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Policy Experts Negotiating Popular Fantasies of ‘Benefit Tourism’ Policy Discourses on Deservingness and Their Relation to Welfare Chauvinism

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ABSTRACT

Welfare provision as a border control strategy is often discussed in relation to irregular migrants and refugees. However, this article focuses on EU migrants. Using discourse theory, it explores interviews with policy experts from four migrant-receiving EU countries. The aim is to identify policy discourses on deservingness articulated in relation to intra-EU migrants from four member states in Eastern Europe, to detect mechanisms that generate these discourses and to reveal how they relate to welfare chauvinism. The article uncovers contesting logics that move policy experts toward welfare-chauvinist assumptions, which might contribute to the discursive welfare exclusion of EU migrants.



KEYWORDS

European Union (EU); free movement; EU migrants; discourse; welfare deservedness; welfare chauvinism

Introduction

Welfare provision as a border control strategy is often discussed in relation to irregular migrants and refugees (see e.g., Düvell & Jordan, 2002; Ataç & Rosenberger, 2019). However, this article places emphasis on EU migrants, that is on EU citizens moving within the union, and takes interest in the new questions regarding EU migrants and social welfare generated in policy and public debate by the right of free movement within the EU. Apart from more organizational social protection issues, discussions have emerged on welfare deservingness and conditionality—whom is to be included in or excluded from national social welfare programs in the context of intra-EU migration. These discussions are supported by the fact that, despite EU citizens being entitled to social protection in the countries to which they migrated, each member state has some control over the exact conditions applied to EU citizens seeking social welfare (Kramer, 2017).

As Kremer (2016) has stated, cross-border mobility and ethnic diversification raise unprecedented challenges to both formal and informal social protection and welfare. These challenges are illustrated in the ongoing public immigration debates in different EU countries, where some question EU migrants’ right to welfare. The debates are frequently based on ideas that EU migrants from poorer member states migrate not to work, but primarily to access social benefits in their destination country (see Hjorth, 2016; Seeleib-Kaiser & Pennings, 2018). Mobility with the chief motivation of claiming social benefits is oftentimes labeled ‘benefit tourism’. But it has been shown that this type of mobility within the EU is not a widespread phenomenon (see e.g., De

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Giorgi & Pellizzari, 2009; Ruist, 2014; Kremer, 2016; Ehata & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2017). Nevertheless, public debates about welfare exploitation by EU migrants in richer EU member states linger, building a base in persistent discourses containing welfare chauvinist ideas, including that native citizens truly deserve welfare benefits, while ‘others’, migrants, are seen as undeserving (c.f. Keskinen et al., 2016). This article seeks to contribute to the understanding of how such discourses are sustained and why they endure despite being counterfactual.

As pointed out by many researchers, welfare-chauvinist and exclusionary practices oriented toward migrants are often camouflaged and justified by economic arguments (see e.g., Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990; Kitschelt & McGann, 1997; Greve, 2019; Hellström & Tawat, 2020; Pettersson, 2020). Many previous explorations of welfare chauvinism have focused on populist political parties and party debates (Norocel, 2016; Pettersson, 2020) or on media discourse (Schumacher & Van Kersbergen, 2016). This article focuses attention instead on the under-researched aspect of policy discourses. While studies addressing deservingness on the policy level are often based on institutional policy discourses as mirrored in mass-media debates (see e.g., Van Oorschot, 2008; Bruzelius et al., 2014; Hawkins, 2015)¹, this article instead analyzes interviews with 28 policy experts in four Western European countries that have received a large number of EU migrants from Eastern European member states during recent years, namely Austria, Germany, the UK and Sweden. Thereby it takes interest in discourses that might be much more subtle and covert than those produced by right-wing populist parties or in the media.

According to Keskinen et al. (2016), there are narrower or broader ways to define welfare chauvinism. The narrow definition refers to the ethno-nationalist political agendas characteristic of right-wing populist political parties, while the broader definition includes all sorts of ideas about reserving welfare benefits for the native population. In our analysis we use the broader definition to allow for a comprehensive exploration of welfare chauvinist ideas in policy discourses and policy expert articulation, and hence outside of populist political parties. The aim of the article is to identify and compare policy expert discourses of deservingness articulated in relation to EU migrants from four Eastern EU member states – Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary and Poland – to detect the logics guiding the discourses, and furthermore to explore how these discourses relate to welfare chauvinism. By using an innovative discourse theoretical approach (see **Theory and analysis** below), we not only identify discourses present on policy level, but also connect these discourses with the assumptions and norms that underpin them. Therefore, this article takes a step away from the predominant discourse literature, focused solely on identifying discourses, and explores the oft-neglected questions of why and how discourses are created, challenged, and sustained.

By applying the above theoretical perspectives to data consisting of interviews with agents who are professionally engaged in interpreting and applying welfare regulations, the article gathers new insights. It identifies policy expert discourses of deservingness, that is, discourses regarding which EU migrants are seen as deserving access to welfare in receiving member states. In addition, it explores whether articulations in these policy discourses challenge or sustain welfare chauvinist thinking, and if so, then how. By analyzing how experts portray public discourses about benefit tourism, it also offers insights into how the welfare chauvinism expressed in such public debates can affect and constrain the policy level.

Moreover, the article brings to light underlying logics behind welfare deservingness discourses. While much research on welfare chauvinism has been focused on a limited set of aspects such as ethnicity (see e.g., De Giorgi & Pellizzari, 2009; Ruist, 2014; Kremer, 2016; Ehata & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2017), or class (cf. Jørgensen & Thomsen Lund, 2016; Guentner et al., 2016), we show the interplay of various aspects and logics in the discursive definitions of welfare deservingness among policy experts. Since policy experts from four different migrant-receiving EU member states are interviewed, the article moreover reveals differences in ways of articulating welfare deservingness on the expert policy level. Taken together, this provides a foundation for the stated

ambition to contribute to an understanding of why discourses on benefit tourism tend to be so prevalent, and why welfare chauvinist ideas work and endure.

Method of investigation

The article is based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 28 policy experts, that is, professionals with good knowledge of EU welfare regulations and/or national welfare regulations. The interviews were performed as part of the large-scale international project *TRANSWEL: Mobile Welfare in a Transnational Europe: An Analysis of Portability Regimes of Social Security Rights* (see Transwel.org), and the selection of experts was determined by the scope and aims of this project. The project investigated EU transnational welfare for EU migrants moving between Austria and Hungary, Germany and Bulgaria, the UK and Poland, and Sweden and Estonia. The experts chosen worked in the four West European countries included in the project, and were selected based on their expert positions within supra-national or national welfare related institutions, and based on their general knowledge of welfare or a specific area of welfare. This was to gain their views on: 1) Their member state welfare system in general, i.e., its strengths and weaknesses; 2) EU migration in general, in relation to their member state welfare system, and in relation to EU migrants' right to access and benefits; 3) Actual or desired reforms that may affect EU migration as well as EU migrants' welfare management; and 4) The greatest perceived challenges to free movement, welfare, and social policy.² This yielded a selection of experts involved in different EU committees, senior members of departments or EU advisory organizations like SOLVIT or EURES, civil servants, senior lawyers, politicians, trade union representatives, business policymakers, or individuals associated with think tanks.³

Besides the direct answers to the questions listed above, the interviews proved to display expert articulations on welfare deservingness and descriptions and interpretations of public debates on benefit tourism. In this article, we take the opportunity to explore this interview outcome in order to bring to light policy articulations on welfare deservingness for EU migrants that may challenge or sustain welfare chauvinist thinking.

The interviews were conducted as well as analyzed by project research teams who mastered the languages of policy experts, and these analyses constitute the material for exploration in this article (Fröhlig et al., 2016b; Regös et al., 2016; Sojka & Carmel, 2016; Zabransky et al., 2016). While some quotations stem directly from the transcribed interviews (as indicated), most are derived from the analyses of the interviews as reported by the research teams, and hence mirror their way of representing the articulations of the experts they interviewed.

Theory and analysis

In the analysis, we used a post-structuralist discourse theory approach, which aims to reveal the logics that render a discourse possible, namely the Logics Approach (LA) developed by Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007) and Glynos et al. (2009). While mainstream discourse studies usually detect and describe discourses, LA is designed to detect the rules and ontological presuppositions that underpin a discourse and make it "tick" (Howarth & Glynos, 2008, p. 25).

Using *logics* as our main theoretical concept, we discuss three intersecting types of logics, namely social logics, political logics, and fantasmatic logics. *Social logics* are defined by Glynos and Howarth as logics that characterize discourses that have become naturalized. *Political logics* are in turn defined as logics that characterize discourses that are instead questioned. Liberal democracy or women's right to vote are for instance today naturalized discourses, underpinned by social logics, while previously they were challenged, non-dominant, and hence underpinned by political logics. *Fantasmatic logics*, lastly, are defined by affect. They are logics that keep desire alive, either by promising fulfillment – in beatific scenarios – or, alternatively, by threatening

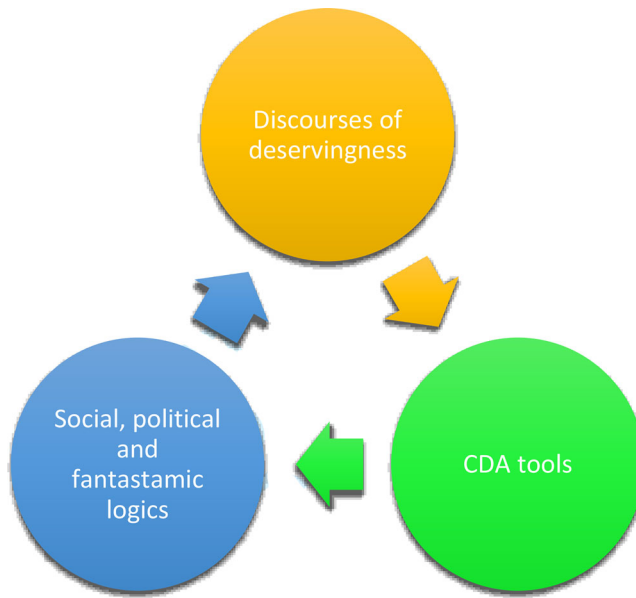


Figure 1. F. Fröhlig & B. Sojka.

with doomsday scenarios, here referred to as horrific scenarios (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; West, 2011). The *fantasies of 'benefit tourism'* in the title of this article refer to the affective aspects that we have identified in the public debates on benefit tourism the experts portrayed.

As LA does not offer hands-on tools for uncovering the assumptions and norms that guide logics, we, in line with Elise Remling's work (2018a, 2018b), developed a method of analysis combining some concepts and analytical tools from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2003).⁴ This method contained two main steps. The first step identified the various country discourses of deservingness by distinguishing key themes, which provided initial codes. For instance, by analyzing the relations of equivalence or differences present in the narratives (Fairclough, 2003, p. 88), we could detect modes of categorizing people and places. Patterns among these categorizations were then discerned by analyzing articulations of who belongs where, when, and under what conditions. Based on these patterns, key themes could be uncovered, and discourses of deservingness identified (Figure 1).

The second step identified the various logics underpinning the detected discourses of deservingness by using CDA concepts such as *existential assumptions* (what exists), *propositional assumptions* (what is the case, can be the case, or will be the case), and *value assumptions* (assumptions that often contain a sense of urgency, or imperative assumptions) (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55) (Figure 2).

Finally, the different country discourses and the various logics governing them were compared (Fröhlig et al., 2016a).

Policy expert portrayals of public debates on 'benefit tourism'

We now move on to the analysis of how experts engaged with and negotiated the issue of benefit tourism. This issue came through in the interviews above all when the experts talked about the EU's policy on free movement. Free movement proved to be viewed positively by all interviewees, considered as desired and necessary, as promoting cosmopolitanism and providing (young) citizens with opportunities for new experiences. However, some perceived effects of EU free

Logics Approach tools	Social logics	Political logics	Fantasmatic logics
Main characteristics of the logics	Practices along a <i>synchronic</i> axis	Practices along a <i>diachronic</i> axis	Desire-based narratives meant to affect through promising a “fullness-to-come” (beatific dimension), or, by threatening disaster (horrific dimension)
Main questions for spotting logics	WHAT? What are the dominant, sedimented norms?	HOW? How have these practices emerged? Are they contested and/or transformed (and if so, <i>how</i>)?	WHY? Why has a specific social order (social logic) been sustained?
Main CDA tools for spotting logics and conducting analysis	Existential assumptions (what exists) Propositional assumptions (what is the case) Value assumptions (what is desirable/undesirable)	Propositional assumptions	Value assumptions Future directions

Figure 2. F. Fröhlig.

movement were problematized. For example, the Austrian, British, and German experts described how the anticipated influx of EU migrants from newer and poorer EU member states contributed to Euroscepticism among the public. It was depicted as fueling beliefs that newer, poorer EU member states are happy to send their unemployed population to older, richer member states. This Euroscepticism was in turn described as generating benefit tourism scenarios.

Austrian experts, for example, often referred to the bad reputation of EU migrants from poorer Eastern member states. They were perceived as potential “social tourists who come in masses to milk the Austrian welfare state and take away jobs” (Regös et al., 2016, p. 52). The UK experts depicted their national debate on free movement in similar modes, with EU migrants seen as burdening the UK welfare resources: “[S]ome people have come to the UK, if not with the intention to work, then with the intention of claiming benefits” (Sojka & Carmel, 2016, p. 33). EU migrants were furthermore seen as burdening the UK labor market by causing unemployment among UK residents: “It’s about job opportunity, that they are taking job opportunities that could be taken by people who are already resident in the United Kingdom” (Sojka & Carmel, 2016, p. 36). German experts recorded public opinions which stated that it would be “unfair and unjust for the German population if the ‘Other’ also receives [German welfare] benefits” and that “mobile subjects are stealing German welfare” (Zabransky et al., 2016, pp. 42–44). The Swedish experts finally, departed from the above, as free movement was not considered to contribute to Swedish Euroscepticism to any great extent.

While the experts often noted public debates on benefit tourism in their respective countries, they clearly distanced themselves from these, by, for example, describing them as inaccurate. Yet, they pointed to Euroscepticism as in itself a threat. Even if debates on benefit tourism were considered incorrect, they were seen as undermining “people’s trust in the fairness of the system and thereby their willingness to contribute”, as it was expressed in the German context (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 43). The Swedish experts expressed similar worries, with reference to discourses on benefit tourism in general (Fröhlig et al., 2016b, p. 51), while the Austrian and UK experts feared that the debates could lead to restrictions regarding who should belong to the welfare state in the

future (Regös et al., 2016, p. 39; Sojka & Carmel, 2016, p. 36). The Austrian experts even expressed concern that the debates “may affect negatively the whole welfare state as they question its fundamental logic of inclusion and thereby open the door to a dismantling of the social system” (Regös et al., 2016, p. 46f).

The German experts were, however, sometimes inconsistent in their distancing from the public attitudes regarding benefit tourism, as in their narrations they both rejected and reproduced these. On the one hand, German experts stated explicitly that benefit tourism does not exist and argued that EU labor mobility has positive effects on German prosperity (Zabransky et al., 2016, pp. 39–42). On the other hand, a “linguistic terminology” was used “that defined mobile subjects as the ‘Other’, who does not belong to the – not really defined – German community” (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 41). German experts proved to implicitly give voice to “a wish that EU migrants would only stay temporarily in Germany and would leave again for their country of origin” and “talked about ‘benefit tourism’ as it would exist” (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 39, appendix). These inconsistencies were interpreted by the German/Hungarian research team as governed by affective desires to be able to “find arguments to reduce or stop paying benefits to the ‘Other’” (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 44).

As mentioned, the Swedish experts did not portray a Swedish public debate on benefit tourism in the wake of EU free movement policy, and did not report any problematic effects of such debates. The EU free movement policy was instead, according to the Swedish experts, a potential threat to the foundation of the Swedish welfare system. The most horrific scenario pictured was that EU free movement policy would force the country to abandon the personal identification number (PIN) system on which the whole welfare system (and society) relies (see Fröhlig et al., 2016b).

To sum up, the policy experts continuously reacted to what was going on in the mainstream political scene, in public debates, and among voters. All but the Swedish experts mentioned national public debates on benefit tourism and described these as a negative effect of EU free movement policy. These experts did not consider the free movement of people as problematic, but rather the secondary Euroscepticism and the benefit tourism scenarios fueled by this EU policy. The public reactions to free movement were thus seen as having possible damaging effects, such as undermining the general trust in welfare systems and willingness to contribute, and in the long run bringing about limitations of social rights and even the breakdown of welfare systems. Hence, the public debates on benefit tourism were not only seen as *picturing* horrific scenarios, but in themselves *producing* horrific scenarios in terms of dystopian futures. And while the scenarios themselves were viewed as mostly inaccurate, the effects of the same scenarios were feared as if on their way to being realized.

A discursive construction of burdensome EU migrants

When the experts discussed free movement, they also clearly articulated assumptions of an EU power divide. We here investigate these assumptions, as they proved to shape categorizations of people as either nourishing the welfare state, or as burdening the welfare state. They hence shaped categorizations that feed discourses on benefit tourism and fuel welfare chauvinist ideas.

Assumptions on an EU power divide came through when the experts positioned their own country as belonging to an EU power center, for example by highlighting qualities of the own nation or welfare system. The positioning in the EU power center was especially strong in the German and UK expert narratives. Not only did they describe their welfare systems as good, as did Austrian and Swedish experts, but they also articulated a position of leadership within the EU. Germany was presented as an EU model case regarding the implementation of EU social coordination, and as “a [EU] ‘player’ that has the possibility to influence regulation in their own favor” (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 41). The UK experts in turn positioned the UK as a leader and

“driver” in the EU with a “unique” system, “looked up to by other member states” (Sojka & Carmel ., 2016, pp. 27–29). The UK expert interviews were performed in the months preceding the Brexit referendum. Considering the result of the referendum and the process that followed, their articulations seem surprising. But one interpretation is that Brexit is partly an effect of a UK logic of superiority, since this logic underpins depictions of the country as holding the EU steering wheel, or at least as the country that *should* be holding it.

So, experts of all countries articulated perceptions of power positions. But while the Swedish and Austrian experts constructed their positions mainly by promoting the superiority of their own country’s welfare system, the UK and German experts tended to assert their member states’ superiority due to their wielding of great influence in the EU.

As a subtext in this self-positioning as superior, newer and poorer member states were ascribed subordinate and peripheral EU positions. There was thus an underlying dichotomization and hierarchization of EU member states in the expert narrations. This in turn shaped a discursive dichotomy and hierarchy between EU citizens, between EU migrants from the old ‘Western’ member states and EU migrants from the newer ‘Eastern’ ones. EU migrants from the ‘Western’ member states were associated with active, cosmopolitan professionals, enriching their destination countries with competencies. They were mentioned as people moving around not for “purely economic reasons”, but “rather because they personify the true ‘European Spirit’ of mobility, that is, of being above all Europeans and moving because all Europe is their home” (Regös et al., 2016, p.55). EU migrants from newer member states in Eastern Europe, were, in contrast, not associated with an abundance of sought-after competencies. As will be made clear in following sections, they were rather perceived as causing trouble in different ways for the welfare systems and labor markets of their destination countries.

Although experts positioned their own country in the power center based on slightly differing claims, these claims, as mirrored above, all articulated superior power positions. They can all be viewed as generated by *logics of superiority*. These logics contributed to the construction of a basic discursive divide between old and new EU member states, as well as between EU migrants from these states. They also contributed to a hierarchization of the two categories of EU migrants, where EU migrants from the new member states, who were the ones sending migrants, were shaped as burdensome, as causing trouble, just as in the public debates on benefit tourism. As will be shown in next section, this construction of Eastern European EU migrants as burdensome formed a basis for expert articulations on welfare deservingness, and for ideas about reserving welfare benefits for the native population.

Policy discourses on welfare deservingness

While policy experts stated that public discussions of benefit tourism were based on prejudices and ideas that the experts did not share, welfare deservingness was a central issue in their narratives, in line with their professions. In this section, we discuss the expert articulations on welfare deservingness and seek to identify the logics that govern them. We also explore if, how, and when these logics sustained or challenged the public discourses on benefit tourism.

In the welfare literature (see, for example, Carmel et al., 2019) eligibility for the social rights regulated by national welfare regulations is defined 1) by people’s contribution to the welfare system, and 2) by human need. Contribution and need also surfaced as core eligibility assumptions in all the experts’ narratives about who deserves access to welfare in the context of intra-EU mobility, and hence in their articulations on welfare deservingness for EU migrants.

The first core eligibility assumption, *contribution*, came across when expert after expert described it as fair that those who contributed to the welfare system by paying taxes should have access to social rights. This was, for example, articulated in the Swedish context: “Only people who have been contributing to the system should be entitled to earnings-related benefits”

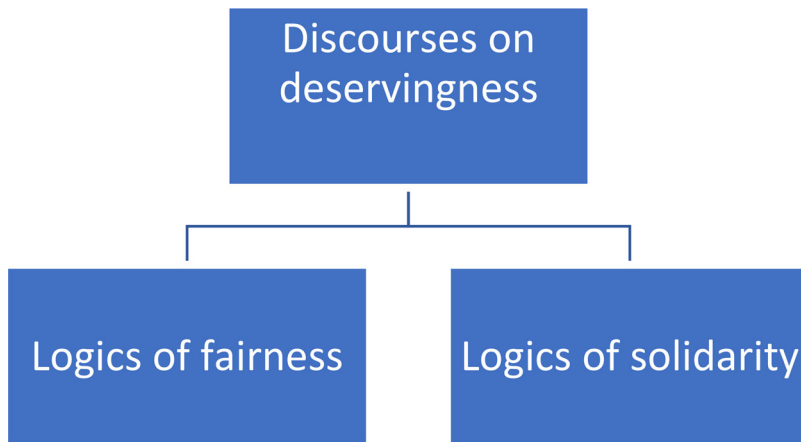


Figure 3. F. Fröhlig.

(Fröhlig et al., 2016b, p. 42). The idea that contribution to the system was the fairest way to define deservingness was in turn related to an ideal of fairness between contributors: “Those who contribute shall be sure to receive what they are entitled to” (Fröhlig et al., 2016b, p.42). So, contribution as a core eligibility assumption was, among experts from all the countries, linked to fairness as a desirable goal, and to assumptions about what fairness entailed in the context of intra-EU mobility. These assumptions we discuss as forming *logics of fairness*.

Even though contribution was seen as the basis of fair welfare distribution, some experts nevertheless seemed to question the allocation of contributory-based benefits to non-national citizens. This was the case among the UK and German experts. The UK experts were quite outspoken on this. They could describe it as unfair that EU migrants could claim UK benefits, even if they were contributing, and could also portray EU migrants as abusing the welfare state (Sojka & Carmel, 2016). German experts were again contradictory. They explicitly stated that, “We, as EU citizens, are all the same with equal access to social security rights” (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 38). They also declared that “those acting accordingly will be provided for in Germany”, hence indicating that Germany does not disadvantage migrants from other EU member states (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 41). Yet, they voiced value assumptions that questioned “if it is fair to pay benefits for EU-Others” (Zabransky et al., 2016, Appendix). Throughout their narrations, they furthermore used a terminology that defined mobile subjects – EU migrants as well as other migrants – as not belonging to the German welfare system (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 41). The UK experts, and to some extent the German experts, can hence be said to give voice to articulations indicating that contributory benefits should go principally to national citizens. This means that these experts were moving toward a possible understanding of fairness in welfare allocation that was similar to welfare chauvinist ideas, expressing that the natives of a country are those who deserve welfare benefits; that is, the ideas voiced in the public debates on benefit tourism from which they also distanced themselves.

Regarding the second core assumption of welfare deservingness, *human need*, this was expressed by the experts as welfare that should secure basic human needs. These assumptions came across among experts from all the countries, and together they shaped what we call *logics of solidarity*. Eligibility based on human need was stressed most strongly by the Swedish experts, where all people registered as residing in the country (and thus in possession of a personal identification number), were considered equally eligible for need-related welfare. They also described the widest scope of need-related welfare. In line with the regulations, they stated that all registered persons in need of healthcare should be cared for by state health services, and that all people registered with dependents deserved support, irrespective of contribution (Figure 3).⁵

However, looking closer at the narratives we can conclude that need-based welfare in all country cases was discussed above all in relation to *national* citizens residing within the national territories, despite assumptions of universal basal welfare. In the UK context, this was very clearly articulated:

There has to be kind of a close tie between nationality and access to the national public purse, because that is where the money comes from (...). It's a matter of principle and citizenship, or else I will say the system is broken. (Sojka & Carmel, 2016, p. 35).

Among the other experts, ideas about native primacy in welfare access came across more subtly, for example by failing to mention this type of welfare in relation to EU migrants. This was especially the case for the Swedish and Austrian experts. EU migrants were hence discursively excluded from need-related welfare even in these contexts, albeit implicitly.

To sum up, articulations of which EU migrants deserve access to the welfare in immigrant-receiving member states proved to be pivotal in the narratives of all the experts. These articulations formed what we call discourses on deservingness. Such discourses have implications for the discursive definition of EU migrant welfare entitlement. However, in these policy discourses we identified assumptions about national belonging, and tendencies of nationalization of welfare deservingness, that remind us of the nationalization of welfare deservingness found in public debates on benefit tourism, referred to by experts. Depending on country context, experts explicitly or implicitly constructed some welfare benefits (above all the need-based ones) as reserved for the native population. In the next section, we will look closer at additional logics working behind these complex discourses.

Intersecting and challenging logics

Tendencies to construct some welfare benefits as mainly for nationals, and hence tendencies of discursive nationalization of welfare deservingness, can be understood as the effect of logics of superiority (discussed previously) interplaying with the logics of fairness and solidarity, as mirrored in the analysis above.

The tendencies can furthermore be understood in relation to propositional assumptions regarding who should be included in the national community. In the interviews, assumptions about national belonging were clearly present and formed what we here discuss as *logics of the nation*. In fact, we identified two such logics. On the one hand, we found *logics of the nation-as-civic*, linked to perceptions of the nation as a place where residency was regarded as the basic prerequisite for welfare deservingness. On the other hand, we detected *logics of the nation-as-ethnic*, linked, in contrast, to perceptions of the nation as a place where ethnicity was seen as the main prerequisite for welfare deservingness.

A logic of the nation-as-civic was only found in one context, the Swedish one. Here residency in the national space was voiced as the most important criterion for national belonging, and the welfare system was spoken of as protecting “all inhabitants who are registered as residing within the national space” (Fröhlig et al., 2016b, p. 34). The nation was thus, in the context of Sweden, chiefly seen as a legal space made up of people residing there a certain amount of time.

The Austrian, UK, and German expert narratives all proved to be dominated by a logic of the nation-as-ethnic. The Austrian articulations were, for example, built on existential assumptions that “the nation group constitutes the primary reference group” and that “national interests exceed European interests” (Regös et al., 2016, p. 35). This generated grounds for welfare deservingness where ethnic nationals were viewed as a “coherent (natural) entity” who should be “entitled to the same rights” (Regös et al., 2016, p. 56). The UK, in turn, was described as a nation where “British is opposed to European”, as a marker of ethnic difference, and furthermore as an island, the borders of which constitute a “natural” divide between British and other

European citizens (Sojka & Carmel, 2016, p. 27). The German experts, for their part, spoke of EU migrants from Eastern member states as belonging to the EU rather than Germany.⁶ This indicates that the nation, in these contexts, was perceived mainly as a culturally defined entity and as a space for people whose ethnicity corresponds to the national cultural identity. The main criterion of national belonging produced here was thus ethnicity.

The tendencies of discursive nationalization of welfare deservingness, and the welfare chauvinist assumptions in these discourses, can be reconsidered in light of the above. The value assumptions highlighted by the UK experts and veiled by the German ones (indicating that it is not really fair to distribute contributory-based benefits to contributing EU citizens) can then be seen as an effect of their logic of the nation-as-ethnic intersecting with their logic of fairness. One result of this intersection was that deservingness based on contribution/fairness was defined in a more limited way. This indicates that the definition of fair welfare allocation might be changing in UK and German policy discourses. It also indicates that the logics of fairness in these policy contexts might be developing into political logics, that is, logics being challenged.⁷

The Swedish expert assumptions, in contrast, considered it fair to allocate contributory-based benefits to all contributing inhabitants. This can be understood as an effect of the Swedish expert narratives being underpinned by the logic of the nation-as-civic, and hence based on assumptions that national belonging is grounded on residency in the country. One must nevertheless remember that being registered as a resident, and fully integrated in the welfare system, requires twelve months of work in the country, which in practice may exclude many EU migrants from contributory-based benefits.

The logics of the nation also intersected with logics of solidarity, which to an even greater extent seemed to challenge articulations on need-based welfare. This was made apparent when all experts directed their articulations on need-based welfare exclusively toward national citizens residing within the national territories, and when EU migrants were not mentioned at all. This was also the case in the Swedish expert articulations, even though they explicitly defined all people registered as residing in the country as eligible, and although their articulations were underpinned by a logic of the nation-as-civic.

When the UK experts explicitly spoke of a possible general exclusion of EU migrants from need-related welfare, it can be understood as an effect of their logic of the nation-as-ethnic interplaying with the logic of solidarity. The same can be said for the more implicit exclusion voiced by the Austrian experts. However, this mode of explanation does not work in the Swedish case. Despite their logic of the nation-as-civic, and despite national belonging being defined by residency, the Swedish experts implicitly excluded EU citizens by not mentioning them in relation to need-based social rights.

The core assumptions of all expert articulations were that people's contribution to the welfare system, as well as basal needs, should define deservingness. These were assumptions governed by the logics of fairness and the logics of solidarity. But as described, these core assumptions regarding welfare deservingness were narrowed down in many expert narratives when welfare inclusion based on contribution, as well as on need, was directly or indirectly spoken of as primarily for nationals. As discussed, these limitations in the scope of welfare deservingness can be regarded as an effect of different logics of the nation, not least ethnic, intersecting with the logics of fairness and solidarity.

The limitations can furthermore be understood as an effect of the cross-cutting basic logics of superiority discussed earlier. Logics of superiority contributed to a discursive construction of East European EU migrants as burdensome, and this activated concerns about their welfare deservingness. Hence, logics of the nation together with logics of superiority seemed to challenge previous core assumptions on welfare deservingness and seemed to introduce welfare chauvinist tendencies and ideas into policy articulations on welfare deservingness.

Concluding discussion

As evidenced from welfare chauvinist research, exclusionary arguments expressed toward migrants are in politics often formulated in veiled ways, such as with economic justifications. Even though such arguments have been researched, a majority of these studies have focused on areas where welfare chauvinist ideas are rather overtly expressed – such as right-wing populist parties – or on policy discourses as displayed in the media. Although such research is valuable, insufficient attention has been paid to articulations made by agents who in their professions interpret and use welfare regulations, especially considering the covert nature of these discourses and how previous research suggests that border management is increasingly moving away from physical borders to the level of welfare.

In this article we have researched policy experts, which has been a both challenging and fruitful endeavor. As shown, welfare chauvinist arguments were not explicitly made by the policy experts. The experts instead placed welfare chauvinism in the realm of public debates on benefit tourism. But as demonstrated, welfare chauvinist ideas that social benefits principally should go to national citizens found their way via complex processes into policy expert discourses of deservingness. These complex processes are the focus of this text, and we have revealed them by applying a political discourses analysis that not only identifies the dominant discourses, but also the mechanisms behind them. Exploring the mechanisms behind the discourses, in the form of the logics generating them, is of vital importance for several reasons: to understand why welfare chauvinist ideas on reserving welfare for the native population prevail despite research showing that welfare abuse in richer EU member states by undeserving EU migrants is not widespread; to understand how the articulations of policy experts challenge or sustain welfare chauvinist thinking; and not least to understand how welfare chauvinist ideas might affect the practical level of policy making.

It was shown that all experts, except those from Sweden, referred to public debates on benefit tourism in their countries, and hence to the existence of welfare chauvinist discourses among the inhabitants. However, the experts described these public debates as inaccurate reactions to EU free movement policy and its anticipated effects, and distanced themselves from the horrific scenarios sketched in these debates. Rather, they described these scenarios as affective fantasies that undermined people's trust in the fairness of welfare systems, thereby posing a threat to the welfare systems per se. By weakening trust in the system, the public welfare chauvinistic debates also threatened the experts. They put a pressure on them to deal with the perceived “false” horrific scenarios in order to prevent the development of “real” dystopian futures, such as limitations in social rights and welfare system collapse. The public welfare chauvinist debates thus influenced policy with these anticipated effects of the perceived public affective fantasies regarding benefit tourism.

While the experts did not themselves articulate horrific scenarios on benefit tourism, they, in line with their professions, gave voice to discourses on deservingness, that is, discourses regarding who is to be included in or excluded from social welfare in the context of intra-EU migration. These discourses on deservingness proved in all cases to be multifaceted and partially contradictory. As shown, this can be understood as a result of the web of multiple, strong logics we identified as generating them. One such logic was the naturalized and social logic of superiority. This was made evident when experts discussed free mobility, and considered the immigrant-receiving member states superior to the emigrant-sending, establishing an implicit hierarchy among EU member states and migrants. EU migrants from newer Eastern Europe member states were discursively constructed as potentially burdening the welfare systems and the labor markets in receiving countries, whereas EU migrants from older member states in Western Europe were rarely, if ever, spoken of in this way. By grading EU migrants, the policy experts implicitly contributed to discourses on East European EU migrants as burdensome, and thereby invoked the basic ideas of the public benefit tourism debates that they explicitly distanced themselves from.

The experts' hierarchization of EU migrants based on their origin as ‘Western’ or ‘Eastern’ does not only contain ethnic elements. The grading also speaks to the claim of Jørgensen and

Thomsen Lund (2016) that immigrant groups are positioned differently depending on their perceived class value, as well as to the claim of Guentner et al. (2016) that migrants' alleged undeservingness often has close links to their social position. Thus, the logics of superiority that underpinned the articulations of the experts seemed to contain class and status related elements that interplayed with ethnic ones, an intersection that contributed to concerns about welfare contributions and deservingness of EU migrants viewed as burdensome.

The article has not only revealed different underlying, intersecting logics behind welfare discourses, but also shown how these logics contest each other. As discussed, the logics of superiority challenged the two core welfare logics: those of fairness and solidarity. These were moreover also challenged by the affective, fantastic logics of the nation-as-civic and -ethnic respectively. The logics of the nation seemed to transform the former social and hence naturalized logics of fairness and solidarity into questioned logics, and thereby into political logics. The logic of the nation-as-ethnic contested assumptions regarding what fair and need-based welfare entails in the context of EU migration, and seemed to move experts' articulations closer to ones found in the public debates on 'benefit tourism' and in welfare chauvinist thinking. This became obvious when a 'but' became implicitly or explicitly involved regarding the deservingness of EU migrants. It was further demonstrated when the meaning of fairness and solidarity changed, when contribution and need-based welfare were, in some cases, articulated as reserved for nationals, and when some experts moved toward a discursive welfare exclusion of EU migrants.

The assumptions that the welfare state should mostly care for nationals were especially explicit in the UK expert context, and most implicit in the Swedish. The variations across country contexts can be understood as depending on differing logics of the nation, on whether the nation was viewed as civic, as in the Swedish context, or ethnic, as in the other contexts. But despite the Swedish logic of the nation-as-civic, where national belonging is defined by residency, EU citizens were discursively excluded from need-based social rights even in the Swedish expert narrations. One possible way to understand this could be by seeing Swedish demands for long-term residency as substitutes for ethnicity or nationality. Both in regulations, and in the expert narrations, only EU migrants who chose to establish themselves in Sweden long-term were considered eligible for need-related welfare. Thus, besides not mentioning need-based welfare in relation to EU migrants, Swedish experts left out of their narrations the fact that all EU migrants *cannot* be eligible for need-related welfare, since restrictive regulations prevent them from registering as residents. This type of implicit welfare nationalization can be viewed in relation to the argument of Norocel (2016) that the Swedish welfare state is contradictory because, in addition to its egalitarian principles, it is a central part of national identity.

So, not only the logics of superiority but also the logics of the nation challenged the two core logics of deservingness in all contexts investigated. Taken together, this recreated nationhood, defended the idea of the national welfare state, and triggered ideas on reserving welfare benefits for native populations. The analysis thus shows how seemingly contradictory parts of the discourses can be understood as a result of the web of multiple, strong logics identified as generating them, which intersected and occasionally contested each other. It demonstrates the complex processes through which welfare chauvinist ideas on reserving welfare benefits for the native population find their way into policy expert discourses of deservingness, and hence might also affect the practical level of policy making. It thereby reveals how ideational shifts in the discourses can occur.

Notes

1. An exception is the study by Schall (2016).
2. The interviews were performed face to face (except for some occasional Skype interviews) and lasted at least one hour.
3. To protect the anonymity ensured the experts, no data regarding workplaces, age, gender, etc. may be published.

4. Even though LA is based on Political Discourse Theory (PDT), and has an ontological understanding of discourse distinct from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it functions very well together with analytical concepts taken from CDA (see Egan Sjölander & Gunnarsson Payne, 2011; Remling, 2018a, 2018b).
5. All parents who registered as residents in Sweden are, for instance, entitled to a child allowance.
6. EU migrants from Eastern member states are seen as welcome in Germany to contribute work and tax revenue, but are expected to leave when their contracts end (Zabransky et al., 2016, p. 37).
7. The Austrian articulations, where fair welfare allocation was seen as based on contribution, *even though* their narrations were governed by a logic of the nation-as-ethnic and national belonging was defined by ethnicity, depart from the above pattern. They remain a puzzle yet to be explained.

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