Critical Social Policy

Article

Governing poverty and migration in European nation-states – keywords revisited

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Abstract

This article introduces a collaborative publication exploring the intricate interplay between poverty governance, migration control, and welfare provision. Adopting a 'keywords' approach, we investigate the terminology and concepts around which academic discussions revolve when addressing poverty and migration. Central to this examination is the figure of the 'poor migrant', whose experiences of inclusion and exclusion intersect along lines of race, gender, and legal status. Using an intersectional lens, the publication dissects key terms and concepts : Welfare State, Welfare Governance, Citizenship, Solidarity and Deservingness, Suspicion and Surveillance, Discipline, and Banishment. We thus aim to conceptualise and critically discuss the constant renegotiation of state

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Critical Social Policy 2024, Vol. 44(4) 573–587

DOI: 10.1177/02610183241273582 journals.sagepub.com/home/csp

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power and the nation-state induced in ex/inclusionary aspects of welfare and migration policies and law. The contribution reveals how notions of belonging shape access to rights and services, particularly along racialized and classist lines. Moreover, it explores how migration policies exacerbate scrutiny and exclusion faced by non-citizen populations within contemporary welfare systems.

Keywords
migration, non-citizens, poverty, welfare governance

Introduction

Over a century ago, Georg Simmel wrote that 'the poor person' constitutes an integral part of society. In his analysis, 'the differentiation of society into rich and poor' (Simmel, 2009: 413) becomes a central part of modern societies, and poor relief does not reduce this divide. Rather, in the words of contemporary scholars, the governance of poverty is – similar to the governance of migration – part of the continuous (re)definition of the nation-state itself, in that it distinguishes those included from those excluded, or, the belonging from the non-belonging (Anderson, 2013; Fassin, 2001, 2011; Khosravi, 2010; Walters, 2010). The 'poor' person is concomitantly excluded and included, and thus 'stands admittedly outside the group while being a mere object for undertakings by the community toward the individual, but this being on the outside is – put briefly – only a particular form of being inside' (Simmel, 2009: 435). This conclusion still bears analytical potential and becomes of particular relevance when we turn our gaze towards 'poor migrants' and enlarge our attention through an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1991) on their differential inclusion in, and exclusion from, the societies in which they reside (see Bruzelius and Shutes, 2022a; Lafleur and Vintila, 2020).

With this publication, we engage in a collaborative writing approach to further question the interlinkages of terms and concepts within poverty and migration policies, which shape each other (see also Bruzelius and Shutes, 2022b).[1] Building on the work of several author collectives that have used a 'keywords' approach to analyse academic debates surrounding the welfare state and migration (Casas-Cortes et al., 2015a, 2015b; De Genova and Tazzioli, 2022), we aim to investigate the terminology and concepts used in discussions related to governing poverty and migration. Our focus is on how these discussions specifically target and impact the experiences of 'poor migrants', who often face heightened scrutiny and regulation by state policies and practices. By critically examining the language and discourse that shape

these debates, our purpose is to shed light on the broader social, political and economic forces that underpin contemporary forms of migration control and welfare governance.

In line with our overall orientation, our discussions are based on a broad understanding of 'migration' and 'migrants' that puts an accent on the legal-administrative status of people categorised as not belonging to the nation-state in which they reside (in the sense of 'non-nationals' or 'non-citizens'). This includes individuals who have not migrated themselves to a certain place but who are 'migranticised' (Anderson, 2019) due to their legal status and descendance. The fact of actually moving from one place to another is therefore not at the forefront of our understanding. Neither at the core of the keywords are individual migrants. Rather, we investigate how European nation-states govern 'migration' and those associated with it as a policy field and category (see Isin and Wood, 2015). Similarly, Maribel Casa-Cortes et al. (2015a, 2015b: 61) demonstrate how the modern state's discourse on citizenship constantly reworks the structures, practices, and regulations that shape migration policies and experiences, while being challenged by various actors from a regional to a global level.

Within the growing field of research interested in poverty, welfare and migration, this collaboratively written themed issue aims to investigate how the governance of poverty and migration heavily influence each other and is co-constitutive of contemporary politics (Procacci, 1991). This focus necessitates an intersectional perspective in order to grasp the gendered, sexed, classist and racialised effects of how 'poor others' are constructed, regulated and governed within the nation-state system (see also Pfirter, 2023; Salomon, 2023). We expand on how nation-states address and attempt to govern poor individuals by bringing a particular focus on the figure of the 'poor migrant', who is subjected to various forms of exclusion by law and not considered as a full member of a nationally defined society. Yet, beyond the shared features of legally not belonging and of being classed as poor, this figure is highly heterogenous in which racialisation, gendering and other minoritisations intersect.

We address seven keywords and keyword pairs that we identified as particularly pertinent (*Welfare State, Welfare Governance, Citizenship, Solidarity and Deservingness, Suspicion and Surveillance, Discipline, and Banishment*) and helpful to a two-fold objective: to rethink how states address 'poor migrants' and thus investigate the intersection of migration and poverty, and to examine the specificities of past and present developments of the welfare state and their impacts for migrants. These differ from their historical antecedents, for example, in terms of poor relief for citizens. The gathered keywords result from an iterative process based on collective brainstorming among the authors and on continued re-categorisation and selection. The final choice covers terms that came up as pertinent and relevant for the discussion on

welfare, poverty, and in/exclusion, and that we see as also having the potential to create a specific link to migration studies.

The keywords we identify have been discussed in the relevant literature, yet we revisit them to conceptualise and critically discuss topics that come up in research on poverty at the intersection with migration policies and laws. We scrutinise ex- and inclusionary aspects of welfare and migration government and the effects they bear on the constant renegotiation of state power and the nation-state. Through the combined analytical lenses of migration and welfare government, the figure of the 'poor migrant' surfaces – in the sense of Simmel (1908) as an integral part of society – as an intriguing starting point from which to outline, redefine, and politicise research in these realms.

We do so by paying particular attention to European nation-states and how these states – as heterogenous ensembles encompassing a diversity of actors, interests, and power constellations – play a central role in creating, identifying, and governing 'poor migrants' (see Isin and Wood, 2015; Sharma and Gupta, 2006). We focus on Europe because of the possibility of investigating the current formations of nation-states that are simultaneously welfare states, acknowledging that these are always localised and historically contingent. This focus allows us to highlight further stratification resulting from the categorisation of people without the nationality of the country of residence as migrants, and the nuances added by whether their status is regulated by asylum law or immigration law, or if they are EU or non-EU citizens. Bringing together scholars from different fields and backgrounds researching Europe's migration regimes and nation-states enables us to draw some more general observations and conceptual directions, while still embedding such historical and local particularities. At the same time, this perspective allows us to take into account global developments (see also Carmel et al., 2012), such as the rise in (far-)right-wing policies that shape not only national but also broader inter- and transnational contexts, as well as international legal developments (such as judgements by the European Court of Human Rights). By linking these developments to local repercussions and responses on the ground, we pay attention to the effects of globalisation that are visible in the government of poverty and migration. For instance, some of the keywords highlight how particular categories of non-nationals were more affected than nationals by the poverty risks introduced by the measures to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and how the pandemic magnified pre-existing inequalities (see also Shachar and Mahmood, 2021). More specifically, we believe that critical migration studies will nourish discussions of these keywords and contribute to existing conversations in social policy and welfare research, as well as influence future research in both fields. Although rooted in a 'European' perspective, we believe these keywords also serve for critical analysis in other contexts.

Mobility, migration and governance of the poor

Today's interlinked discussions on migration, welfare provision, and poverty have their roots in the way that political entities historically targeted populations as a site of governmental intervention (see keywords 'Welfare State' and 'Welfare Governance'). As visible with the citation of Simmel at the beginning, 'the poor' were one of the first targets. The question of who was responsible for taking care of which poor individuals has been a contested issue for centuries (for a Swiss example, see Schnegg and Matter, 2010; van Leeuwen, 1994) and was one of the reasons why formal rules on nationality and the connected rights and obligations were introduced in the process of nation-state formation (Brubaker, 1992). In many countries, such as Switzerland or the United Kingdom, parishes, municipalities, or other local entities, used to be responsible for the population that was born within their geographical confinements and had to take charge of them in cases of neediness (Borrelli and Bochsler, 2020). 'The poor' could therefore be deported from other places back to the territory and the responsibility of the parishes or 'home municipalities' to which they formally belonged (Tabin et al., 2008). Besides the ability to remove those 'impoverished' from territories in which they were deemed to have no right to support, the responsible municipalities could also support their members by sending 'poor relief' to the municipalities in which they resided. As such, 'poor laws' posed problems for local authorities 'that were structurally similar to those presented to central government by international migrants in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries' (Feldman, 2006: 1), meaning that questions of belonging and entitlement to support and solidarity have long been closely connected. The ethnic and racial conception of belonging, and the territorial logic of welfare entitlement, is a core concept of nation-states that regularly problematises and targets migrants in the neoliberal restructuring of national welfare retrenchments (Keskinen, 2016).

This perception of belonging is based on the principle of sedentariness inherent in the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1995). William Walters (2004) shows how this 'national order' and the nation-state's role in the categorisation of the world produces 'migration' and 'migrants' as a socio-political fact that is differentiated from mobility or movement (see keyword 'Suspicion and Surveillance'). This led to the differentiation between citizens and non-citizens living on a state's territory, who become the outsiders and insiders within nation-states (see keyword 'Citizenship'). While over time more social rights also became accessible to the latter without acquiring citizenship (Carmel and Sojka, 2021), their entitlements remain porous and often contested. Research on new public management and neoliberal state logic further highlights the conditionality of labour market participation that migrants face, endangering their stay as soon as they are deemed undeserving for not contributing enough (Borrelli

and Bochsler, 2020; Considine et al., 2018). Hence, the exclusion and removal of the poor population are not new, and current political attempts to marginalise 'poor migrants' follow long-established, discriminatory strategies (see keywords 'Solidarity and Deservingness' and 'Banishment'). Instead, the proliferation of harsh policy measures against the poor in general, and 'poor migrants' in particular, are at the forefront (Atzmüller et al., 2020). According to Purtschert (2019), the persecution and social exclusion of poor populations have been made efficacious through a differentiation beyond a citizen and non-citizen divide, with additional hierarchising between different groups of non-citizens. From a postcolonial perspective, the assumption that wealthy citizens of the 'Global North' 'migrate for higher-order needs rather than for economic reasons or the simple wish to find a better existence elsewhere' (Sanders, 2015: 110) within state policies and political discourse allow for discrimination and racialisation of poor non-citizens and reconstruct images of normality and deviance linked to poverty and migration (see keyword 'Discipline').

Today, images of the poor, undeserving, abusing or deceiving 'migrant other' are commonly voiced when the public and policymakers negotiate differentiated access to welfare depending on legal classification and assumed belonging (long- and short-term permits, so-called 'third-country nationals' and EU/EFTA citizens, asylum seekers, refugees; see Casati, 2018; Osipovič, 2015). Social welfare is therefore also a site of intersectional racialisation and populist discourses; it becomes a means by which to maintain some populations in poverty and to exclude certain groups from access to benefits and more stable permits based on their nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion, or race. We find governmental attempts to demolish and gentrify alleged 'problematic areas' (Suárez-Krabbe and Lindberg, 2019), stripping people of their right to housing in certain neighbourhoods to reduce alleged 'ghettoisation' (see Fekete, 2018). Poverty policies thus are a biopolitical strategy (Gupta, 2012). Making use of welfare dependence and poverty as reasons for forced evictions serves national governments as a strategy to depict non-citizens of the 'Global South' and citizens with a 'non-Western' migration history (Zhang, 2020) as inherently antithetical to otherwise 'White' values, such as working to sustain oneself and being independent of public welfare (Lindberg, 2020). Addressing poverty from an intersectional perspective by including the specificities of a critical lens on migration offers, we believe, an enriching perspective on structural exclusion and allows for a differentiated analysis of legal and regulatory systems (see keywords 'Citizenship' and 'Welfare Governance').

Welfare and the nation-state

Within this contribution, we examine how nation-states deal with and construct 'the poor', more specifically the 'poor migrant', and how forms of

government that tackle this rather heterogeneous group (in terms of additional intersecting categories such as gender, race, and age) diffuse into more generalised forms of welfare provision and policies. Historically, welfare as a concept was often dealt with as being detached from the context of the nation-state, instead treated within states as the natural containers of policies and their effects. Migration policies have also historically legitimised the exclusion of people (and continue to do so), particularly those racialised or perceived as 'undesirable' based on social class, nationality, and whether their behaviour is seen as desirable or deviant. Although migration policies may affect all people without legal citizenship similarly and on a legal basis, the actual effects in terms of life possibilities are stratified along racist, classist and gendered lines (Bhambra and Holmwood, 2018; Bhatia, 2021; Mbembe, 2017). In line with this, we understand race, class and gender as social constructions that bear material and intersectional consequences for the persons affected (see keywords 'Banishment' and 'Discipline').

Before welfare states emerged (van Bavel and Rijpma, 2016), welfare policies were not state-driven but executed by various local organisations, private institutions as well as the church (Forrest, 2012; Stark, 1995). Although welfare has been studied for decades, it was for a long time taken up in the context of political science (Wickwar, 1946), and social policy or social work and its practical implementation (Esping-Andersen, 1990; van Bavel and Rijpma, 2016). Yet, the definition of social welfare is varied, at times including only individuals who fall below a minimum level of income, and at other times covering broader categories. According to Zald (1965: 3), '*{s}ocial welfare* will refer to those formally organized and socially sponsored institutions, agencies, and programs, exclusive of the family and private enterprise, which function to maintain or improve the economic conditions, health, or interpersonal competence of some parts or all of a population'. Other definitions take in certain aspects of family, private enterprise, or union operations as social welfare (Kamerman, 1983; Martin, 2004). Hence, the terminology in welfare research can be vague, for instance as regards the understanding of which actors are involved and should be counted as relevant (see keyword 'Welfare State').

Criticisms point out that framing social welfare as targeting only the poor fails to consider programmes that cater to the 'advantaged' and thus risk reinforcing stereotypes of poor welfare recipients (Feagin, 1973). Our focus on the governance of the poor, however, is rooted in the recognition that the governance of poverty, and more precisely welfare benefits, is understood as a sociological relationship (Simmel 1908) that is always dependent on the extent to which a society is characterised by accumulation and inequality (de Swaan, 1988). In other words, the existence of public assistance, and the claim to this assistance, produce poverty as a social phenomenon. The object and target of social assistance (or previously poor relief) is not the poor

person *per se* but rather society at large and the reproduction of the prevalent social conditions (Maeder and Nadai, 2004). Hence, poor relief and later welfare programmes are political tools of concomitant ex- and inclusion (Simmel, 1908; Tabin et al., 2008), often connected to the disciplining of 'paupers' (Jütfe, 1981). It is, therefore, a question of governing poverty (Castel, 2003; Maeder and Nadai, 2004; Procacci, 2007; Tabin et al., 2008; Wacquant, 2009), which points to the interlinkages of technocratic allocation of rights, moral judgements, classification/sorting and identification (see keyword 'Welfare Governance'). Poor relief and welfare are thus part of legitimising the classist order of things and the unequal distribution of resources and power in society, while in charge of taming the dangers of poverty and providing a decent labour pool (de Swaan, 1988).

The specific national order that governs 'poor migrants' adds additional stratification to the government of poverty, which operates along legal status and nationality (see Achermann et al., 2023). Welfare support aimed at reducing poverty among non-nationals includes financial aid, as well as the distribution of goods and necessities provided by state-funded agencies or non-governmental actors. While civil society or non-governmental organisations may fill gaps in service provision and provide emergency support, they also perpetuate the state's retrenchment of welfare provision. This becomes especially apparent in moments of 'crisis', such as the war in Ukraine or during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the quickest responses are often taken by non-state actors, first in the line of support. Administrative procedures and standardised practices may limit state support and exclude specific categories of people, such as undocumented migrants and rejected asylum seekers. To understand this order and stratification, our focus lies on the ways that nation-states carry out such 'welfare bordering' (see also Misje, 2021) in a globalised context and thus are challenged by increased migration and border-crossing. We understand nation-states as powerful social and political constructs and as deeply heterogeneous, thus they are not unified actors within a field characterised by local, as well as regional and transnational, interactions that influence each other (Bevir, 2012; Bevir and Rhodes, 2010; Wimmer and Schiller, 2002). As such, policies of different political fields can have contradictory goals, while their implementation can take place outside state institutions.

This is in line with another core interest of contemporary research that questions the actual role of welfare, its logic, and preconditions for receiving such support. Current developments attest that the times of 'generous welfare states' are in decline, if they ever existed (Keskinen, 2016). Instead, welfare policies aim for an intense screening of potential recipients to reduce the number of people to whom such support is granted (Jørgensen and Thomsen, 2016; Laenen, 2020). The screening takes a suspicious look at entitlements based on labour participation and behaviour and, importantly,

distinguishes according to nationality. This has been conceptualised as 'welfare chauvinism' (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990) and 'welfare conditionality' (Carmel and Sojka, 2021; Fletcher and Flint, 2018). Similarly, the (possible) consequences of reliance on welfare for people without national citizenship or local belonging, allow us to investigate the nexus between governing poverty, controlling migration and statecraft. With this collection of keywords, we thus wish to critically situate the nation-state and its welfare governance over time, as well as the entangled workings of policies and laws, addressing how different categories of 'migrant' and 'poor' are created in different contexts for the purpose of governance.

The keywords

All the keywords in this contribution are located within the triangle made up of the topics of welfare, poverty, and migration. Each keyword begins with a brief introduction into prior work on the respective term, as well as a glimpse into past developments. Authors briefly explore the debates that have evolved around each keyword (without pretending to be exhaustive), thereby contextualising each term within welfare research. We then specify migration-related aspects and discuss how they relate to the broader topic that each keyword addresses, but also engage with how migration research contributes to and shapes the understanding of the keyword. This follows the idea of de-migranticising (Dahinden, 2016) and migranticising (Anderson, 2019) the discussion and proposes to investigate the continuous (re)negotiation of the nation-state (Fassin, 2001, 2011; Khosravi, 2010; Walters, 2010). Following the reflexive turn in migration studies (Amelina, 2017; Dahinden, 2016; Nieswand and Drotbohm, 2014), this approach helps to go beyond the taken-for-granted dichotomies of 'foreign' and 'home' populations and allows the understanding of migration policies as influencing different fields of policy, bureaucracy and knowledge production. To support our arguments, the sections take up various categories of non-citizens, including asylum seekers, but with a stronger focus on various categories of legal residents outside the realm of asylum. This highlights the continuous questioning of belonging, no matter how stable a residence permit seems. As such, each keywords section combines summaries of works that the authors deemed relevant as well as their own research examples to illustrate the arguments.

The first keyword, *Welfare State*, sets out to problematise the term itself, often conceptualised as a national construct and thus in contrast to migration, which as a global phenomenon is assumed to be a rather disruptive force that potentially destabilises the welfare state and thus the nation. It critically presents common conceptions of what the welfare state should provide and how migrants are often excluded and only partially included, despite EU efforts to create a more global and encompassing system.

Welfare Governance connects to the broader discussions on governance and neoliberal individualisation and advances how activation policies push an economic focus on labour market participation no matter the cost – leaving migrants vulnerable to exploitative working conditions and termination of their stay permits if they do not participate. This goes along with the responsibilisation of the 'poor migrant', individualising their failure and producing key momentum to drive them out of the national territory. The contribution concludes that (material and status-wise) precarity is a key result of the current welfare governance of non-citizens.

One main part of welfare eligibility depends on the *Citizenship* of the respective individual. As a marker of inclusion and exclusion, and being long associated with wealth/class, race and gender, citizenship does not remain the ultimate status to secure state support, however. On the path towards it, we find increasing in-between states, statuses and permits that become demarcations of belonging and entitlement.

Solidarity and Deservingness dives deeper into state models and the diversity of actors (including non-state actors), exploring how acts of solidarity are highly governed by nation-states and embedded in classed, racialised, and further intersecting discriminatory notions of belonging. As an example, this section takes up the discourse on how solidarity within EU citizenship is increasingly limited, rendering contestations against welfare retrenchments towards migrants difficult. States retreat to a reduced understanding of solidarity, based on ideas of deservingness.

With *Discipline* on the one hand, and *Suspicion and Surveillance* on the other, we focus on contemporary processes of social differentiation and exclusion at the intersection of migration policy and welfare governance. Both contributions look at bureaucratic practices that sanction and punish certain behaviour or render it suspicious and thus prone to control. The keywords explore how these practices are then justified, and critically discuss the consequences for non-citizens, moving on to theorise on the permeation of these practices into society.

Banishment concludes the keyword discussion by arguing that all the practices of welfare states can be counted as the politics of destitution that ultimately lead to the banishment of unwanted individuals. It argues that banishment can be helpful as a conceptual lens through which to understand the purposeful strategies that render individuals deportable, whether citizens or non-citizens.

For a final summary of our arguments, we conclude with a brief discussion and a reflective commentary by Bridget Anderson.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was

supported by the nccr – on the move funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation grant 51NF40-182897.

Note

1. The consequent contributions emerged from the workshop 'Migration, Social Welfare and Social Cohesion' convened by Christin Achermann, Lisa Marie Borrelli, Stefanie Kurt, Doris Niragire Nirere and Luca Pfirter in January 2021, which included the participation of Cecilia Bruzelius, Jean-Pierre Tabin, Bridget Anderson, Sandra Mantu, Nora Ratzmann, Anita Heindlmaier, Jukka Könönen, Anna Lundberg, Ulrika Wernesjö, Vincent Dubois, and Reinhard Schweitzer.The workshop and the project that coordinated it were supported by the nccr – on the move funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation grant 51NF40-182897.

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