Management (*Koordination Flüchtlingsmanagement*).¹⁴ Furthermore, the agency is expanding this objective to achieving inclusive housing models. This means that it seeks to overcome the model of separated emergency accommodation facilities for refugees and foster the co-housing of various groups, tailored to respective individual needs (see also the presentation of the Master Plan in *Runder Tisch zur Versorgung von Flüchtlingen 2016*).

So far, the development of this objective, and the corresponding measures to achieve it, are still ongoing, but the interviewee outlined a number of steps that had already been taken towards a comprehensive housing strategy. They comprise, for example, the Modular Accommodations for Refugees (*Modulare Unterkünfte für Flüchtlinge, MUF*), i.e. individual housing units with their own kitchens and bathrooms, which are currently constructed in various locations throughout Berlin. Even if these units are currently exclusively used for accommodating refugees, they are designed in a way that they can also house other types of households such as students at times with lower numbers of asylum seekers. At the same time, the units offer more privacy and independent living to the refugees and thus do not differ strongly from regular apartments or shared living arrangements.

The concept of inclusive housing also implies to fully respect the needs of different vulnerable groups, such as formerly homeless persons, large families or single mothers. Newly created housing shall ensure that such different groups can live together according to their individual needs (SenIAS_KSFM; Senat Berlin 2016: 28f). Various organizations are involved in the development of these housing forms, including public agencies and departments at the level of the Senate and the districts, non-profit organizations and initiatives as well as refugees and other target groups. For instance, the Coordinator initiated monthly “expert talks” where refugees are strategically involved in policymaking as experts for their own lives, directly providing opinions and input into the policy-making process. Invitations for these talks are communicated by migrants’ organizations and NPOs that are also partly involved in these rounds if they can provide additional information on the topic of the respective session. The input provided by the refugees is then passed on to the policymakers responsible for the topics at hand (SenIAS_KSFM).¹⁵

Moreover, contacts between refugees and the autochthone population in Berlin shall be fostered, because refugees in group accommodations so far complain about a lack of interaction and exchange. Therefore, large newly opened accommodations are accompanied by community work in a program by the Senate Administration for Urban Development together with the districts, called BENN – Berlin

¹⁴ The activities of the Coordination are also outlined in materials provided by the interviewee, including „Themenübersicht und Projekte Koordinierung Flüchtlingsmanagement“ (23.05.2018), „Kurzkonzept Pilotprojekt Unabhängiges Beschwerdemanagement in Flüchtlingsunterkünften – Modell und Anforderungsprofil“ (23.05.2018), „Kurzkonzept AG Qualitätsstandards/ Unterbringungs-TÜV (23.05.2018), „Kurzkonzept Expert*innen-Talk. Leben als Geflüchtete*r in Berlin“ (23.05.2018), „Struktur Abschlussveranstaltung Expert*innen-Talk. 18.12.2018, 16-19 Uhr. Leben als Geflüchtete*r in Berlin (28.08.2018), „Kurzkonzept Einrichtung eines runden Tisches ‚Alternativen zur öffentlichen Unterbringung geflüchteter Menschen‘“ (22.05.2018), „Kurzkonzept Newsletter Flüchtlingsmanagement“ (April 2018). These documents have been used for the analysis of this case study.

¹⁵ Topics and results of these processes can be accessed on the website of the Coordination Refugee Management at <https://www.berlin.de/koordfm/themen/qualitaetsmanagement/gremien-und-arbeitsgruppen/artikel.703555.php> (last accessed 07/11/2018).

Develops New Neighborhoods (*Berlin Entwickelt Neue Nachbarschaften*) (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2017: 28f, 74f).

While the quality of publicly managed accommodations shall be improved, refugees' access to private housing shall also be enhanced. Therefore, a round table has been established under the auspices of the Senate Administration for Justice. It is jointly presided over by The State Secretary for Integration in the Senate Administration for Integration, Labor and Social Affairs (SenIAS, *Senatsverwaltung für Integration, Arbeit und Soziales*) and the State Secretary for Housing in the Senate Administration for Urban Development and Housing (SenSW, *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen*). They have invited representatives of the districts, of municipal and private housing companies and counselling agencies to discuss the barriers to the housing market and the possibilities for increasing the available housing supply. In addition, they seek to reduce the disadvantages for refugees in the housing market in Berlin. The participants agree on the need for a centralized counselling agency on housing that bundles information on available housing options and access to them and providing this information to refugees (SenIAS_KSFM). In addition, some districts and nonprofit organizations are already trying to support refugees' access to private housing through counselling and outreach efforts to landlords (cf. Bachner 2017; Bündnis Neukölln 2017; Coldewey 2015).

In sum, integration is usually understood as equal participation in society and its resources, including housing. The interview partners, as well as the policy documents analyzed for this study – including publicly available material and documents provided by the interview partners, underline the importance of networking between public, private and nonprofit organizations in order to overcome the currently difficult situation of refugees on the local housing market in Berlin (see also SenIAS_KSFM). All actors shall join forces to improve the quality of publicly financed accommodations on the one hand and increase private housing options on the other. Moreover, integration in terms of personal contacts shall be fostered.

3.1.2 Housing in the Refugio

The former subchapter has demonstrated the political will of the current local government to improve refugee accommodation and housing, overcome the difficulties encountered since 2015 and contribute to integration through the available housing opportunities. However, this is a long process: Currently, there are still a number of emergency accommodations, many recognized refugees have to remain in group facilities due to the lack of housing supply, and most inhabitants in Berlin are struggling with rising housing prices. Moreover, exchange between autochthone groups and “newcomers” – even if these have lived in Berlin for years – does not arise automatically but needs to be actively promoted (Koordinierungsstelle Flüchtlingsmanagement 2018: 4–6; SenIAS_KSFM; LAF_VER; see also the report on Be an Angel in this work package).

In this context, the Refugio can be understood as a very advanced example of co-habitation and contacts or – in the words of one interviewee – as an example for the “next step” of integration (REF_MA). It condenses the goal of the *Stadtmission* to offer everyone a home by literally offering a new home and a new community to its residents.¹⁶ Each resident has his or her private room. However, in contrast to a normal apartment kitchens and other community facilities such as washing machines, are shared by each floor, which is inhabited by app. 12 persons each (REF_MA). By sharing these facilities and fostering a number of additional community activities and events, the Refugio is going

¹⁶ <http://www.refugio.berlin/>, last accessed 26/10/2018.

beyond mere “accommodation” or “lodging” by implying shared living and mutual assistance. Its encompassing concept of living and working together expands beyond the group of inhabitants and invites everyone to contribute to the community, with the overarching goal of reconstructing society and making it more equitable (Knoch 2017).

The founders developed the idea of Sharehouses in South Africa, where sharing is a widespread practice due to the widespread needs and limited resources of various groups. Seeing the needs of newcomers in Berlin, and striving for contributing to societal change, they established a Sharehouse in the city. Initially, the project began at a much smaller scale, as a neighborhood program in one apartment. The founder then got to know the divisional manager of the *Stadtmission*, who was involved in another project around the corner of this first apartment. The manager was soon enthusiastic about the idea of a shared living project intended to promote integration and offered the now vacant building of a former home for the elderly of the *Stadtmission* in Berlin-Neukölln to expand the housing project (REF_MA; Wuchold 2015). The former use of the building was helpful for the concept of shared living, as the layout of the house already included individual rooms with private bathrooms and large community facilities such as kitchens and common rooms. Moreover, the entire building is accessible for persons with disabilities and thus open to any kind of resident or visitor. In 2017, the Refugio was fully handed over to the *Stadtmission*, which is now solely responsible for the project.

When the first residents moved in, the house was not yet developed to the point it is now. For example, the café was installed later and some renovations such as a new coat of paint were undertaken (Scholz 2015; Wuchold 2015). These works were carried out with the help of Refugio’s residents and “[b]y the time [the house] became more beautiful, more alive, I would say” (REF_NU). Moreover, residents contribute actively to the community by assisting at events, volunteering in the in-house café and maintaining communal spaces such as the roof garden. These activities provide further opportunities for interaction and exchange. The lively community is also fostered by the communal “house dinner” every Friday, where the residents come together. However, participation in the dinner is not compulsory and usually not all inhabitants are present, because they have their own independent lives with their respective commitments, friendships and activities (REF_MA). This independence is one of the stated goals of the Refugio, and residents shall be further empowered to pursue their own projects. Ultimately, this is assumed to also benefit the community and the neighborhood (Tricarico 2015).

The empowerment of the refugees living in the Refugio shall be achieved first by reducing their treatment as a separate group. Instead, they are integrated into the house and the neighborhood as regular inhabitants. Each inhabitant is perceived as a person with resources who can – and shall – contribute something to the community (Knoch 2017). If refugees require support for achieving integration, for instance regarding written communication with public agencies or seeking a place in childcare, this support shall be provided at eye level between residents. In this sense, the Refugio differs from regular group accommodations where support is provided by professional staff employed by the housing provider.

The model of the Refugio is intended to foster mutual learning through regular exchange between individuals of various backgrounds (REF_MA). In order for this scheme to work, the diversity of the house’s inhabitants is an explicit goal that is pursued actively by “casting” new residents in the case of vacancies (Tricarico 2015):

You really have to apply for a place, of course. At first, a room has to be free, and then you have to apply. [...] Such a small motivation letter, and you have to see that the person who is applying really knows that this is a community, that it is not a group accommodation where you close your door and that's it. But here, you have a share that you give back to the house. (REF_MA)¹⁷

The management team makes a pre-selection of all candidates on the waiting list and proposes three candidates to the residents of the respective floor. The inhabitants interview the preselected candidates and decide on the allocation of the room, because “[t]hey have to live with them, so that is kind of important (laughs).” (REF_MA)¹⁸ The new inhabitant then becomes part of the respective floor community that jointly uses facilities such as washing machines. In this regard, the model of the Refugio resembles the shared-living apartments which are very common e.g. among students and which foster community and mutual learning (Böttcher 2015).

3.2 Distribution of responsibilities in the program

The Refugio understands itself as a “workshop for a heavenly society”¹⁹, which is conceptualized as an open space for neighbors from Berlin and elsewhere. By networking with various initiatives, organizations and individuals, access of the *Stadtmission* to various groups of Berliners shall be enhanced. The activities and relationships of the Refugio depend on the persons involved – including the interests and inputs of the inhabitants – as well as on the tasks and challenges at hand and thus evolve over time. An example of the changing needs, and resulting activities of the Refugio, is the provision of counselling and “first aid”. During the peak of new arrivals in the second half of 2015, some newly arriving asylum seekers were referred to the Refugio for support. The residents provided them with everything they needed, from shelter and food to counselling and assistance with the asylum application procedure. Refugees who had arrived earlier, and were thus more knowledgeable regarding the structures and procedures of life in Berlin, provided peer-to-peer support. By this engagement, the residents compensated for the evident shortcomings of the public and institutionalized support systems (Tricarico 2015; see also the report on *Be an Angel* in this work package). At the same time, they were able to become active and experience the possibility to help others. When the numbers of new arrivals sank, such support was needed less often, and activities shifted to assisting with other matters such as searching for childcare facilities or employment possibilities. Such assistance is mostly provided spontaneously, even if certain hours for counselling are also scheduled.

Apart from such individual assistance, inhabitants are also supported in pursuing more structured projects. The in-house activities are diverse and reach from running the café at the ground floor of the building, organizing various events, to conducting a language café or yoga classes that aim at fostering exchange between different groups of inhabitants in the neighborhood. In addition, residents from Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey and Germany are currently developing education programs on topics such as social and economic recommencement, social participation and migration in the framework of the “Refugio Lab” that they have founded (Berliner Stadtmission 2018: 2). If necessary,

¹⁷ „Man muss sich hier dann richtig bewerben natürlich. Es muss erstmal ein Zimmer frei sein, dann muss man sich richtig bewerben. [...] So ein kleines Motivations Schreiben und man muss schon merken, dass derjenige oder diejenige, die sich hier bewerben wirklich wissen, es ist eine Gemeinschaft, also es ist nicht so ein Wohnheim, wo man die Tür zu macht und das war es. Sondern man hat halt hier so einen Anteil, den man zurück gibt an das Haus.“

¹⁸ „Die müssen ja mit denen auch leben, das ist dann schon wichtig (lacht).“

¹⁹ „Werkstatt für Himmlische Gesellschaft“, <https://www.berliner-stadtmission.de/refugio/wir-ueber-uns>, last accessed 30/10/2018.

the Refugio provides assistance such as counselling or makes space in the house available for the activities of its residents.

Residents shall also be involved in the decision-making process of the project itself. Since there were no blueprints for such co-housing facilities in Germany, the Refugio can be described as a “learning by doing” experience, resulting in a dynamic process of continuous adaptation and structural changes. For example, the responsibility for the Refugio within the *Stadtmission* has recently been reassigned from the organizational field “Mission” to the “Diaconia”, including a change in the responsible executive (REF_MA). Such dynamics have brought about some insecurity for the inhabitants. In addition, they were sometimes disappointed regarding the degree of participation in decision-making. These difficulties are perceived as problems of communication regarding both the expectations of participation and the transparency of the respective decisions (REF_MA). Therefore, one of the lessons learned so far is that communication must draw on all the available channels, and that sometimes a clear statement regarding the scope and limits of participation, is needed. In particular, the management team needs to take decisions regarding security issues or administration autonomously, because they are ultimately responsible for the outcome and need to legitimize them vis-à-vis the *Stadtmission* (REF_MA). While three years of existence are perceived as short for a project such as the Refugio, a certain degree of stability has nonetheless been reached and shall now be built upon to consolidate and expand relationships both within the house and with external stakeholders (REF_MA).

The Refugio has also drawn on outside experts to supplement its own expertise and capacities for the development of the project. For example, the roof garden was developed together with students and professors of the Technical University Berlin (Weissmüller 2015). Moreover, the facilities of the Refugio, such as the hall and conference rooms, can be rented for external events (Berliner Stadtmission 2018: 3).

3.3 Co-operation with the local government

In contrast to the group accommodations for asylum seekers managed by the LAF, housing in the Refugio is organized as in a “regular” apartment. Thus, even if the *Stadtmission* is the owner of the building, it does not manage the Refugio as a group accommodation where housing is provided in kind and the provider is reimbursed by the public purse based on a contract with the LAF. Instead, each inhabitant pays the rent for his or her lodging to the *Stadtmission*. The *Stadtmission* also takes care of the administration of the building, which is why the employees of the Refugio do not directly enter into contact with public agencies and do not have to write applications for funding or proposals for publicly funded projects. In the case of residents whose incomes are insufficient for covering the rent, the responsible public agency such as the job center supplements these incomes or covers housing costs completely by paying the rent to the *Stadtmission*. These regulations are equal for recognized refugees and Germans (cf. Gluns 2018a). According to the employee of the Refugio, they have not experienced any problems regarding the assumption of housing costs by public agencies (REF_MA).

In those cases, the residents directly enter into contact with the responsible public agencies and apply for funding. Moreover, they have contacts with various other public and semi-public actors in Berlin, for instance regarding administrative proceedings. Some of these issues are perceived as problematic. For example, the rules for family reunification – which have been greatly restricted in Germany in recent years – often do not allow for family members in the countries of origin or in transit to join the refugees in Germany. Moreover, regulations regarding the asylum procedure and residence titles are partly a problem, even if most of the refugees living in the Refugio are already recognized as refugees

or have been granted subsidiary protection (REF_MA). Another key issue for many inhabitants was the question of how to obtain a place in childcare. These places are scarce (cf. AWO_MA) and mothers have to make various phone calls to find a facility with free places. While this is difficult for all mothers in Berlin, foreigners might encounter additional difficulties such as a lack of German language skills or a lack of information. In those cases, fellow residents and volunteers of the Refugio provide assistance, e.g. by explaining mothers the system in Berlin and helping with the communication. The employees of the Refugio also establish networks with the district, brokering contacts to mothers of newly born children and asking for further support (REF_MA).

Other contacts between the tenants of the Refugio and public organizations are smooth and do not impose any obstacles. For example, the interviewed resident was studying in a master's course at the university at the time of the interview. He described that access to the university was easy after having completed a language course and submitted all the documents needed for inscription. As his degree is mostly in English, which he speaks fluently, he does not encounter any language difficulties (REF_NU).

In terms of contributing to policymaking, the Refugio possesses significant networks to key persons such as the former local mayor (*Bezirksbürgermeisterin*) and office holders in high positions in the public administration. Many of those local policymakers have visited the project. They are usually highly interested in the project's proceedings and convinced of its positive impact. These connections could be used to provide inputs into policymaking or ask for support, if needed (REF_MA). Moreover, the Refugio and its employees, as well as representatives of the *Stadtmission* or the DWBO, are involved in structured coordinating bodies and institutions for knowledge exchange such as round tables (cf. Runder Tisch zur Versorgung von Flüchtlingen 2016). Contacts are particularly dense with educational institutions as well as organizations that deal with integration in general (REF_MA).

Taken together, collaboration with the local government and administration is mainly established on a case-by-case basis. As the Refugio is not a "group accommodation" but a shared living space for various individuals, funding is not provided based on a contract but depending on the financial support needs of the respective resident. This support is provided according to the general support systems – i.e. those for German citizens and recognized refugees – or to the separate systems for asylum seekers.

3.4 Assessment of the effect of the program

The Refugio is conceptualized as a shared living space that is co-designed by its residents. Therefore, they were "establishing a group to come up with new ideas, how to make Refugio a better place" (REF_NU). The contributions of the residents include voluntary engagement and participation in the manifold activities of the Refugio. These activities can empower refugees and can help them to overcome the difficulties of their flight (Böttcher 2015). While the model of shared living thus creates opportunities for co-production and shaping your living environment, it is also time-consuming and can clash with other commitments, especially for those inhabitants who are working and/or studying at the same time or who are engaged in other volunteering activities outside the Refugio (REF_NU; REF_MA). Therefore, community life changes with the turnover of residents and with changes in their individual living situations and there are times when the community is not as active as initially envisaged. However, this can be seen as an indicator for successful integration, because it implies that the residents are so well involved in other structures that they do not have the time to volunteer in the Refugio.

In general, the project is considered highly successful by policymakers as well as by its residents:

It's like a new lifestyle, it is something really new, it is something very nice. It is not just like a house or just a room where you can live. It is a community; your neighbors could become more like a family, sort of. And you have people who really want to support you, people who want to help you. So, you feel like you have all the tools to start feeling a little bit happier and being more a little bit optimistic about the future [...] (REF_NU)

Shared living affords the possibility to overcome the difficulties of regular refugee accommodations, which are often crowded while simultaneously being isolated from the German society. The Refugio, instead, allows entering into contact with the autochthone population and the surrounding neighborhood (Brömse 2015). At the same time, living together with other persons always entails the potential for conflicts. This is no different in the case of the Refugio, where residents of one floor comprises very different age groups, nationalities, household compositions etc.

REF_NU: Yes, so of course, we have problems and we need to solve it. It's like, you know, like dishwasher issues, washing machine issues. Like, something left, some food behind. It's just small things.

IN: And how do you solve them?

REF_NU: Being angry on the WhatsApp group (laughs).

Other issues are resolved by convening a meeting and trying to reach consensus on how to proceed. In this sense, the house is a real community, in which conflicts are addressed jointly and where each resident participates and contributes individually according to his or her capacities and preferences.

However, one of the goals that has not been achieved is to conceptualize living in the Refugio as a time-limited step in the integration process. Initially, it was expected that residence remain in the project for app. 18 months, during which they should be enabled to learn or improve their German language capacities, stabilize their living situation in terms of finding employment, and also find a community. Experience shows that this duration is usually exceeded, because on the one hand, finding another apartment is difficult, and on the other, the community aspect has become a strong and highly valued aspect of the residents' lives which they are reluctant to let go of (REF_MA): "I would like to have more and more projects like this. Because I think, I consider myself as a very lucky person for being here." (REF_NU)

The scholarship program "ANKOMMER. Perspektive Deutschland" by the KfW foundation and Social Impact gGmbH, has asserted the success of the project with a special prize, endowed with 10,000 Euros. The program is supporting initiatives and social enterprises that help refugees to integrate into the labor market. The prize was awarded to the Refugio for its special concept that combines housing, working and personal encounters. The concept is understood as fostering active contributions to the community, thereby making society more sustainable (Köchling 2016).²⁰

In sum, the project is highly successful in fostering integration and exchange and providing a living experiment and model of co-habitation and community life. In the eyes of both the founders and the users of the project, this should not remain a single instance, but should instead be used as a blueprint for similar projects, thereby spreading the idea and enhancing its impact (REF_NU; Tricarico 2015). This expansion could be publicly supported, as the Refugio is contributing to many publicly stated goals. As many of the residents pay for their rooms from earned income, the public funding needs of the

²⁰ See also https://www.kfw.de/KfW-Konzern/Newsroom/Aktuelles/News/News-Details_359296.html, last accessed 30/10/2018.

project are very limited. The biggest problem is the availability of buildings. A policy change from building refugee accommodations to shared living concepts is already underway (cf. SenIAS_KSFM), thus opening possibilities for further Refugios or similar co-housing projects.

The strengths of the project become clear when compared to the regular model of refugee accommodations: Asylum seekers, and even recognized refugees, are usually housed in group facilities with high residential densities (Runder Tisch zur Versorgung von Flüchtlingen 2016). The buildings exclusively house refugees, thereby separating them from the autochthone population and inhibiting social integration in terms of personal contacts. Therefore, professional staff such as social workers have to meet any need for support and advice – e.g. regarding counselling on how to access employment, education or health care (LAF_VER; SenIAS_KSFM). In the case of the Refugio, such support is provided by fellow residents, if needed. At the same time, refugees in the Refugio have the possibility to give something back by assisting their co-tenants with their own capacities. Moreover, contracts for running a refugee accommodation are now highly formalized by European and national law. Official calls for bids must be published for each part of the contract, e.g. regarding separate contracts for managing the facility and ensuring its security. They are usually awarded for 24 to 36 months, after which a new call is published, and a new application must be compiled by the provider (cf. LAF_VER). Administration in the case of the Refugio is easier. The house is owned by the provider, who allocates housing units – in the case of the Refugio consisting of private rooms and bathrooms – individually to achieve social diversity. If assistance with housing costs is needed, this is also provided on an individual basis.

However, the regular accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers is also undergoing reform under the current government. The measures to monitor and improve the quality of regular accommodations, the active networking and collaboration both within the public administration and with civil society actors and the measures to empower refugees themselves are pointing towards a number of improvements that can be expected in the future (SenIAS_KSFM; LAF_VER). Moreover, community living as in the Refugio is not the best option for everyone, irrespective of their nationality or residence status:

It depends, some people don't like to live in big communities. I know some people, who moved in here and then they moved out after a couple of months, because it is a very busy place; it is not a quiet place. (REF_NU)

Therefore, public agencies should foster a variety of housing options for both long-term Berliners, and newcomers of all ages and backgrounds, in order to afford everyone a choice of his or her living situations. This can be compared to a jigsaw puzzle in which various pieces need to be combined to provide spaces for all groups, including vulnerable groups such as elderly, disabled, or LGBTI persons (SenIAS_KSFM). Cooperation with nonprofit organizations, which are close to their respective target groups, can help to tailor housing to the needs and interests of different societal groups.

4 Conclusion

The Refugio is primarily a case of indirect and individualized cooperation between public agencies and nonprofit organizations. Cooperation is not institutionalized in a contract or other formalized arrangements. Instead, it arises on a case-by-case basis depending on the living situation and support needs of its residents. In this sense, cooperation does not differ between residents with a migration or refugee background and autochthone Germans: public agencies are involved in their respective functions, be it as providers of childcare services, of housing allowances or social benefits. In this regard,

all residents are confronted with problems such as the scarcity of housing opportunities or childcare facilities in Berlin. However, the legal situation of refugees imposes some additional obstacles that autochthone Germans do not encounter. They include in particular the legal status that is connected to residence rights, the right to take up employment or to bring one's family to Germany from the countries of origin or transit. These legal conditions thus create additional contacts between the residents and public agencies and can become a source of conflict.

At the same time, the Refugio is part of the *Stadtmission*, which in turn is a member of both the Diaconia as a large welfare association and the Protestant church. This embeddedness provides the Refugio with a number of resources that independent nonprofits do not possess and that facilitate the involvement in policymaking and implementation due to the traditional corporatist structures of the German welfare state. These structures largely persist despite reforms in recent years (cf. Zimmer and Freise 2019 (i.V.)). The system entails the institutionalized involvement of the welfare associations in policy procedures at the various federal levels – in particular at the regional and national level – as well as informal relationships between these associations and public entities. They aggregate their member organizations' interests and represent these in the political decision-making processes (cf. Heinze and Olk 1981). Moreover, the associations and their (local) members are strongly involved in providing social services on behalf of and with funding by the state.

In the case of the Refugio, this involvement is also rather indirect: The Refugio is not mandated to provide housing to particular groups by public actors. Instead, individuals have developed the housing model based on their perception of prevailing needs in Berlin. These needs comprise both housing and support needs of refugees and migrants, as well as wider needs for societal change in terms of enhancing community cohesion. However, in spite of this "bottom-up" development and indirect relations to public actors, the Refugio contributes to a variety of publicly stated goals such as refugee integration and empowerment. Its success in this regard is demonstrated by the wide recognition by policymakers and other stakeholders as well as by the satisfaction of its residents. Therefore, the Senate and the districts in Berlin could consider supporting the scaling of this idea, e.g. by providing public buildings for establishing similar co-housing projects. This would contribute to solving the current housing shortage, while at the same time conforming to the traditional model of shared responsibilities between public and private actors. The model has several advantages. Firstly, the administration of such projects is much easier than the provision of group accommodations or public housing. Secondly, shared living contributes to mutual learning and thus fosters social integration in terms of personal contacts. Thirdly, the mutual support decreases the need for institutionalized and professional support, i.e. voluntary engagement directly decreases public costs. At the same time, public actors should honor and support the huge efforts that need to be invested by civil society in order to establish such a project, for instance by providing additional infrastructure or funding for the manifold individual activities that characterize the Refugio.

Interviews:

AWO_MA	Counselling Agency for Women by the AWO, employees (Frauenberatungsstelle der Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Mitarbeiterinnen 1 und 2)
LAF_VER	State Office for Refugees, Department for the Awarding of Contracts (Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten, Abteilung Vergabe)
REF_MA	Refugio, employee
REF_NU	Refugio, user and inhabitant
SenIAS_KSFM	Senate Administration for Integration, Labor and Social Affairs, Coordinating Agency Refugee Management (Senatsverwaltung für Integration, Arbeit und Soziales, Koordinierungsstelle Flüchtlingsmanagement)

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