16. Januar 2020

Dear Forschungskolloquium Flucht,

I am very pleased to join your sessions for the first time and get to know all of you! Please find below the draft of my article on **logics of support in labour market integration projects targeting refugee women in Germany**. I am thankful for any kinds of comments and feedback!

I aim to submit this paper soon in an **international journal on reception, integration policies and governance of migration and asylum**. The audience of this paper, consequently, is international, with expertise in reception policies. I aim to contribute to debates by investigating empirically **the (increasing) overlaps of asylum policies with labour policies and its ambivalent gendered effects on the ground**.

In the last months I struggled enormously with complying with the character limitation (max. 10.000 words). First drafts were rather a chapter of a whole book. This is why in this draft I aimed at radically shortening parts of my analysis and tried to reach a more abstract level, less focused on individual expressions of practitioners and keeping instead the larger organisational context and comparative view in focus. Now the paper is short (current status: 7.000). But: **Do you have the impression this actually worked out? More important: In which parts do you indeed miss more empirical insights or quotes?**

Further questions for discussion

- **Do you miss a "context chapter" or which kind of context information is lacking?** I explained my case selection (Germany) in the introduction more in detail, while referring to the state-of-the-art and my theory in chapter 2.
- Because of the shortening procedure some points might need further clarification in **chapter 2**.
- Do you miss **references** in the empirical analysis or the discussion? In which parts/arguments would you find references enriching or necessary?
- Do you miss further **organisational context information** in the empirical analysis?

My next steps will be to **further elaborate the empirical analysis,** including (again) extending this chapter a little bit.

Sorry for my English, if you see spelling mistakes or bad expressions, don't hesitate to let me know…

Thank you very much for your feedback!

See you next week,
Johanna

The case of German labour market integration projects targeting female refugees: Activating the 'other' or supporting equal participation

Abstract

In post-2015 Germany a plethora of publicly funded projects seeking to help refugees to 'integrate' into German society were implemented. A contested field of support emerged shaped by multiple stakeholders from different policy fields. This article empirically explores labour market integration projects targeting female refugees. Using a comparative case study approach of various projects the article uncovers incoherent logics of support: *logics of activation* and *logics of participation* co-exist in the field that contain ambivalent conceptualisations of agency and the active role of refugee women at the labour market. This article argues that these tendencies exist due to the different organisational contexts of the projects. Dilemmas stemming from the increasing overlap of labour market and asylum policies need to be solved by the organisations and lead to ambivalent gendered outcomes. The analysis might reflect broader developments and predicaments of contemporary reception policies in Western societies from a gender perspective.

Keywords: reception politics, female refugees, labour market inclusion, gender knowledge, service providers, activation, equal participation

1 Introduction

In December 2015, successful integration of refugees[1] into the labour market was on the agenda of the congress of the governing German conservative party (CDU) in Karlsruhe. A declaration was adopted that stated: "[W]e put special attention towards equal opportunities of women and men to engage in any occupation. Thus, we not only fight against old-age poverty, but support emancipation and societal inclusion." (Karlsruher Declaration 2015: 19). This quote illustrates the dominance of political and public attention directed towards gender biases of and refugee women[2] within asylum and reception politics in general and labour market integration in particular in the wake of the post-2015 influx of refugees in Germany.[3][4] It also reflects growing attention towards refugee women and gender equality in reception and

[1] I use the term 'refugee' as a social construct and aim to differentiate the term from legal or political labels such as asylum seeker or displaced person. The term refers in a more broad and sociological sense to processes of categorisation of people that produce effects on participation in different social fields. The constructions may vary over time and space.

[2] In the following I use the terms ‚refugee women' or ‚female refugees' as social constructs and labels prevalently used in the examined field of research. It should be emphasised that from a non-essentialist perspective attributions and expectations connected to these labels don't cover lived gender identities and practices of individuals or collectives. Yet, the productivity of these labels might have effects on processes of subjectivation.

[3] Between 2015 and 2018 alone around 1.5 million asylum claims have been filed in Germany, including more than 500.000 claims by female and almost 1 million claims by male refugees.

[4] Entanglements between reception policies and gender equality or women's empowerment have a long history in Germany. In the wake of the Immigration Act adopted in the year 2005, for instance, integration debates circled around honour killings and regulations on rights of residence of trailed spouses (see, for instance, Erdem 2009).

humanitarian aid by international political actors over the last decades (see, for example, Liebig & Tronstad 2018; Bekyol & Bendel 2016).

This article is informed by and contributes to the literature on reception[5] politics for refugees. More specifically, the study builds upon two connected strands of literature: 1) research on humanitarian assistance for refugees from a gendered perspective (Grabska 2011; Hyndman 1998; Freedman 2011, 2015; Parrs 2018) and 2) research on labour market support and activation policies[6] (Heidenreich, Aurich & Beerheide 2014). While a broad body of literature exists that explored the implementation of gender policies and gendered effects of humanitarian support the studies often focused on organisations with proven expertise and experience in the work with refugees and migrants, such as 'engaged' civil society actors, international bureaucratic organisations or non-governmental organisations (Lester 2005; Freedman 2015; Szczepanikova 2010; Olivius 2014). Consequently, private or third sector organisations without track-record in the field fall behind. Scholars on activation policies claim that little is known so far about how activation logics proliferate into other policy arenas such as refugee and asylum policies (see, Heidenreich & Graziano 2014). To date, only a few studies exist that explored employment-related support services tailored for refugees that emerge increasingly in different European countries (Breidahl 2017; Hagelund & Kavil 2009; Sarvimäki & Hämäläinen 2016). Although expanded knowledge on gendered effects of activation policies exist (Lewis 2002; Skevik 2005; Lundqvist 2015; Adkins 2012; Betzelt 2008; Betzelt & Bothfeld 2011) it is quite unclear how the interplay between activation and humanitarian policies shape gendered outcomes.

This article takes a look at the emerging field of labour market integration projects[7] targeting female refugees in the case of Germany. These projects aim at making refugees fit for their stay in German society, including the acquisition of the German language, civic education (culture, history and politics) as well as employment-related training and preparation[8]. The case of German reception politics[9] is interesting for four reasons: *Firstly*, compared to other

[5] I understand 'reception' as a term for a broad range of activities, discourses, regulations and politics that aims at or affects the inclusion of newly arrived refugees or migrants in different fields of society, including education, employment, health care, politics or culture. It involves a variety of actors from different sectors, different policy arenas and different policy levels, including authorities, civil society, the private sector, municipalities and institutions.

[6] The term ‚activation' used in a wider sense extensively since the 1990s to describe the shift from rights to obligations and duties in welfare states. ‚Activation policies' or ‚active labour market policies' (ALMP) are applied to a broad range of different policies and programs (including vocational training, incentives, sanctions, benefit reductions) directed towards people receiving state benefits or social assistance or people outside the labour market (Bonoli 2019; Kenworthy 2010). The goal of these policies, often referred to as 'workfare', is to turn people from 'passive' recipients of support to 'active' citizens that pursue employment. In the case of Germany the public employment services are the Federal Labour Office and local jobcentres. The Hartz IV reforms introduced sanctions, conditionality of benefits and incentives to increase the workforce and employment flexibility.

[7] In this article I use the term ‚labour market integration projects' referring to this vast number of state-led interventions supporting refugees to participate at the labour market. There are also other names for these projects, including employment-related integration projects.

[8] These projects often follow, precede or replace general integration programs or tests.

[9] Explaining shortly: 1) the opening of the labour market for refugees under certain conditions and for certain groups, 2) the shift of the legal system after recognition as refugee (from SGB II to SGB III that is from asylum benefits to unemployment benefits) and 3) the importance of ‚integration efforts'

European countries Germany has invested significantly on facilitating integration of refugees and asylum seekers. For the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 alone a total of 2 billion euros have been spent.[10] *Secondly*, the field of support services for refugees has expanded significantly as a result of the crucial post-2015 legal reforms that formally facilitated access of refugees and asylum seekers to the German labour market. Shaped by countless stakeholders with various backgrounds, the field turned into a chaotic and diverse 'infrastructure' of integration[11]: a plethora of publicly funded courses and projects seeking to help refugees to 'integrate' into German society and get ready for the labour market were implemented. Some are offered by for-profit, others by a variety of non-profit organisations. Besides well-established organisations new service providers without track record in the field of humanitarian assistance are involved. *Thirdly*, Germany is (just as, for instance, Austria) one of the rare cases that offer gender-specific employment trainings targeting specifically female refugee and asylum seekers (cf. Li 2018).[12] *Fourth*, German government has, just like Sweden or Italy, a declared policy to activate refugees as early as possible (with employment counselling even in centres of first reception) and to avoid waiting periods (cf. Eurofund 2016).[13]
The aim of this article is to explore empirically the broader logics of support that shape the practices and discourses of these projects from a gender perspective. By doing so, the article contributes to a better understanding of what actually happens when activation politics interact with humanitarian politics in context of gender-sensitive support for refugees. In detail, the study craves out how the projects conceptualise agency and the active role of refugee women in the labour market guided by three categories of analysis: 1) What images of and expectations towards refugee women are produced?, 2) What practices of support are offered?, 3) What are the reactions by participating refugee women?
Theoretically, this paper builds upon the sociology of knowledge: to capture the logics of support and the normative foundations of the projects investigated I use a Foucauldian perspective on the production of subjectivities through particular governmental rationalisations and technologies that are result of power relations[14].
Drawing on fieldwork from April 2017 to August 2018 in Lower-Saxony (a northern federal state in Germany), the study uses a qualitative comparative case-study approach. Six state-

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and the role employment and language acquisition play for securing individual residence status and permit to stay.

[10] Integration Act 2016

[11] Other scholars refer to these developments also as „integration market" (Kurki, Masoud, Niemi & Brunila 2018; see also Lounavaara et al., 2015; Palttala, 2015). Thus, however, the marketisation of the field is in my opinion overemphasised and neglect the plurality and diversity of organisational types involved into these processes.

[12] This development also reflects the high visibility of gendered discourses and contestations, in general, in the field of refugee reception, e.g. on gender relations, sexual violence, etc. In other European countries, for instance, in Sweden or France, employment-related trainings for refugees are mostly non-gender specific (Eurofund 2016)

[13] "We have learned from our mistakes in the 1990s: It just isn't worth anything to leave people inactive in their accommodations. This is neither human nor useful for our society, economy or our social security system. That is way the majority of the population doesn't accept that." (11th Report of the Commissioner of the Federal Government for Migration, Refugees and Integration, 2016: 16)

[14] Using the concept of *organisational gender knowledge* (Dölling 2003; Wetterer 2008) the analysis is interested into implicit and explicit explanations of gender differences and hierarchies and related organisational categories of reality construction that guide the modes of project implementation.

funded labour market integration projects targeting female refugees were selected that cover a full range of variation, including different types and backgrounds of organisations. The study builds upon multiple data, including interviews with project practitioners and participating refugee women as well as project-related material.

I argue that two competing dominant logics of support co-exist in the field. While all projects conjure up ideals of gender equality and women's empowerment in order to meet the mutual policy goals agency and the active role of refugee women are conceptualised in contrasting ways: the *activation frame* and the *participation frame*. The *activation frame* perceived refugee women as potentially unproductive and lazy, unwilling or unable to work. Colonial images of passive victims of patriarchal Muslim families were reproduced. Support was understood as introducing the participants to presumably modern feminist ideals and lifestyles. (Part-time) employment was framed as moral (feminist) duty and modus of (feminist) liberation. Participants, in contrast, struggled with the pressure to actively engage into their inclusion process and lacked orientation and information. Projects related to this frame were implemented by organisations with little previous experience in humanitarian aid or support of (forced) migrants. Instead these organisations built upon or shared the interest on close relations to local state employment agencies. The *participation frame*, in contrast, recognised refugee women as highly productive, motivated and capable. Racial and gendered structural discrimination were regarded as main reason for increased vulnerability. Support included empowering and participatory approaches as well as lobbying for the interest of (forced) migrants. Participants developed future employment visions and goals, yet, they also realised the actual limits of the support offered to them. Projects related to this frame were implemented by organisations with previous experience in humanitarian aid or support of (forced) migrants. All these organisations perceived (forced) migration as integral part of the organisational reality.

As a result of this study, I claim that the proliferation of labour market policies into humanitarian policies in context of gender-sensitive support has ambivalent (unintended or intended) gendered outcomes. Varying organisational types and contexts result in different adaptations of gendered policies and goals. Organisations make use of their discretionary power and agency and interpret gender equality and women empowerment differently according to their wider political agenda. This may include both logics of support that challenge or manifest utilitarian governance of migration. In the name of support for refugees, arguably, some projects interpreted gender equality and women's empowerment in favour of employment policies, while, simultaneously, in other cases alternative approaches in favour of equal civic participation for (female) refugees appeared.

The structure of this article is as follows: The next section provides insights from previous research on refugee support and labour market participation from a gendered perspective and then outlines the theoretical foundation that underlie the article. After the presentation of methods and data the analysis is carried out. In the discussion, I elaborate my contributions to the understanding of refugee reception politics and raise questions for future research.

2 Understanding labour market inclusion programs for female refugees

To understand labour market inclusion programs for female refugees it is helpful to build upon the strand of literature on research on humanitarian assistance for refugees from a gendered perspective (Grabska 2011; Hyndman 1998; Freedman 2011, 2015; Parrs 2018) and 2) research on labour market support and activation policies (Heidenreich, Aurich & Beerheide 2014).

In the field of humanitarian assistance for refugees a large body of research by feminist scholars exists, some of them focusing on organisational actors. Several scholars have already uncovered the ambivalent role of non-governmental organisations in gender-sensitive politics under neoliberal times (Lester 2005; Freedman 2015). Remarkably, however, studies often focused on organisations with proven expertise and experience in the work with refugees and migrants, such as 'engaged' or voluntary civil society actors, international bureaucratic organisations or non-governmental organisations (Szczepanikova 2010; Olivius 2014).[15] Consequently, private or third sector organisations without track-record in the field fall behind. Studies with focus on integration and permanent residency of immigrants, in contrast, have already recognised the diversification of service providers and explored the phenomena of marketization and projectisation of support programs (see Kurki, Masoud, Niemi & Brunila 2018; Joppke 2007). Comparative approaches, yet, are still missing. Furthermore, in previous research on humanitarian support the economic participation of refugees was regarded predominantly as male phenomenon. Refugee women were regarded as family-oriented, economically dependent on male breadwinner and lacking employment motivation (critically, see, Kofman, Morokvasic, reference). Feminist scholars, more recently, turned attention towards economic contributions of female refugees (Buscher 2010).

Activation policies are based on the notion of an 'adult worker model' and assume that women can be self-reliant and equally contribute to the labour market. Numerous studies in different countries have investigated from a gendered perspective how these policies affect men and women differently. Several studies have explored gendered impacts of activation politics (for the case of Germany: Kopf & Zabel 2017). Critical scholars claim that due to the individualising paradigm and the negligence of family and care responsibilities activation policies might deepen differences among women (cf. Fraser 1994; Lewis 2006; Ostner 2004). Other scholars argue that these politics have significant impact on conservative welfare states with traditional gender roles assuming a male breadwinner model such as Germany (cf. Betzelt 2008). In the case of job placement and counselling, for instance, several studies showed that gender stereotyping plays a role in German employment agencies (Jaehrling 2009, 2015; Betzelt & Bothfeld, erosion, 2011).[16] Increasing marketization and cooperation of the state with private and third sector organisations (Greer, Breidahl, Knuth & Larsen 2017; Ludwig-Mayerhofer & Wroblewski 2004) and increasing connection of different spheres of support due to neoliberal restructuring pushed the question of politic implementation into the

[15] In some studies the organisational background and type of the support service providers are hardly made explicit. Instead their role is underestimated and regarded as homogenous „humanitarian community" (Buscher 2010: 6) indicating implicit mutual interests and goals.

[16] Inspite of the criticism, scholars disagree whether activation policies offer emancipatory chances for women or not (cf. Ben-Ishai 2006).

focus of research on labour market policies (Barbier 2004). Several scholars state that little is known so far about how activation logics proliferate into other policy arenas such as refugee and asylum policies (see, Heidenreich & Graziano 2014). To date, only a few studies exist that explored employment-related support services tailored for refugees that emerge increasingly in different European countries (Breidahl 2017; Hagelund & Kavil 2009; Sarvimäki & Hämäläinen 2016). With regard to increasing differentiation of activation policies it is debated whether tailor-made employment-related services targeting specific groups are helpful (Dahlstedt 2013; Rice 2017; Clarke 2005). Some scholars refer to specific needs and circumstances that specific measures might cover, while others see stigmatisation of groups and differentiation and individualisation of service provision as problems.
I draw theoretically on a Foucauldian perspective of governance (References) in order to take the diversification of state activities through multiple stakeholders under consideration and to pay attention to the encounter of different societal spheres. This means to focus on normative (gendered) beliefs, assumptions and constructions of reality in order to understand power relations. Power, from this perspective, has both disciplining and productive effects. This paper is interested in exploring overarching logics of support. This includes the particular forms of subjectivity (that is identities and representations that are regarded as legitimate) that emerge and the forms of technologies that are implemented. Technologies are "practical techniques, methods, instruments, and institutions that enable authorities to act upon the conduct of individuals and groups so as to transform it" (reference: 100).[17]

3 Methods and data

This comparative sociological analysis draws upon a broader multi-sited qualitative-empirical research project. In total, six case studies[18] were conducted analysing state funded labour market inclusion projects targeting refugee women implemented by different service providers in four cities of Lower Saxony (Germany). The data was collected between April 2017 and August 2018 and consists of 65 interviews, including 16 interviews with practitioners (among them one male practitioner), 25 interviews with participating refugee women, 13 expert interviews, 11 interviews with relevant local actors, as well as project-related material (reports, flyers and internal documents) and on-site participant observations. In order to gain insights into the organisational contexts of the projects I interviewed project managers and staff. Using problem-centred interviews (Witzel 2000) enabled to understand how practitioners constructed the 'crux of the matter' why female refugees were in need of support and what everyday narrations were told in order to justify respective project activities.[19] Interviews with narrative elements with several participants of each project served to contrast the practitioners' discourse with reactions by female refugees. The analysis focused on dominant knowledge repertoires and practices through comparison of the project cases.

[17] There are a lot of studies on the governance of activation. For an overview, see, Van Berkel & Borghi (2008)
[18] The case study approach was specifically helpful in order to explore each project "in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin 2018: 75; emphases in original).
[19] During the interviews, the respondents were confronted with elaborating, modifying, disproving or confirming their understandings of what actually was at stake.

My extensive fieldwork, including numerous encounters with experts of various backgrounds and in various professional contexts enabled me to be more attentive to relevant debates, conflicts and actors in the field. On this basis, the selection of the cases aimed at covering a full range of variation of the phenomena. Only then, conclusions on general tendencies, ambivalences and characteristics of the emerging field can be drawn. The sample consists of projects of different organisational types, including for-profit and non-profit organisations and varying organisational experiences in working with refugees, including well-established and newly involved organisations (cf. Gluns 2018).[20] All organisations relied on a variety of funding sources, including funding through providing state services. Additional criteria that guided the selection process were: rural area/town; (no) training on gender-specific branches; (no) low/high qualifications; (no) explicit reference to part-time work.[21]

Prior to the analysis the sample[22] will be introduced shortly: The project *SWP – social work professional* was conducted by a long-established, non-commercial feminist education organisation in a town with close networks to migrant communities and perennial experience in gender-sensitive approaches. The project targets higher qualified refugee women and developed from a predecessor non-gender-specific project. It offers qualification in the field of social work.

The project *Let's start* was conducted by a nation-wide active for-profit educational organisation in a rural area. For decades the organisation specifically offers a broad spectrum of labour market measures for various target groups. The organisation builds upon years of cooperation with local employment agencies. A previous project targeting female migrants was opened for refugee women. The project explicitly offers part-time activities.

The project *MiMo (Migrant Mom)* was part of a nation-wide employment program targeting migrant mothers implemented by a long established community-based welfare organisation with in a town. The organisation offers various social services for unemployed, needy and marginalised people. The organisation has experiences in gender-specific approaches and opened a previous project for migrant women for refugee women. The project explicitly addresses models of work-life-balance.

The project *We help* was implemented by a new, small, regionally based for-profit educational organisation in a rural area. The projects offers training on domestic and elderly care and targets low qualified refugee women. The young and ambitious organisation offers a broad spectrum of (mainly branch-specific) integration projects specifically tailored for refugees and migrants. It had no previous experiences with gender-specific projects.

The project *Step in – speak up!* is a non-branch specific project consisting of language training and traineeship for several months. The implementing service provider was a small,

[20] The sample ranges, for instance, from small community based (forced) migrant organisations with various services for refugees via non-profit educational organisations and welfare organisations to nation-wide active for-profit educational organisations with extended experience and services specialised on unemployed people.

[21] The cases selected allow forming pairs of comparison for internal validation as each characteristic applies to more than one project.

[22] For reasons of data protection the names of the projects and the organisations are anonymised. The project pseudonyms chosen try to reflect the main features of the cases. The reason for this approach is that, in contrast, to project evaluations this scientific study is interested in understanding overall emerging patterns, rationales and trends in the field of research. Statements of individual participants or practitioners or organisational particularities are less important.

local based (forced) migration organisation with close contacts to refugee and migrant communities. It served the needs of refugees through various services in different fields such as education, health, leisure and cultural activities or political participation. It had no previous experience with public employment services.
The project *Business works!* was implemented by a small, regionally based, long established for-profit educational organisation affiliated to the local Chamber of Crafts. The organisation was specialised in entrepreneurial trainings for women, some targeted for migrant women. It built upon a long-term partnership with the local public employment agencies.
The projects officially aimed at facilitating and supporting successful 'integration' into the labour market, while, simultaneously, fostering gender equality and taking cultural differences into account. The projects usually lasted for 12 to 24 months and contained several activities ('modules') including (work-related) language acquisition, assessments of competencies/profiling, social environment as well as vocational orientation, counselling, training and acquisition of competencies, practical work testing and visiting companies. The activities were conveyed through class-like courses running usually five times a week for four to six hours and were accompanied by social workers. A low threshold approach was common, including low language requirements. The projects were all co-financed by local job centres. Participation was both voluntary and compulsory, due to requirements by job centres that provided services on the conditions that their 'clients' attend a labour market integration course. At the end of the projects the participants usually received a certificate. The participants were mainly from Syria, Iraq, Iran or Afghanistan, aged between 24 and 61 years and arrived in Germany between one to four years ago. They differed with regard to their educational and occupational experiences and backgrounds. Recognised refugees who obtain financial benefits were the main target group of the projects, though in two cases participation was opened for asylum seekers and rejected refugees with toleration.

4 Activating the 'other' or supporting equal participation

In this chapter I analyse empirically the logics of support that shape the various investigated projects. Although all projects were likewise in charge of helping refugee women to enter the labour market differences were noticeable with regard to how agency and the active role of refugee women in the labour market were perceived. Two contrasting dominant rationales of support emerged: the *logic of activation* and the *logic of participation*. The gendered normative foundations rooted in the different organisational contexts the projects were embedded into can explain these ambivalent logics. The analysis is distinguished into three dimensions: 1) What images of refugee women were produced?, 2) What activities were offered?, 3) What reactions were articulated by participants?

	Activation frame	Participation frame
Images of refugee women	- Oppressed and dependent by the family and culture - Lazy or unproductive - Unwilling or unable to work	- Multiple discrimination and oppression - Resilient and productive - High motivation and capabilities to work

Activities	- Re-arranging family and everyday life - Cultivating self-responsibility and self-discipline - Directing towards docile and profitable female ideal	- Giving information and orientation about rights, structures, and institutions - Strengthening collective identities and belonging - Lobbying for equal access and recognition
Reactions	- Lack of comprehensibility and understanding of the support given - Exhaustion and frustration - Readiness to work anything	- Signs of empowerment - High expectations of support - Sense of encouragement to resist and endure hardship
Project examples	*We help,* *Let's start!,* *MiMo*	*SWP – social work professional, Step in – speak up!,* *Business works!*

4.1 Representations

Activation-frame (1 page)

The projects related to the logic of activation perceived refugee women clearly against the background of the organisations experiences and (newly) established ties to local public employment agencies. The image of refugee women and their social relations enacted in these projects reflected dominant stereotypes of oppression and dependency due to Muslim families and cultures, while conservative family roles were assumed as 'overcome' in a liberated German society. A common interpretative pattern in these projects, that support this claim, was the idea that refugee women would shortly after arrival naturally 'disappear' into their families. A most fundamental goal of these projects, thus, was in any manner "to reach these women at all" (project manager, *Let's start!*). Enacting typical assumptions of unemployed people, especially low-skilled women, in activation policies these projects, furthermore, regarded refugee women as potentially lazy and unproductive. Although the project *We help*, for instance, explicitly trained in the field of child and elderly care one practitioner explained:

> "Child care is very important. Because every mother wants that her child is cared for. My mothers' heart is just always bigger than anything else. And I do understand that, however, you should of course not rest on it."

The quote illustrates how 'staying at home' was framed in opposition to 'genuine' (gainful) employment and how refugee women were regarded as potentially shirking away from (civic) responsibilities (to work). Using a "cultural toolkit" (Swidler, 1986) that strong image of refugee women as potentially reluctant and unable to work due to gendered cultural norms and traditions these projects regarded refugee women in need of basic awareness for moral and decent behaviour as modern (female) citizen: One practitioner of *Let's start!*, for instance, explained: "It's a gift if living expenses are financed by taxes!" As care and domestic affinity was assumed employment prospects were predominantly seen in gender stereotypical branches.

Participation frame (1 page)

The image about their clients produced by the projects tied to the logic of participation, in contrast, included **more sophisticated knowledge** about refugee women. Although refugee

women were also perceived as potentially acting within conservative family and gender roles, conservative or oppressive family structures were not exclusively attributed to refugees, but understood as typical broader societal problem. The project *Step in and speak up!,* for instance, reckoned potential dropouts due to overload with family as well as employment-related responsibilities. Complex and dynamic family relations were acknowledged and perceived among their clients. Thus, culturalisation and homogenisation were avoided, and instead differences among women were equally recognised and cherished. One practitioner of the project SWP reflected: "Some women are strongly involved in very traditional family constellations, other women have almost very supportive partners or supportive families" (*SWP – social work professional*). When evaluating potential barriers to enter the labour market among their participants, practitioners of these projects almost always spoke extensively about structural, legal or institutional unequal treatment and discrimination. In contrast to projects enacting a logic of activation, practitioners of these projects unanimously emphasised the significantly high level of motivation to work among their participants. Instead of assuming limited eagerness to work practitioners of these projects narrated stories about how participants (and projects) indeed actively dealt with facing barriers while trying to enter the labour market. The project *Business works!* is a strong example for this. The project offers support to become self-employed. The practitioner experienced several similar incidents of how highly ambitious participants that were (over)fulfilling "heightened" administrative requirements as refugees were confronted with structural blockades. The practitioner remembered one participant who strived for opening a shop. She prepared all documents and fulfilled all requirements "extraordinarily well". Yet, bureaucratic barriers were seen as key obstacle to integrate: "We need time. We don't need the immigration authority to put us under pressure, but we need a status which permits self-employment." This exemplifies how these projects took the status of their participants, their early arrival and insecurity to stay under consideration. Refugee women, against this background, were perceived as remarkably resilient, resourceful and capable subjects. Good employment opportunities were not narrowly seen in gender stereotypical branches. Instead diverse working experiences, including care and domestic work, were valued, while skill adequate positioning at the labour market was regarded as key challenge. Following a holistic view on their clients and including the broader political and societal environment of the local community into the scope of the projects, these cases showed typical features of civil society organisations.

4.2 Activities

Activation-frame (1 page)

The practices of support implemented by the projects of the activation-frame resembled typical activation measures, while linking neoliberal rhetoric with colonial and culturalised ideas of liberation. The practitioners almost always spoke about the problematic caring and family responsibilities of the participants. The program and activities of the project *Let's start!* represent strong examples for this aspect. The project was explicitly designed as only part-time in order to offer opportunities to participate for refugee women. One practitioner explained the projects goals: „All would end up in making them workable, to arrange their lives so that they are able to work or that they have a chance at the labour market." More than

other projects this measure focused on the re-arrangement of individual everyday life. Although its main goal was obtaining employment with mandatory social security the activities implemented and the practical input was focused on resolving practical and organizational 'barriers' that emerged from family responsibilities. This included testing models of compatibility of private and professional life as it was assumed that refugee women have not yet become familiar with these kinds of models. As the project goal was to increase 'availability' of participants, regular attendance was important. Absence, in contrast, was evaluated as lack of willingness or readiness to work, while problems articulated by participants were assumed as potential subordinate or only pretext. Related to employment participation these projects combined feminist thought, colonial images and conservative gender roles in order to justify the project approach. The practitioner of *We help* elaborates:

> "Every woman has the right to independence. Everyone once in a while has to do something for oneself. And that also means to maybe work part-time. Going out for four or five hours, getting to know new people, finally spending time with other people for four for five hours, not only with the family."

This pattern is typically addressed to lower class women in Germany (reference) and turns employment into a question of individual choice, attitude and willingness. Calling up feminist rhetoric the claim turns into something "we cannot not want" (Spivak in Brown). Chances at the labour market were seen in part-time employment and low-wage sectors. Dependence on a (male) breadwinner or the state was assumed. Cultivating self-responsibility and self-discipline were pivotal goals in the activation projects. A statement of a practitioner of the project *We help* clearly illustrates this:

> "So they have to be active on their own. One of them wanted to go to some kind of hairdresser. So I said: Simply just go there! Just go in and ask. Have a nice day! My name is ... I am currently participating in a project of an educational organization and I would like to do an internship here. Is this possible? Just ask. They can only say yes or no. Well and in some cases that works".

Challenges to find a job were played down and individualised. Performing activeness and engagement was highly valued, while the working world and attaining a job de facto were pushed into the unclear future (and beyond the scope and period of the project). Instead individual integration paths and goals were set and monitored. The projects were framed as 'initial' or 'early' step of a longer and challenging path of 'integration', often with opportunities to continue at the said organisation. De facto, however, obtaining certificates at the end of the project, did not necessarily translate into a job position or improvement of chances at the labour market. As these projects were primarily concerned with quickly decreasing unemployment among refugee women other factors of participation shifted into the background. One practitioner of the project *Let's start!*, for instance, stated that wearing headscarves would reduce chances to enter the (local) labour market. Instead of fighting against discrimination and marginalisation she claimed that it would depend on the decisions of the refugee women whether they would "like to work or not". Similar perspectives on how to deal with cultural differences were found in other interviews of this frame. Typical for organisations working for state employment agencies the primary goal of these projects was to push participants into employment or further training. Thereby, structural or institutional problems were perceived as 'outside' the project and bypassed.

Participation frame (1 page)

Projects following a participation logic were characterised by activities that built upon a broader concept of social inclusion and participation.

The organisation implementing the project *Step in and speak up!* had naturally developed networks and close links to (forced) migrant communities. The project was one among a broad spectrum of activities, including cultural and social events, to improve community cohesion. It encouraged participants to organise and become politically active. Celebrating different cultural identities within the community was part of the project. Similar approaches were seen in the other projects of the participation frame. The experienced non-profit educational organisation of the project *SWP – social work professional* is also a strong example for this participatory-oriented approach. Content, concept and activities of the projects were not imposed on the participants. Participants were supported to articulate their needs and expectations towards the projects in order to potentially adapt and change the curriculum. Not showing up in class, furthermore, was less regarded as sign of unwillingness to integrate than as a potential sign of not covering the needs of the participants. By doing so, these projects regarded refugee women as responsible and trustworthy subjects. These projects were typically busy with supporting the confidence of their participants and understood this as problem when entering the labour market. Expressing their views and needs, even if they might contradict views or plans from the side of the projects was not regarded as problematic, but rather an expected outcome of the support. This can be illustrated by the perception of a practitioner of the project *Step in – speak up!*:

> "So I always had the impression that, maybe based on their experiences, they are just very polite (laughed) and they say: Yes! Yes! - either because they didn't really understand or they didn't dare to really express their wishes, their needs."

This also meant to be committed to the individual wishes and dreams of their participants and to work on these particular interests. Carefully and mutually finding and sketching out possible future occupations and paths of integration were integral part of the projects.

In order to equally participate at the labour market these projects, furthermore, regarded the **recovery and restoration** of (temporarily limited) resources as one important precondition of integration into the labour market. From a **resource-oriented** approach the projects avoided drawing attention solely on language competences or equating language with general skills or experiences. Instead of increasing pressure, these projects deliberately reduced stress and expectations directed towards participants: "We reduce stress with learning. We do carry out examinations, because this is just really important in Germany. But we indeed try to avoid to put tests too much into our focus."

The projects related to the logic of participation paid attention to convey broad and full information and orientation regarding the structures, institutions and **rights** at the (local) labour market. In the project *SWP – social work professional* the participants learned more about the German labour and asylum legislations as well as about the welfare system. Remarkably, however, these projects didn't devalue or question the eligibility of financial benefits or unemployment in normative terms. A practitioner of *Step in – speak up!*, for instance, explained: "If you have a break for half a year, then you have a break for a year. Then you can recover a little while. This is not bad. It could be worse."

4.3 Reactions

Activation-frame (1 page)

Although all participants in these projects were thankful to receive support the overall goal of the projects was not always clear to them (cf. Kurki, Masoud, Niemi & Brunila 2018). For some of participants of the project *Let's start!,* for instance, the purpose of the project simply was "making them not staying at home". This reflected other of participants on the other projects that articulated frustration and insecurity as their personal needs for support seemed to be not covered in the projects. As the participants were afraid of sanctions if they would drop out most of them decided to come and at least make the best out of it. For many participants the classes were helpful to talk with other refugee women about their experiences and to built a network. But also cases of increased tension and conflict between participants and the projects existed. Participants at the project *We help*, for instance, expressed deer desire to take leave in order to fulfil their parental role (especially during summer vacation). One participant actively expressed her anger about her situation: Since arrival in Germany more than three years ago she participated non-stop in a series of integration measures, each of them for several months. Yet, since arrival she is trying desperately to find a job as a hairdresser. Well aware of working rights she stated: "Everyone working in Germany, all employees have vacations. We work at the job centre! Ok! So why we don't have holidays?" Her case does not only vividly underpin the typical ‚lock in effect' of activation measures but also serve as an example for the „eventful productiveness of unemployment" (Adkins 2012) in neoliberal context. These experiences of suppression and powerlessness enforced by the projects actually exacerbated the de facto vulnerable situation of newly arrived (female) refugees. In some cases, consequently, the projects resulted in (unintended) effects of minimum efforts and indifference. Many participants felt as if they had no chance and articulated their readiness to work anything and anywhere.

Participation frame (1 page)

Participants of projects following the participation logic showed less feeling of powerlessness and frustration when talking about the projects. Instead the strong commitment and efforts by the staff members and the informal and friendship-like relationship were valued. In the case of *Step in – speak up!*, for instance, participants were often already involved in other activities of the organisation and, thus, part of the community before the project started. While in the other projects many participants felt out of place and in need of concrete information and orientation about the project goals and their chances to follow their aspirations at the labour market, participants in these projects seemed to be more aware and confident. The participant-oriented approach of these projects had effect on the self-esteem and the feeling of involvement of many participants. Participants showed signs of regained confidence and capacity through coping with their experiences. Some talked enthusiastically about their visions and had clear goals in their mind. One participant of the project *SWP – social work professional,* for instance, said her dream was to become a peace ambassador. Participating in the project was one important step to realize this plan. While not all participants were so eager and determined, nevertheless, it was palpable that the participants felt respected and recognised by the projects. Although in these projects activeness and motivation to work was similarly articulated among participants it was also common to talk about limited

opportunities at the local labour market. Tensions arose when the responsibility to find a 'good job' was shifted to the engaged staff members. For many participants the relation to the staff members was important 'social capital' and they had great hopes for their commitments.

5 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to empirically explore the logics of support that shape the discourses and practices of labour market integration projects targeting refugee women in Germany. By comparing projects covering a broad spectrum of organisational contexts from a gender perspective the study provides insightful empirical findings on what actually happens when activation policies interact with humanitarian policies in the context of gender-sensitive support for refugees. While all projects were equally in charge of implementing gender policies i.g. helping refugee women in entering the labour market, the findings indicate somewhat mixed and rather polarised tendencies: projects following a ***logic of activation*** drew on concepts of agency and the active role of refugee women in the labour market that combined typical images of unemployed low-skilled women in activation measures (lazy, incapable, unproductive) and neoliberal rhetoric with colonial and culturalised ideas of refugee women as 'vulnerable victims' in need of liberation. Support given was based on normative foundations of rational life-styles, self-reliance and activeness that distinguished between presumably liberated modern Western (part-time) working women using day care and 'the other'. Projects following a ***logic of participation***, instead, perceived refugee women as highly motivated, resourceful and active in spite of all hardships shortly after arrival and restrictive and discriminatory asylum policies. The offered support was based on ideas of equal participation and community, including providing rights-based information, empowerment approaches and lobbying for the interests of refugee women. In spite of good intentions the special targeted support practices may, hence, have intended and unintended gendered effects that may in parts result in governance and disciplining refugee women as 'the other'.

I argue that the uncontrolled expansion and differentiation of state-funded assistance for refugees leading to polarised logics of support targeting refugee women are not a side stage but **substantial components** in order to understand the inclusion of refugee women at the labour market. Indeed, I suggest that the opposing tendencies among the projects might **characterise broader developments and predicament of contemporary migrant integration and reception policies** in Western societies. The **emerging overlap** between labour and asylum policies in Germany results in a contested field of support and incoherent policy implementation. Well-established organisations have to compete for state funds with service providers that may regard the field of refugee support as a new market offering access to a 'new' target group. The various service providers implementing these policies face reinforced "organisational challenges" (Heidenreich & Patrizia 2014) and conflicts over "hierarchies of different policy goals" (Lewis & Giullari 2005) as well as balancing ambiguous policies (explanations needed here). This study uncovers the role of organisational contexts, including organisational experiences, perceptions of clients and general goals (and the organisational 'integration philosophy') on the ground in order to understand how gender-sensitive reception policies are carried out and what intended or unintended effects it may have. Organisations built upon experiences with previous groups and programs and make use

of discretionary power to interpret project goals in favour of the organisational interests. The observations coincide and correspond with studies on gender in humanitarian support that have emphasised since long the ambivalences of NGOs (Freedman 2015).
This study shows interesting insights into how organisations define agency and the active role refugee women in the labour market differently. Taking a look at previous studies refugee women in humanitarian aid and reception politics were predominantly regarded as dependant, passive, family-oriented vulnerable victims while refugee men were regarded as breadwinner, economically oriented and active. Yet, the findings of this study bring unexpected concepts of agency and active role of refugee women to light. The projects investigated generally expect refugee women to be actively shaping their lives and perceive them as potential employees and 'valuable' for society. I, however, refrain from unambiguous, one-sided or homogenising accounts on constructions of refugee women and support. In some cases the potential agency and power to make change is limited to economic participation. As agency – and thus the idea of making own decisions, being powerful and independent – for refugee women is assumed in the labour market this would – if we take a look at the previous research –, however, include structural and political changes regarding exploitation and discrimination. These projects aimed at including refugee women into the dominant activation paradigm using colonial images and neoliberal utilitarian logics. Increasing employability is framed as pivotal pathway for becoming 'well integrated' and securing residency status. These projects, hence, contribute to the production of new subjectivities of 'ideal' refugee women. Only those cases with experiences in working with refugee or migrant women with typical features of civil society organisations understood agency in a broader sense of participating in or contributing to the receiving society. These cases rather struggled with distancing their action from dominant neoliberal frames and instead approach in holistic and critical manners. Social and legal inclusion, for instance, are emphasised remarkably in these cases. The results, furthermore, show ambivalent trends with regard to depolitisation of gender (cf. Olivius 2014) as some cases actively fought structural discrimination and marginalisation, while others were limited to individualised approaches. While agency becomes increasingly visible in the talk and implementation of policy programs directed towards refugee women we suggest according to our data that gender-sensitivity and call for 'activeness' through support practices directed explicitly towards refugee women can from an organisational perspective be understood as a 'black box' policy concept leading to potentially contradictory effects.
It should be mentioned that these projects are primarily designed to serve its clients and to offer help against marginalisation, poverty and unemployment. The participants, however, often lack information about the type of project and organisations offered to them and are unable to assess the quality of provided services. The insights into reactions by participants indicated that participants are, indeed, in vulnerable and complicated circumstances. While most of them were thankful to receive any kind of support, only some articulated anger or critique if their needs were neglected. We need a more detailed understanding of the subjective feelings, experiences and perceptions participating refugee women have in these projects.
Referring to the case of Germany: The analysis presents a cut out and snapshot of the dynamic and evolving field of labour market inclusion for refugees in Germany (now: 2019: Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz, explanations of current developments needed here).

Comparing a full range of service providers to analyse the implementation of reception policies provides insights to the way practitioners define project goals depending on the organisational context. In contrast, it would be insufficient to limit the sample, for instance, to either long-established or newly involved organisations. Drawing attention to the context of labour market inclusion we also need to understand how other actors, particularly voluntary workers and enterprises frame their support.

There is no doubt that the support projects are important and that practitioners are doing their best to help, while being caught between ambivalent policies, organisational goals and personal values. The study, however, shows that common goals need to be clearer in order to guarantee project quality. The alleged increased sensitivity towards gender equality has to be assessed with caution and in contextualised manner instead of jumping to hasty supportive conclusions. Activation programs need to be redesigned if applied to the group of refugee women, otherwise differentiated employment support for refugees may serve as a catalyst for stigmatisation and inequality.

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