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Families First? The Mobilization of Family Norms in Refugee Resettlement

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European resettlement programs prioritize the admission of refugee families. While this is seen as the "natural" thing to do, we argue that the mobilization of family norms is crucially political: in everyday bordering practices, interpretations of family norms are decisive for who is admitted to Europe. We study the selection of Syrian refugees in Turkey for humanitarian admission to Germany, which involves national governments, UNHCR, and NGOs. Fusing practice-theoretical approaches to humanitarianism and mobility governance on the one hand, with gender and sexuality scholarship on nationalism, empire, and migration on the other, we show how family norms configure discretionary power in transnational migration governance. First, family norms shape how power is exercised over refugees in vulnerability and assimilability assessments. Vulnerability assessments hinge on whether a family counts as protective and supportive, or deficient and threatening. Assimilability assessments scrutinize whether refugees do family "right": in a way that will not disturb resettlement countries' national (gender) order. Second, the mobilization of family norms reflects power disparities between actors. International and non-governmental actors strive to recognize plural family forms, but are disciplined into applying resettlement states' more constraining family norms, thereby participating in the (re)production of the borders and boundaries of Europe.

Les programmes européens de réinstallation priorisent l'admission des familles de réfugiés. Bien que cela soit considéré comme un choix «naturel» nous soutenons que la mobilisation des normes familiales est essentiellement politique: dans les pratiques quotidiennes de contrôle des frontières, les interprétations des normes familiales jouent un role décisif dans la sélection des personnes admises en Europe. Nous étudions la sélection de réfugiés syriens en Turquie pour admission humanitaire en Allemagne, qui implique les gouvernements nationaux, le HCR de l'ONU et des ONG. Nous montrons comment les normes familiales configurent le pouvoir discrétionnaire dans la gouvernance des migrations transnationales en fusionnant d'une part les approches pratiques et théoriques de l'humanitarisme et de la gouvernance de la mobilité, et d'autre part les études du genre et de la sexualité sur le nationalisme, le colonialisme, et l'immigration. Premièrement, les normes familiales déterminent la manière dont le pouvoir est exercé sur les réfugiés dans les évaluations de vulnérabilité et d'assimilabilité. Les évaluations de vulnérabilité s'articulent selon le fait qu'une famille est considérée comme protectrice et solidaire, ou déficiente et menaçante. Les évaluations d'assimilabilité examinent si les réfugiés « se comportent bien » en famille, c'est-à-dire, d'une manière qui ne perturbera par l'ordre national (de genre) des pays dans lesquels ils se réinstalleront. Deuxièmement, la mobilisation des

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normes familiales reflète les disparités de pouvoir entre les acteurs. Les acteurs internationaux et non-gouvernementaux s'efforcent de reconnaître la pluralité des formes de familles mais se voient obliger d'appliquer les normes familiales plus contraignantes des états où les réfugiés se réinstallent, participant ainsi à la (re)production des frontières et limites de l'Europe.

Los programas europeos de reasentamiento dan prioridad a la admisión de familias de refugiados. Si bien esto se considera lo "natural," sostenemos que la movilización de las normas familiares es un asunto crucialmente político: en las prácticas fronterizas cotidianas, las interpretaciones de las normas familiares son decisivas a la hora de determinar quién puede entrar a Europa. Estudiamos la seleccion de refugiados sirios en Turquía que pueden entrar a Alemania a través de programas humanitarios, eFun los que participan los gobiernos nacionales, el ACNUR y las ONG. por un lado, los enfoques teóricos y prácticos del humanitarismo y de la gestión de movilidad con los estudios de género y sexualidad sobre el nacionalismo, el imperio y la migración, por el otro, asi mostrando cómo las normas familiares configuran el poder discrecional en la gestión de la migración transnacional. En primer lugar, las normas familiares determinan la forma en la que se ejerce el poder sobre los refugiados en las evaluaciones de vulnerabilidad y asimilación. Las evaluaciones de vulnerabilidad dependen de si una familia es capaz de ofrecer protección y apoyo o si es deficiente y peligrosa. Las evaluaciones de asimilación determinan si los refugiados hacen "bien" a la familia, si no alteran el orden nacional (de género) de los países de reasentamiento. En segundo lugar, la movilización de las normas familiares refleja las disparidades de poder entre los actores. Los agentes internacionales y no gubernamentales tratan de reconocer diversas formas de familia, pero están entrenados para aplicar las normas familiares más restrictivas de los estados de reasentamiento y, así, participan en la (re)producción de las fronteras y límites de Europa.

When Pope Francis visited the Greek island Lesbos in April 2016, he took three refugee families back to the Vatican with him. Confronted with the challenge of whom to select among the 3,000 refugees in camp Moria, NGO workers decided to select refugees "randomly" in a "lottery-type" process (Melvin 2016). No one appeared to notice that families, not individuals, and heterosexual nuclear families, not extended family, were given the scarce spots on the Pope's airplane back to the Vatican. Thus, far from selecting "randomly," NGO workers not only prioritized family, but also made important interpretative, normative choices about what constitutes a family.

In European resettlement and humanitarian admission programs, too, spots are limited. In these programs, European governments admit limited numbers of refugees from countries elsewhere in the world, to alleviate the burden of first countries of refuge as well as the suffering of particularly vulnerable refugees. In contrast to the internationally codified right to seek asylum, there is no right to resettlement: states are under no legal obligation to offer admission places or to justify a negative decision, and can define their own criteria: in theory, they are free to select whom they want. In practice, however, European states' sovereign power to select refugees is shared with other geographically dispersed actors: non-governmental organizations, first countries of refuge, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). All these actors work with their own criteria and procedures, and exercise discretionary power in their normative assessments.

The discrepancy between estimated resettlement needs and available spots makes selection challenging. For instance, of the approximately 3.5 million Syrian refugees

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currently residing in Turkey, only 0.5 percent will be offered safe and legal access to protection in Europe through resettlement or humanitarian admission (UNHCR 2018). Just like the Pope, European resettlement programs prioritize the admission of vulnerable refugees together with their families. Admitting families is seen as the "natural" thing to do—while other selection categories like "religion" or "educational background" trigger public debates, the programs' focus on families, women, and children usually goes uncontested.

However, feminist analysis teaches us that representations of the family as natural mask the political nature of family norms, and of the gender and sexuality norms which shape the roles and relations of family members. In particular, feminist scholarship informs us that these norms—whether formalized in policies or law, or as tacit knowledge informing policy discourses and practices—play a central role in governing mobility and belonging. Family norms are crucial to the drawing of national, cultural, and racialized boundaries, as they serve to distinguish between those who do family "properly," like "We" do it, and "Others" with "deviant" family practices (Bonjour and De Hart 2020). Practice theoretical approaches in International Political Sociology (IPS) (for an overview see Bueger and Gadinger 2014) have advanced an understanding of norms as enacted practices with contingent "meanings in use" (Wiener 2009): norms take shape in everyday practices of discretionary, normative evaluations, and justifications by a multiplicity of actors (Gadinger 2016). IPS scholars studying mobility and border governance have deployed practice theoretical approaches in fruitful ways (Côté-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014; Magalhães 2016), but have only recently started to explore the gendered and racialized dimension of bordering practices (Basham and Vaughan-Williams 2013; Stachowitsch and Sachseder 2019). Attention to norms pertaining to love, intimacy, and family in mobility governance is particularly scarce (but see D'Aoust 2013, 2018a; Bissenbakker 2019). Our paper contributes to filling this gap, by exploring the normative dimension of refugee resettlement practices with a focus on family norms.

In studying norm contestations from a practice-theoretical angle, IPS scholars have shown that actors mobilize different normative principles and "common goods" (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 365) to justify their cause and decide on legitimate orders (Gadinger 2016). We show that family, intimacy, and kinship are a central element of these normative grammars, which actors use to justify their practices of inclusion and exclusion. Paying analytical attention to how normative justifications mobilize conceptions and valuations of a family allows us to better understand who gets "cared for," and who becomes a subject of "control" (Pallister-Wilkins 2015).

Adapting practice theory's dictum of "following the actors" (Bueger and Gadinger 2014, 52) so as to make normative contestations and power visible, we propose to "follow the family norms" throughout the different sites of enacting refugee selection. This enables us to shed light on two aspects of the discretionary power exercised in resettlement selection processes (Garnier, Sandvik, and Jubilut 2018a). First, it allows us to better understand how power is exercised *over* refugees, as actors select refugees by assessing their vulnerability (deservingness of care) and assimilability (non-threat to the national order) to justify who is allowed to move and who stays put. As we will show, family norms play a crucial role in these assessments. Second, this analytical lens allows us to identify power relations *between* actors involved in mobility governance, as we observe whose family norms dominate the selection process, and how.

We analyze Germany's refugee admission programs as an example of current EU admissions within the framework of the EU–Turkey statement of March 2016 (European Council 2016), which Germany has been a main driver of (Bialasiewicz and Maessen 2018). Based on multi-sited fieldwork in Germany and Turkey, we zoom in on the selection of refugees in Turkey for humanitarian

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admission to Germany, to ask: How do different refugee-selecting actors' interpretations of family norms shape their assessments of which refugees are to be resettled? How are these interpretations and the contestations they produce reflective of power relations in transnational mobility governance?

To answer these questions, the article is structured as follows. First, fusing practice-focused approaches to humanitarianism and mobility governance on the one hand, and gender and sexuality scholarship on nationalism, empire, and migration on the other, we carve out our theoretical framework. We then set out our data and methods before outlining the context and procedure of Germany's humanitarian admission from Turkey under the EU–Turkey deal. Finally, our analysis shows the distinct ways in which different actors mobilize family norms to select refugees for resettlement. Our empirical analysis comes in two parts, the first exploring the assessment of refugees' vulnerability, the second examining the assessment of their assimilability.

Theorizing Family Norms in Transnational Refugee Admission Practices

Refugee admission programs are not only a humanitarian response to "reduce the suffering of distant strangers" (Barnett 2013, 393), but also a means of migration control, regulating access to the nation-state. We draw on scholarship on humanitarian and bordering practices to conceptualize these two logics of "care and control" (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 58) not as competing or contradictory, but as co-constitutive of each other.

Following Garnier, Jubilut, and Sandvik (2018b), we regard resettlement policies as part of the broader phenomenon of "humanitarian governance." Didier Fassin coined the concept of "humanitarian government" to "designate the deployment of moral sentiments in contemporary politics" (Fassin 2012, 14). Fassin emphasizes that humanitarian government centers on a "politics of compassion," where policies are framed not in terms of justice and rights, but of suffering, misfortune, and compassion (Fassin 2012, 3–8). Whereas the discourse of justice and rights implies equality, the politics of compassion is, of necessity, a "politics of inequality": compassion is always exercised in a relation of domination, "from the more powerful to the weaker, the more fragile, the more vulnerable" (Fassin 2012, 15–16). In governing "the lives of undesired and suffering others," policies and practices "oscillat[e] between sentiments of sympathy on the one hand and concern for order on the other hand, between politics of pity and policies of control" (Fassin 2005, 366). Resettlement programs are a prime example of this intersection of care and control. On the one hand, such programs "care" by assessing refugees' vulnerabilities and admitting those they find to be most in need. On the other hand, the selection process aims at assessing the "assimilability" of refugees, prioritizing those supposedly least likely to disrupt the national order.

Scholarship on humanitarian and border practices emphasizes that care and control come to operate in concrete situations of bordering work, and through actors' situated justifications. Claudia Aradau (2004) has shown how the "politics of pity" may coincide with the "politics of risk." Her analysis of discourses on human trafficking shows that presenting trafficked women as victims of psychological trauma evokes pity for their suffering which must be alleviated. At the same time, women are deemed "risky": likely to engage in disruptive or criminal behavior because of their trauma, which justifies surveillance and disciplinary measures. Likewise, critical scholarship on humanitarian border practices explores the rendition of migrant populations as "both *at* risk and *a* risk" (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 54), where the daily practice of border policing treats migrants as lives to be saved as well as unwanted intruders of the nation-state. This scholarship emphasizes that there is nothing

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contradictory about "caring for the life and safety of individuals on the one hand, and preserving order on the other" (İşleyen 2018, 4).

Aradau (2004, 257–58) reminds us that "[w]hose suffering becomes recognised ... is a question of struggle and construction and not of inherent 'merit'." Similarly, the normative question of who is assimilable into the national order is prone to contestation. A practice-theoretical lens is particularly fruitful to shed light on such contestations by studying actors' everyday interpretations and enactment across the heterogeneous sites or "universes" (Bigo 2014) of contemporary migration governance (cf. Magalhães 2016, 136–37). In the transnational setting of refugee admission, control over national borders is delegated to a plurality of geographically dispersed actors (Côté-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014) with significant discretion in normative interpretations and enactment of bordering practices (Moffette 2014; Eule et al. 2019). In assessments of refugees' vulnerability and assimilability, resettlement actors enact norms as contingent and inter-subjective "meanings-in-use" (Wiener 2009) to decide about refugees' access to protection. At the same time, in actors' concrete "doing" of refugee selection along the particular sequence of the admission process, they need to coordinate and align their normative judgments to a certain extent to make the process work. In this inter-subjective activity of "political and moral ordering" (Thevénot 2002, 54) through "negotiating competing legitimacy claims" (Gadinger 2016, 197), norms or normative contestations reflect legitimacy struggles and power relations between different actors. We contribute to scholarly efforts to analyze the normative grammars of such struggles by highlighting the role of family norms in the process of refugee selection.

Implicitly and explicitly, all actors involved in the selection process mobilize family norms in their practices. Where existing scholarship on forced migration and humanitarianism has focused on gender and sexuality (e.g., Hyndman 1996; Carpenter 2003), our findings point to the importance of a related but distinct set of assumptions and norms in refugee selection with regard to *family*. Such family norms are informed by gender and sexuality norms on the "proper" roles and relations of family members. Feminist students of nationalism and empire have shown that family norms are crucial to the definition of collective identities and boundaries—be they cultural, racial, or national—as gender and family norms are represented as "the "essence" of cultures" (Yuval-Davis 2008 [1997], 43–45, 67). These politics of intimacy extend beyond notions of femininity and masculinity to what Stoler (2001, 829) defines as "intimate domains—sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement, and child rearing." From colonial times to the present day, defining who "We" are and how "We" are different and better than "Them" inevitably involves reference to the proper roles of men and women, proper dress, proper parenting, proper sex, and proper loving (Puar 2007; Hajjat 2012; Bonjour and De Hart 2013). Over the last decade, these questions have become central, especially in analyses of the politics of family migration in Europe (for an overview, see D'Aoust 2018b).

So far, this feminist migration scholarship has focused on domestic politics, inquiring how national governments produce the Nation by regulating family and migration (Van Walsum 2008). We shift the focus from national to transnational governance. Our analysis shows that family norms are as central to transnational as to national migration governance. We argue that various actors operating in this transnational setting, with divergent relations to the nation-building project, mobilize different family norms in the social practice of selecting refugees for resettlement. We find that these normative contestations and negotiations reflect the power relations between actors, notably the dominance of the nation-state in transnational migration governance, as resettlement states' mobilization of family norms disciplines other actors' interpretations and assessment practices.

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Data Collection and Analysis

The empirical analysis in this article builds on extensive, multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (Marcus 1995) by author 1 in Germany and Turkey between January 2017 and May 2019. Data from Germany include observations at resettlement expert meetings and semi-structured interviews with NGOs, UNHCR, and IOM Germany, German state representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF), as well as lower-level state representatives from federal provinces. During a one-month research stay in Turkey between October and November 2018, author 1 conducted interviews with Turkish state representatives, NGOs, UNHCR, and IOM Turkey, as well as representatives from the EU External Action Service, and undertook ethnographic observations of parts of the admission process. As access to the Turkish migration authorities has been limited, the analysis can only draw some conclusions with regard to its interpretations and practices. Observations and interviews focused on actors' selection practices and situated interpretations of criteria and procedures (Côté-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014, 197). We analyzed the data by examining the rationales that shape different actors' assessment practices: what is their respective problem-definition and the resulting selection logic? How are family norms mobilized and how does their very meaning change in the distinct selection logics of the different actors involved?

Setting the Scene: Refugee Resettlement from Turkey to Germany after the EU–Turkey Statement

UNHCR defines resettlement as "the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them—as refugees—with permanent residence status" (UNHCR 2011b, 3). Humanitarian admission programs usually grant only temporary protection and allow for more flexible procedures. Especially in the European context, resettlement has been marginal both in policy practice and in scholarship (but see van Selm 2004; Garnier 2014; Hashimoto 2018). Since the so-called refugee crisis of 2015–2016, however, resettlement has increased in importance. On the one hand, resettlement is part of the broader externalization of EU migration policies in which EU member states are increasingly relying on third countries' cooperation on border control. Resettlement is one way in which EU member states may express international solidarity with partner countries. On the other hand, in the face of increasing critique of EU asylum policies for failing to save those who are "truly" vulnerable, resettlement is presented as an alternative or supplement to existing policies.

Germany's humanitarian admission programs from Turkey are one example of resettlement and humanitarian admission programs within the EU–Turkey cooperation on migration. In their Statement of March 2016 (European Council 2016), commonly referred to as the EU–Turkey Deal, Turkey and the EU announced that they would cooperate in "addressing the migration crisis." One of the measures the deal proposes is the so-called one-to-one mechanism, admitting a Syrian refugee from Turkey for every person returned from the Greek islands. The EU promised to realize this via voluntary resettlement and humanitarian admission of up to 76,504 persons (European Council 2016).

There are two ways in which cases get referred to UNHCR's Turkey resettlement unit for admission to European countries. The first way is referral from UNHCR's partner NGOs or other UNHCR units, for which UNHCR's resettlement unit needs the approval of the Turkish Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM). The second is referral from DGMM, based on its own vulnerability assessments. Once submitted or approved by DGMM, UNHCR further reviews dossiers and proposes them to resettlement states like Germany. German migration

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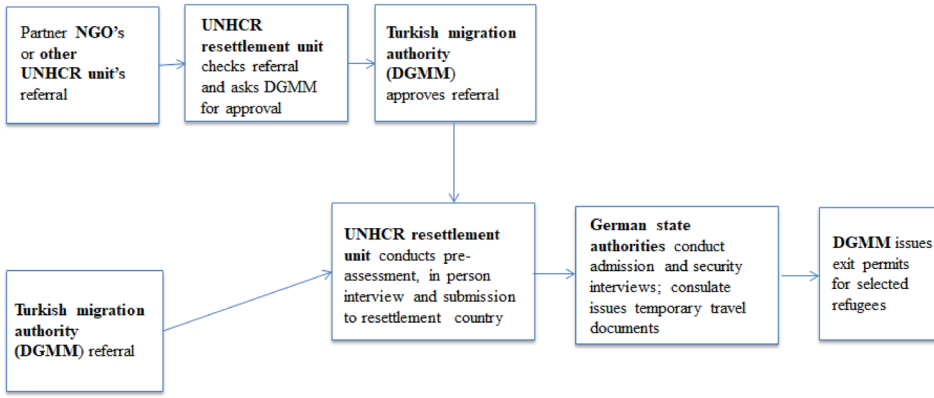

Figure 1. The chain of refugee selection for Germany's humanitarian admission program from Turkey, based on fieldwork insights.

authorities of the BAMF then meet refugees in person at the Consulate in Istanbul to take the decision over admission to the program. This decision also includes a security screening by German security services. Yet, the content and relative weight of these interviews remains secretive.

After the consulate issues temporary travel documents, DGMM still needs to grant an exit permit, or refuses it, for instance because of unresolved lawsuits or unpaid debts. Figure 1 serves as a simplified illustration of this process, which in practice always involves back and forth movements, cases dropping out along the way, and varying time spans between the different steps.

All actors have their own assessment criteria, procedures, and mandates. Yet, since actors who refer dossiers have an interest in seeing refugees effectively depart, they need to take the practices of other actors into account to prevent rejection at a later stage. The final decision on acceptance or rejection remains the discretionary decision of resettlement states since, as UNHCR underscores (2013a, 2), "Resettlement is not a right, and there is no obligation on states to accept refugees or stateless people for resettlement." It is UNHCR's mandate to focus on refugees' needs and vulnerabilities. The interests and selection criteria of resettlement states such as Germany should only play a subordinate role. In practice, however, aware that resettlement states have the final say, UNHCR's aim is to submit dossiers to resettlement states with a high chance of being accepted. This relational dimension of selection practices, in which actors anticipate a dossier's chances of traveling all the way down the admission chain, also plays into actors' interpretative deliberations of family norms, as we show in the following section.

The Role of Family Norms in the Selection Process

The prioritization of families is a key norm at every step in the selection process. Selection criteria specified in the standard operating procedures for implementing the EU–Turkey statement (Council of the European Union 2016) include "members of the nuclear family of a person legally resident in a Participating State." According to UNHCR's Resettlement Handbook, protecting the unity of the family in and through resettlement is a key principle, which "derives directly from the universally recognised right to family life" (UNHCR 2011b, 178). As a former UNHCR resettlement caseworker from Lebanon phrases it: "Basically the concept of family unity in resettlement is the key concept, the one in the middle that everything revolves around." Likewise, in European resettlement states' admission policies,

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"unity of the family" is an important official selection criterion (European Migration Network 2016; Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat 2017).

At every step in the process, actors' interpretations of family norms—intrinsically connected to gender and sexuality norms—inform practices of inclusion and exclusion. The logics of care and control identified as central to international migration governance by Aradau (2004) and Pallister-Wilkins (2015), materialize in the everyday administrative practices of selecting refugees for resettlement on the one hand as assessing refugees' vulnerability and on the other as assessing their assimilability.

Vulnerability

The most obvious and least controversial criterion for selecting refugees for resettlement is their vulnerability: resettlement programs aim to allow the most vulnerable among refugees to move to countries where their protection needs can be more effectively met (UNHCR 2011b). Family norms are key in determining what constitutes vulnerability in the eyes of refugee-selecting actors.

Dependency of and within the Family

A core aspect of the assessment of refugees' vulnerability is the question of access to financial resources and income security. This assessment is made not at the individual level but at the household level. From the very beginning of the selection process, vulnerability assessments by Turkish NGOs and state authorities consider the family unit as the basic provider of safety and livelihood, because "if the family stays together and supports each other that usually helps and provides safety" (Interview NGO ASAM). As Spijkerboer (2000, 102–3) notes for the context of forced displacement more widely, "the family is seen both as a protected and protective institution."

However, not all families are considered able to provide support and safety. In particular, families within which there is a perceived *excess of dependency* are seen as vulnerable rather than protective. This is illustrated by the criteria for accessing the Red Crescent Card, the major source of financial assistance for refugee families in Turkey (Kizilay 2019). NGOs commonly draw on these criteria when making their own assessment of refugees' vulnerability.

The Red Crescent criteria operationalize vulnerability mainly as economic dependency, starting from assumptions about who can work and be economically self-reliant—able-bodied adults—and who is dependent—minors, the elderly, or disabled family members. When "dependent" family members outnumber family members assumed to be able to generate income, that is, when economic dependency outweighs economic self-reliance within a family, families become eligible for cash assistance. While these categories suggest clear-cut, calculable vulnerabilities, they reflect gendered conceptions of dependency, such as the assumption that single women have no income of their own.

While for Turkish NGOs a lack of *current* economic self-reliance is an indicator of vulnerability and protection needs, for German migration officers *anticipated* or *assumed* lack of self-reliance in the resettlement state can function as a criterion for exclusion from resettlement. According to the policy on admissions from Turkey, Germany explicitly prioritizes families with "integration potential," including children of "low age" and parents whose "educational and vocational training" and "professional experience" will allow them to be self-reliant (Bundesministerium des Innern für Bau und Heimat 2017). The transnational process of selection for resettlement thus subjects refugee families to the paradoxical requirement of being economically *dependent* while in Turkey, but likely to be economically *independent* once in Germany. Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas (2018) have coined the concept of "promising victimhood" for this particular discourse, where only those who are

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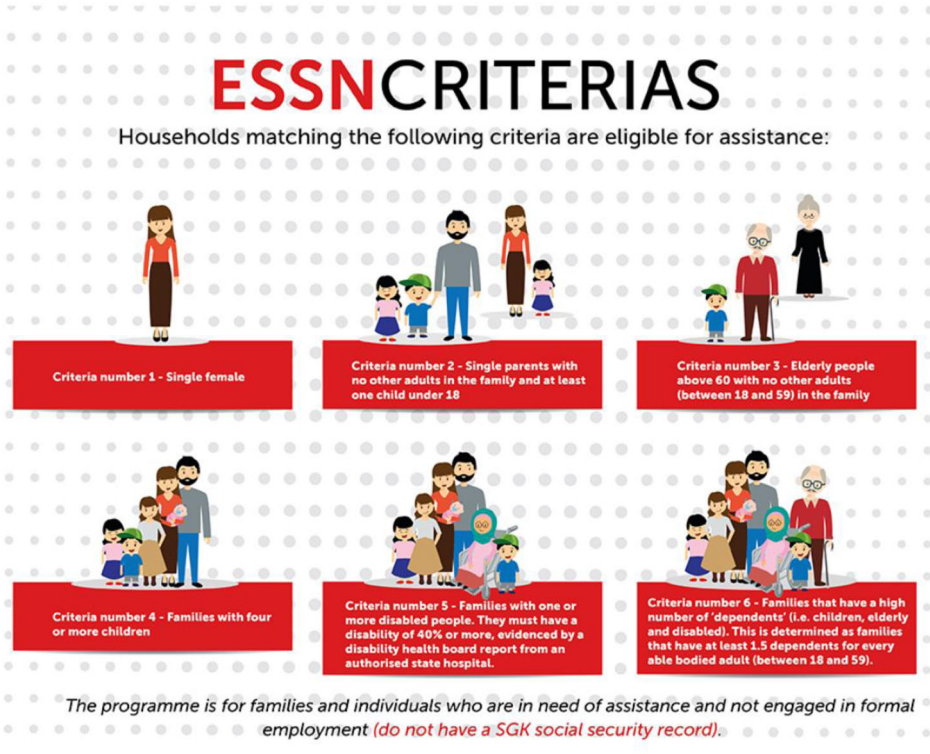

Figure 2. Selection criteria for Red Crescent (turk. "Kizilay") Card. Source: Kizilay 2019.

vulnerable now, but expected to outgrow their vulnerability in the future, are deemed deserving of support. This paradoxical selection practice aligns with Aradau's observation that what is seen to put people *at* risk and deserving of care (here: economic dependence) simultaneously renders them *a* risk (here: to the German welfare state). In such instances the politics of pity can become "hijacked by a politics of risk, which is based on risk minimization and containment" (Aradau 2004, 274).

The Absence or Presence of Family

The absence or presence of family is crucial to the assessment of refugees' vulnerability, in highly gendered ways. Women without family are by definition seen as vulnerable. All actors involved in the selection process focus on women and children, based on the assumption that they are more vulnerable than men (cf. Sözer 2019). All resettlement actors agree in considering the absence of family as an indicator for single women's particular vulnerability. Among Turkish NGOs, single women are by definition categorized as eligible for the Red Crescent Card, as they are assumed not to be able to provide for themselves. The UNHCR Resettlement Handbook states that UNHCR "considers as women at risk or a girl at risk those women or girls who have protection problems particular to their gender, and lack of effective protection normally provided by male family members" (UNHCR 2011b, 263). Thus, UNHCR assumes that women depend not only on their family but specifically on *men* in their family for protection. In practice, UNHCR applies the category of "women at risk" to all women who are either divorced or otherwise have no "male protection." Critically reflecting on the automatism of this practice, a UNHCR frontline worker notes "Even when they are not vulnerable, every woman who lost her husband counts as "woman at risk""

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(Observations UNHCR Ankara). Simultaneously, this interpretation obscures the myriad ways in which families may be a source of violence and constraints for women. Like UNHCR, resettlement states prioritize "vulnerable women" with reference to their special protection needs. The interpretation of single refugee women as per se vulnerable and deserving of care is thus relatively uncontested among refugee-selecting actors.

Whereas women without family are perceived as per se vulnerable by all actors involved, refugee men without family tend to be seen as per se *not* vulnerable. Rather than *at risk*, refugee men are seen as *risky* (see also Fine 2018). Resettlement states in particular play an important role in obstructing the resettlement of men, as a UNHCR resettlement officer from the MENA region explains (Observations German Resettlement Expert Meeting 2019):

> "[W]e do have highly vulnerable men and we do identify them for resettlement. There are two reasons [why it is difficult to submit their dossiers]. It is not as generous as vulnerable women because obviously just being female, and alone potentially, that adds a level of vulnerability. But the other reason, I have to admit, I cannot tell you how many times resettlement countries tell us "No single men." We do try to consider certain profiles, we do have a number of LGBTI who are men, that we try to consider for resettlement, or people who have been detained."

As Turner (2017, 31) observed in the admission program to Canada, resettlement countries only accept single male refugees if they are LGBTI persons and survivors of torture. Well aware that single men will stand little chance at a later stage, Turkish authorities state that they still refer them to UNHCR as they might be victims of torture, victims of violence, or medical cases. While DGMM declares not to have a rule for excluding single men, the expectation is that their chances of being selected for resettlement are marginal (Interview DGMM).

On the rare occasions that resettlement countries specify the logic behind their reluctance to admit single men, they present two lines of argument. First, single refugee men are expected to work and be self-sufficient and (therefore) not to be vulnerable (cf. Turner 2017). Talking about resettlement to Europe, the conservative leading candidate for the 2019 European elections, Manfred Weber, for instance, declared that "those who have a high protection need, old people, women who have been raped, children who have medical needs, those we need to bring to Europe, not the 18-year old man, who can also have a decent life in a Turkish camp" (Deutschlandfunk 2019). Second, single men are perceived to have more difficulties integrating in the resettlement country. A report about admission to Ireland makes this explicit, stating that "UNHCR observed that Ireland has been cautious regarding resettlement of single males. This is based on the view that single men will be harder to integrate in the community as Ireland does not have large resettlement populations and most people are resettled in family groups" (Arnold and Quinn 2016, 31). This assumed relation between "integration potential" and family is gendered and racialized: absence of family is seen to undermine the assimilability of "non-Western" men. Single refugee men have become the main object of Europe's concern with public security. As a former minister of the interior of a German federal province puts it (Interview former Minister of the Interior of a federal German province, own translation):

> If you look at the social composition of the refugees who arrive here [irregularly], sixty per cent are young men. That is the generation and the gender that has an affinity to commit criminal acts. We have extreme problems with young refugees, especially from North Africa, regarding criminality. And a society notices that—the night of New Year's Eve in Cologne [where women were sexually assaulted, allegedly by refugee men], the "Amri" terrorist attack in Berlin [killing twelve people at a Christmas market].

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This perception of single men as dangerous reflects the assumption that family *disciplines* men into behaving "properly," whereas men without family—especially those racialized as "non-Western"—are assumed to be (sexually) violent and immoral. This fear of single migrant men has a long history: in the first half of the twentieth century, the French government preferred married Italian labor migrants who brought their family, because it feared the "violent and unpredictable behaviour" of unmarried men (Lucassen 2005, 106–7). De Hart (2017) traces fears of the supposed sexual aggression of refugee men back to the trope of the sexually aggressive black or brown men predating on white women, which was an integral part of the racist ideologies of European colonialism.

Taken together, the way single refugee men are constructed as a category by resettlement states—neither vulnerable nor assimilable—makes their submission for resettlement difficult. Yet, the representation of single refugee men as dangerous is also contested in the transnational setting of admission practices: while all actors involved perceive single men as less vulnerable, Turkish migration authorities and UNHCR do not subscribe to resettlement states' reading of single, racialized men as per se "risky." Reflecting the dominance of European resettlement states in these transnational governance processes, however, even single men who are assessed as vulnerable by NGOs, Turkish migration authorities, or UNHCR are excluded from resettlement, which confirms that the politics of care "can only function for certain categories of individuals, i.e., the non-dangerous" (Aradau 2004, 259).

While absence of family is equated with vulnerability for women and with non-vulnerability for straight men, *presence* of family can be read as an indicator of vulnerability where gay men are concerned. Rather than a source of safety and support, the family is perceived as a space of potential violence and danger for LGBTI refugees—a term most resettlement actors use interchangeably with gay men. Thus, the family is seen to reinforce the vulnerability of LGBTI people caused by their refugee status and by the hostility toward LGBTI people in Turkey (KAOS GL 2016; ECRE European Council for Refugees and Exile 2018).

> Well, it is not forbidden in Turkey but one can say that because they are refugees and LGBTI they have a lot of protection problems. The combination makes them vulnerable. Often the threat is not coming from the Turkish society but from within the family because they do not accept it. So the problem comes from within rather [than] from the outside. (Interview ASAM)

In line with this frontline worker's statement, UNHCR's resettlement assessment tool for LGBTI refugees (UNHCR 2013b) urges its staff to "be aware of violence by family or community members." In contrast to heterosexual women for whom the family counts by default as a source of protection, for LGBTI refugees the family is seen as a site not of protection but of potential harm. Therefore, resettlement aims to protect LGBTI refugees by *separating* them from their (biological) families. This reflects binary imaginations of "the West" as gay-friendly and "the Rest"—including Syrian families—as homophobic, identified by scholarship on "homonationalism" (Puar 2007; Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010). Queer critique has shown that "gay friendly" practices often "encouraged the marginalisation of non-normative 'queer' sexualities," especially if these are "not easily accommodated within normative, Western models of sexual citizenship" (Hubbard and Wilkinson 2014, 598–99). However the gay-friendly self-image of UNHCR and Western resettlement countries does not translate into attention for the families that LGBTI refugees may have formed. While in its LGBTI guidelines (UNHCR 2013b) UNHCR declares to "recognize ... same-sex-couples as a family unit for the purposes of resettlement processing," the burden of proof regarding these relationships is significantly higher (Menetrier and Lawrence 2019). Even if UNHCR would submit same-sex couples, resettlement states would usually not admit these couples without proof of cohabitation or legal registration (UNHCR 2013b, 11). Given the

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factual impossibility of obtaining such proofs in many countries of first refuge, LGBTI refugees' own family definitions risk falling through the cracks of resettlement's heteronormative selection practices.

Assimilability

Selecting refugees for resettlement is not only about selecting the most vulnerable—it is also about selecting the most assimilable, that is, least likely to disrupt the national order. Refugees and other immigrants are perceived as a threat to national order and security in three interrelated ways: a threat to public security (migrants as violent, criminals, terrorists); a threat to social security (migrants as burdens to the welfare state); and a threat to identity security (migrants as a threat to "a white, Christian Europe") (Fassin 2012, 112–13; see also Huysmans 2000). Our analysis shows that family norms play a role in these different aspects of assimilability assessments. It also shows that in transnational mobility governance, NGOs and international organizations are drawn into the project of safeguarding the national order.

Family and "Integration Potential"

In its official policy orders for refugee admission from Turkey, Germany lists the following selection categories (Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat 2017, own translation):

- Protection of the unity of the family
- Family or other integration-facilitating links to Germany
- Integration potential (indicators: educational and vocational training, professional experience, languages, religion, low age)
- Degree of protection needs, counting especially for people whose protection needs have not been assessed by the UNHCR
- Additional criteria, which can be determined with Turkey on the EU-level in procedural guidelines

These formal selection criteria suggest different justifications for the focus on families in resettlement. First, the family unit—implicitly defined as the nuclear family—is seen as intrinsically worthy of protection. Second, family ties in the resettlement state are framed as "facilitating integration." The assumption that migrating with their family is helpful or even necessary for migrants to build a life in a new home country is a longstanding policy frame. Since the 1960s, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Community have promoted family reunification for (internal) labor migrants for this reason (Bonjour and Kraler 2015, 1409). However, in more recent policy debates on family migration in Western Europe, including Germany, family has been represented as an obstacle to migrant integration, as migrant families are seen to reflect and transmit "deviant" norms and values (Bonjour and Kraler 2015). In German resettlement policies, the opposite frame applies: embeddedness in family networks is assumed to increase rather than hamper refugees' assimilability.

Which Families?

Family is considered to enhance assimilability—but not all families. The bureaucratic practices of different refugee selection actors understand "family" predominantly to be a nuclear family, consisting of a heterosexual adult couple and their minor children. Although a former UNHCR worker emphasized that "Resettlement does not separate families, ok" (Interview former UNHCR worker from

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Lebanon), this dominant definition of family may clash with how refugees themselves define their "family." The same UNHCR worker commented that "Syrians particularly have a very strong family bond." In doing so, she expressed a perception of cultural differences with regard to family norms and practices, which most likely does not pertain primarily to the *strength* of family ties among Syrians—whether they love their loved-ones better—but rather about the *scope* of these ties—which family members they have strong ties with (Interview former UNHCR worker from Lebanon):

> So for example … "you are the brother x, do you want to go to y" ok? He would say "No, I don't want to go alone. I want to take with me my mother, who is widowed and I have two other married brothers with their families. So sometimes we try to work this out; we try to see whether the other families are eligible, if all the criteria apply. Sometimes it works, sometimes it does not.

What we observe here is a clash between different conceptions of what constitutes a "family." According to the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, "the nuclear family clearly is the core" (UNHCR 2011b, 178). In line with this definition, the UNHCR worker must treat "family" as isolated nuclear units: the resettlement candidate is a single man without family attachments, and both of his brothers have their own families. Therefore, she speaks of "families" in plural. In the eyes of the resettlement candidate, however, all these people make up *one* family, *his* family, which he refuses to leave behind. The Resettlement Handbook recognizes that "there is no single, universally agreed-upon definition as to what constitutes a family" and advocates "cultural sensitivity" and "a pragmatic approach," recognizing in particular that "extended relations may be the last line of defence for individuals who rely exclusively on the family unit for survival, psychological support, and emotional care." However, the Handbook only allows for admittance of non-nuclear family members if there is a relationship of "dependency" between them (UNHCR 2011b, 178–79). The UNHCR worker's comment that "sometimes we try to work this out" reflects this conditional and limited recognition by UNHCR of pluralist conceptions of family. It also reflects the practical concern of securing the commitment and effective departure of resettlement candidates. Indeed, UNHCR officers want to avoid so-called "no-show" cases: people or families who, at some point in the process, sometimes very close to departure, decide to drop out. Leaving extended family members but also friends behind is one of many reasons for withdrawals. While the discretionary and opaque admission process works toward reducing refugees' agency as political and social subjects, the undesirable scenario of withdrawal forces resettlement actors to take refugees' own priorities and normative conceptions of family into account.

The standard operating procedures for implementing the EU–Turkey statement (Council of the European Union 2016) specify that families with "complex or unclear profiles are not eligible." Such so-called complex profiles may include "underaged spouses" or polygamous marriages. Turkish authorities classify cases of child marriage, polygamy, and perpetrators of war crimes and other serious crimes listed in Article 1F of the Geneva Convention as non-eligible for resettlement (Interview DGMM). Resettlement countries such as Germany exclude these cases from resettlement, so that DGMM frontline officers at the very beginning of the admission chain know they would drop out at a later stage anyway. In addition, polygamy and child marriage are illegal in Turkey. The overlap in family norms between Germany and Turkey makes these groups fall out of the procedure early on.

The UNHCR struggles with how to deal with polygamous marriages. Its Resettlement Handbook states that "[u]nder international law, polygamy is considered a violation of the principle of equality of men and women in marriage," as "it has serious implications for the emotional and economic well-being of a woman and her dependents." Nonetheless, UNHCR stresses that it "aims to respect the culturally diverse interpretations of family membership and ensure the protection of

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members of polygamous families" (UNHCR 2011b, 207). The Handbook argues that as most resettlement states will not admit more than one spouse, resettlement will generally result in separation of families, notably in "a situation where one wife is chosen over the other(s)," which UNHCR strives to avoid. Resettlement of members of polygamous families may be considered, even though "additional considerations and procedural safeguards are required," which are detailed in a special resettlement assessment tool for polygamous families (UNHCR 2011a).

In practice, however, UNHCR usually does not select cases of polygamy and child marriage for resettlement (cf. Neikirk 2017). UNHCR frontline workers are aware of the tension between resettlement states' priorities on the one hand, and the inclusiveness of their mandate as defined in the Resettlement Handbook on the other. As one of the frontline workers of UNHCR Turkey's resettlement team describes it (Observations UNHCR Ankara): "We cannot socially design a family. But there is no [resettlement] programme that would accept them." In this frontline worker's view, UNHCR should respect that people may shape their family lives in different ways, rather than imposing a particular conception of what a family is. At the same time, she is aware that, in the end, European norms on "proper" family and marriage overrule UNHCR's mandate. Through the exclusion of polygamy and child marriage, UNHCR not only controls access to resettlement but also participates in enforcing the boundaries of socially acceptable or desirable family constellations in Europe. Thus, while UNHCR's official mandate focuses on care, as an actor in transnational mobility governance in which resettlement states dominate, UNHCR is forced to adopt resettlement states' normative understandings of family, and thus to contribute to safeguarding their national order.

Categories of family unity also reflect the legal, diplomatic, and security concerns of resettlement countries and countries of first refuge. Resettling not only unaccompanied children, for instance, but also children with unresolved custody issues, counts as diplomatically sensitive, because resettlement states fear the risk of being accused of child abduction (Interview with German Ministry of the Interior; Interview German Foreign Office). First countries of refuge, such as Turkey, do not issue exit permits if people are involved in lawsuits over divorce or child custody issues, since the outcome would impact the question of family constellation and legal guardianship. Moreover, the security threat posed by resettlement candidates is assessed at the level of the family unit: the dossier counts as cleared only after all family members have been through a series of screenings. This concerns especially male family members old enough to serve in the military or to be recruited.

At the moment that migration authorities of resettlement states meet the refugee for an interview, their criteria of what constitutes a resettable family have already largely been addressed by NGOs, Turkish authorities, and UNHCR. The dossiers that UNHCR proposes to German migration authorities either consist of nuclear and "complete" families, or of single mothers with their children, or single LGBTI persons. What remains for the German authorities to assess is primarily the "integration potential" of refugee families.

Most notably, German migration authorities strive to establish whether the family, gender, and sexuality norms and practices that refugees adhere to are in accordance with what German officials perceive as "German" norms. For instance, at a German resettlement expert meeting in 2018, a representative from the German Ministry of the Interior explained (Observation German Resettlement Expert Meeting 2018, authors' translation):

> The most important criterion for us is the UNHCR-assessed resettlement need. And for everything that follows, we are in a situation where there is more need than capacities. … To make it concrete: if there is for instance a family who thinks that girls should not be allowed to go to school, this would be a constellation for us where we say the demand is so high, we will rather take another family.

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In this state representative's account, the discrepancy between needs and spots morally justifies the use of integration criteria, and even frames them as a necessity for further filtering. Shared power over selection between different actors with their respective mandates and expertise is central to her argument. In her view, UNHCR's vulnerability assessment has established "whom to care for" but the state's assessment is needed to complement and potentially correct this selection by controlling whether the "endangered" are not "dangerous" themselves (cf. Ticktin 2011, 53; Aradau 2004, 259). Resettlement states' interviews seek to disengage refugees from the suspicion of threat to the national order to ascertain that they deserve to be cared for on German territory. This intertwinement of care and control materializes through family and gender norms: assessing refugees' gender and family norms and practices serves to control the boundaries of belonging, while simultaneously serving the humanitarian aim of "freeing up" spots for those who are equally in need but, supposedly, more deserving. This assimilability assessment mobilizes family and gender norms to scrutinize not only the "proper" composition of the family—monogamous, nuclear, and complete—but also how these norms are supposedly lived and performed.

The example of parents—often the father—who do not allow their children—often the daughter(s)—to go to school or participate in mixed swimming classes is given by Germany and other resettlement states to illustrate how they assess "integration potential" in practice. Other examples are the question as to whether refugees are planning to be economically self-reliant or their reaction to a same-sex couple kissing on the street (Interviews EEAS Turkey, EU Commission; Observations German resettlement expert meeting 2018).

However, how exactly the BAMF assesses "integration potential" or in which instances it is deemed to be "too low" remains opaque. When asked about the definition of the term "integration capacity" at a German resettlement expert meeting, a BAMF representative responded (Observations resettlement expert Meeting 2019, own translation):

> **BAMF:** Well capacity is … I would rather say "perspective" and I would say that there are no fixed criteria that you can specify in an administrative regulation. Rather we ask about personal ideas about the life in Germany … we also emphasize that Germany is an open society, that it is very diverse, freedom of religion—and we ask concretely about that, to [ensure] that there is no principal rejectionist attitude—that he cannot imagine to live in an open society, he does not want to send his children to mixed sport or swimming classes despite the fact that he can choose the swimwear freely according to his ideas. … They are also giving up something in the first country of refuge that they cannot rebuild and it has consequences. So it should also be clear whether they actually want to be in this process.

The response of the BAMF representative underscores frontline workers' discretion in making their assessment of assimilability, which other actors have to anticipate. More importantly, however, it shows how the mobilization of gender and family norms in these assimilability assessments constitutes a bureaucratic form of pre-emptive border control to calculate and contain future risks (cf. Aradau 2004), echoing larger trends toward pre-emption in European security and mobility governance (De Goede 2008). Here, as in broader debates about migration and multicultural societies in Europe, gender and family norms are presented as core features of European culture, which distinguish "progressive" and "open" European societies from supposedly traditional and closed societies elsewhere in the world (Roggeband and Verloo 2007; Bracke 2012; Bonjour and de Hart 2013). As Spijkerboer has shown for European asylum law, selection practices in refugee admission, too, work in part "through a dichotomy between an idealised notion of Europe as a site characterised by human rights, and non-European countries as sites of oppression" (Spijkerboer 2018, 221). Informing refugees about these cultural differences

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in the admission interview is, according to the BAMF frontline officer, not only a matter of control but also of care: it also serves to help people to take an informed decision. In a similar vein, a civil servant from the EU Commission argues (Interview EU Commission):

> You will never be rejected if you say "I don't like gay people," I can tell you. Nobody is ever rejected for certain points of view. It is only to see what the expectations are and for people to start thinking whether it's a good choice for them. You don't want them to find themselves in a situation where they would not be happy, right?

In this paternalistic discourse, controlling the national (gender) order by discouraging refugees perceived as threatening this order is perfectly compatible with caring for refugees' future well-being.

Conclusion

"The international is personal," as Cynthia Enloe (1989, 196) put it: the realm of the intimate is central to international politics. Building on IPS scholarship's insight that normative practices are at the heart of border and mobility governance, we show that family norms are a crucial element of the normative grammars mobilized in transnational migration governance. In particular, our analysis of the mobilization of family norms in refugee resettlement selection practices yields a better understanding of two related aspects of discretionary power: first, how power is exercised over refugees in assessing their vulnerability and assimilability; and second, how power is distributed between states, NGOs, and international actors.

In the absence of binding legal norms and judicial or democratic oversight, family norms function as a fundamental normative framework for resettlement actors' exercise of discretionary power over refugees' access to resettlement. Here, the intersecting logics of care and control materialize as an assessment of refugees' vulnerability and assimilability. In these assessments, resettlement actors mobilize family norms as enacted "meaning-in-use" (Wiener 2009) to make and morally justify the distinction between those deemed deserving of resettlement and those whose movement remains contained. Since the family is perceived as a key source of support and protection, absence of family is read as vulnerability—but only for women. The family composition also matters: since a family is expected to care for its own, a family that is not considered able to do so counts as vulnerable, for instance, families with single parents or large numbers of minor children. Assimilability assessments are all about whether refugees do family "right": in a way that will allow them to "fit" in their new host countries. Thus, far from being "natural" and self-evident, family norms are an intrinsic part of the political logics of care and control as they manifest in the daily practices of transnational migration governance.

In existing feminist scholarship on the politics of migration and citizenship, the focus has been almost exclusively on the nation-state and its governance of nation and family. Our analysis shows that family norms are also central to migration governance practices of non-state actors—but in crucially different ways. The closer actors are tied to the nation-building project, the more explicitly they mobilize specific family, gender, and sexuality norms in selecting refugees for resettlement. This is reflected not only in the prohibition of polygamy in both Turkish and German law, but also in assessment practices, for instance, when German caseworkers test resettlement candidates' adherence to progressive gender and sexuality norms. The further actors are removed from the nation-building project, the more they strive to allow for a plurality of family norms—as reflected, for instance, in the UNHCR's attempts to accommodate family forms that extend beyond the nuclear family.

Finally, following family norms throughout the process sheds light on power relations and negotiations between different actors. It helps us to move beyond

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the insight that in the everyday doing of refugee governance power is dispersed and to show *how* power is distributed and exercised. Our multi-sited approach of studying norms as enacted practices across different bordering sites has highlighted that due to normative divergences between actors, some people's admission is more contested than others'. For instance, whereas all actors involved regard single women and gay men as per se deserving of resettlement, actors disagree on the eligibility of straight single men and non-nuclear families. Where contestation occurs, power disparities become apparent: we observe that resettlement states' criteria and normative interpretations cast a long shadow over the practices of other actors. Since resettlement states eventually decide whom to admit or exclude, all other actors involved in the selection process anticipate resettlement states' normative assessments. Thus, through their involvement in transnational migration governance, international and non-governmental actors are drawn into the nation-state project of producing and reproducing the boundaries of the Nation by controlling the boundaries of the Family.

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Data

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- German Ministry of the Interior, Ministerial Official, October 19, 2017, Berlin, Germany.
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(Participant) Observations

- German Resettlement Expert Meeting 2018, September 27–28, Berlin, Germany.
- German Resettlement Expert Meeting 2019, September 13–14, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.
- UNHCR Resettlement Unit, October 30–November 2, 2018, Ankara, Turkey.

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