



FARSIGHT

March 2015

Immigration and Welfare States

*Migrants as
welfare providers
in Belgium*





FARSIGHT

Our mission is to design and deliver tools for people who want to improve the world.

OUR THEMATIC SPECIALITIES - CLICK TO SEARCH



Migration



Conflict

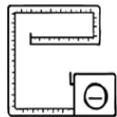


Justice

OUR TECHNICAL EXPERTISE - CLICK TO SEARCH



Research



Monitoring and Evaluation



Integrating Technology



Program and Fund Design



Implementing in Tough Environments

<http://seefar.org>

Hong Kong — Brussels — Jakarta — Nairobi — Istanbul

ABSTRACT

Farsight presented an earlier version of this brief to the PROVIR closing conference at the University of Bergen in Norway, 19-21 November 2014.

As the issue of migration becomes more prominent in Europe, one debate focuses on the burden that migrants may impose on welfare states, and the generosity of those welfare states as pull factors for migration. The suggestion that welfare states are generous to migrants and migrants are a burden inspires a concern for the statistics of migrants' access to welfare benefits and to the non-state benefits that migrants generate or receive. This brief begins by considering the perception of welfare states as pull factors for migration into Europe by looking at European welfare state models and focusing on Belgium. We then explore inclusion and exclusion from Belgium's system. Turning from the state to non-state actors, we introduce two diaspora organizations that provide assistance to immigrants. These examples indicate that organized migrant groups play a role in ameliorating the welfare situation of fellow immigrants excluded by the host state. Among other consequences, this may blunt the effectiveness of welfare exclusion as a strategy of controlling migration.

Le compte tenu de la question de la migration est importante en Europe, il est plus préoccupé par la charge imposée aux États migration de bien-être et à la générosité de l'État providence qui agit comme un facteur d'attraction pour la migration. Certaines de ces hypothèses sont, cependant, interrogés par des statistiques montrant le droit aux prestations et activités générales de migrants. Cet article examine tout d'abord l'idée que les Etats-providence ont des facteurs d'attraction pour la migration vers l'Europe. Nous examinons les modèles des Etats-providence européens et se concentre sur l'Etat-providence Belge. Dans la providence Belge on regarde qui est inclus ou exclus dans ce système. Nous regardons également les diasporas organizations qui ont pris des initiatives pour aider les immigrants dans le pays où ils vont s'installer. Nous montrons que les groupes de migrants organisés jouent un rôle dans l'amélioration du bien-être des immigrants qui ont été rejeté par le pays hôte. Ci-joint l'efficacité de la stratégie d'exclusion, ce qui a comme référence contrôlé la migration, est mise en question.

Gezien de migratiekwesie prominenter wordt in Europa is de last die migratie meebrengt op welvaartsstaten, en de vrijgevigheid van die welvaartsstaten die fungeert als aantrekkingsfactor voor migratie één van de bekommernissen rond deze kwesie geworden. Sommige van deze veronderstellingen worden echter in vraag gesteld door statistieken die de aanspraak op uitkeringen en de algemene activiteiten van migranten weergeven. Dit artikel bespreekt in eerste instantie de opvatting dat de welvaartsstaten aantrekkingsfactoren zijn voor migratie naar Europa. We onderzoeken modellen van Europese welvaartsstaten en leggen de focus op de Belgische welvaartstaat. Binnen de Belgische welvaart wordt gekeken naar wie geïncludeerd dan wel uitgesloten wordt in dit systeem. We bekijken ook diaspora organisaties die initiatieven hebben genomen om immigranten te begeleiden in het land waarin ze zich gaan vestigen. We tonen aan dat georganizeerde migrantengroepen een rol spelen in het verbeteren van de welvaart van immigranten die uitgesloten werden door het gastland. Hiermee wordt de effectiviteit van de exclusie-strategie van de welvaartstaat, die als doelt heeft migratie te controleren, in vraag gesteld.

INTRODUCTION

*“Rules on access to social assistance have always functioned as an instrument to distinguish between those who ‘belong to us’ and for whose needs ‘we’ feel responsible, and the ‘others’ who belong elsewhere, for whom we do not feel responsible and who we can remove from ‘our’ society if they become destitute”.*¹

The quote above from Kees Groenendijk links to his discussion of the 19th Century Poor Laws, in which each community was responsible for relieving its poor. Poor migrants could be treated in the same way as the local poor, or removed from the community. An alternative was to insist on the community of origin relieving their poverty. Migrants’ home communities could therefore give money to relieve the migrant paupers so that they would not be forced to return to their home.

Today, the notion of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ continues to dominate understandings of the welfare state, in terms of those who are ‘entitled’ and ‘deserving’, versus those who are ‘not entitled’ and ‘undeserving’. European welfare states are more than the sum total of social policies. They are powerful institutional forces representing ideas and practices associated with inclusion, exclusion, membership, belonging, entitlement and identity.² Geddes argues that rather than looking at the way in which migration affects the welfare state, it may be better to look at the structural and ideological changes in welfare states and how these affect understandings of migration.³

There has been sustained attention to the idea that some migration occurs because migrants benefit from the welfare state without contributing to it. This reflects and reinforces a distinction between desirable migrants, who make economic contributions to the host state, and undesirable migrants who do not, such as asylum-seekers and labour migrants who have not managed to secure employment. The label ‘welfare tourist’ has developed⁴ in relation to a person perceived to migrate to benefit from welfare states in wealthier countries. In the European Union (EU) overall, this idea seems directed most commonly at migrants from

¹ K. Gronendijk, ‘Access for Migrants to Social Assistance: Closing the Frontiers or Reducing Citizenship?’ in E. Guild, S. Carrera and K. Eisele (eds.) *Social Benefits and Migration: A Contested Relationship and Policy Challenge in the EU*, Centre for European Policy Studies, 2013.

² A. Geddes, ‘Migration and the Welfare State in Europe’, *The Political Quarterly*, 74(s1), 2003.

³ Geddes, 2003.

⁴ P. Kellner, *Welfare tourism: crisis, what crisis?*, for YouGov, 13 January 2014, <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2014/01/13/welfare-tourism-crisis-what-crisis/>

Eastern Europe. In the UK, it has even contributed to politicians floating ideas that threaten the principle of free movement in the EU, such as quotas on immigrants coming into the UK or a ban on the entry of EU citizens who have not secured work.

The risk of 'welfare tourism' is not clear in the welfare statistics of countries most concerned about it. In Germany, for example, 85% of basic welfare payments and 93.5% of supplementary welfare assistance is claimed by German nationals. In the Netherlands, 84% of social assistance is for Dutch nationals.⁵ While it is too simplistic to look at whether immigrants harm or help the welfare state, these numbers suggest four issues to consider.

First, immigrants may not claim welfare benefits as much as they are thought to claim. Second, on a related point, welfare benefits may not be an adequate incentive for migration for most people. Zimmerman, for example, has found that economic migrants are people seeking employment and better work conditions, rather than setting out to benefit from social welfare.⁶ An implication is that restricting access to welfare benefits may not have noticeable or predictable impacts on migration. On the other hand, Farsight's research on migrant decision-making has indicated that in some circumstances the perception of 'generosity' from a destination country can at least subjectively be a factor for people considering emigration.

Third, generalisations across the EU may not be helpful on this point, since each welfare system has different categories for claimants and implications of those categories, including straightforward exclusion of some types of immigrant from certain benefits. Fourth – and this will be the focus of this article – the face of immigration has changed and the face of the welfare state has changed. Migrants have become more transnational, more mobile and more organized in ways that have de-emphasized the role of the state and reduced the relevance of welfare provided directly by the state.

This brief explores the issue of welfare restrictions from the perspective of third country nationals in the EU. We begin with inspiration from migration-for-development perspectives that suggest the role of the state has been diminished in preference for the market, transnational civil society and community.⁷ The increase in mobility over the past few decades has meant an increase not just in migration, but also an increase in the ongoing mobility of those migrants. Migrants are less likely to move simply from point A to settle in point B. They are more likely to be transnationals who move between their home country and host country,

⁵ Groenendijk, 2013.

⁶ K. Zimmermann, 'European Migration: Push and Pull', *International Regional Science Review*, 1996.

⁷ T. Faist, 'Transnationalization and Development: Toward an Alternative Agenda', *Social Analysis*, 53(3), 2009.

who form organized groups in the host countries to support themselves there and to support their home countries.

In some ways, we may have come full circle to the 19th Century Poor Laws, when there was an expectation that the pauper's home community could support the pauper even when they had migrated to another community. There is also continuity – seemingly ignored by the Poor Laws and by debates on welfare tourists – in the fact that the “home community” might not be geographically distant and in the country of origin. Instead, it may be found in diaspora groups providing mutual support for immigrants congregating in the host country. Organizations run by immigrants take initiatives to assist otherwise destitute immigrants, filling in welfare gaps for the migrant without regard for the formal welfare state. In situations where welfare states exclude some categories of migrants, perhaps to create a level of discomfort that could encourage their departure, civil society can lower that discomfort. Marginalization encourages the marginalized to mobilize and form support systems in civil society, perhaps lowering the impacts of marginalization to bearable levels.

EUROPEAN WELFARE STATE MODELS

The best known typology of European welfare state models is that of Gøsta-Esping Andersen, who identifies three.⁸ The first is the liberal welfare state, which applies means-tested assistance and is dominated by modest social insurance plans. Benefits cater mainly to a clientele of low income, usually working-class, state dependents. In this model, the limits of welfare equal the marginal propensity to opt for welfare instead of work. Entitlement rules are strict and are often stigmatized. The model therefore imagines a minority of low-income dependents and a self-reliant majority. The state encourages the market, either passively by guaranteeing only a minimum income, or actively by subsidizing private welfare schemes.

Geddes suggests that, in the UK, migrants and their families are more likely to be found on the lower-income and lower status occupations, while migrant groups deemed as ‘unwanted’, such as asylum-seekers, are excluded from the standard system of assessing eligibility for welfare benefits.⁹ In a liberal welfare state, falling into such a category risks attracting stigmatization and a popular perception that the claimant is unfairly draining the system. However, that perception assumes lower-income people are actually entitled and claiming from the welfare state, which depends on the rules, their knowledge and motivation.

The second model is the conservative-corporatist welfare model. At the time Andersen

⁸ G. Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, 1990.

⁹ Geddes, 2003.

developed his typology, European countries with this model of welfare state included Austria, France, Germany and Italy. The model focuses on preserving status, with rights attached to class. This corporatism was subsumed under a state structure that was perfectly ready to displace the market as a provider of welfare. The role played by private insurance and occupational fringe benefits is therefore minimal. On the other hand, the state's emphasis on upholding status differences means that its redistributive impact is negligible. As Andersen suggests, the undertone of this model is that the state will only interfere when the family's capacity to look after its members is exhausted. Modern states with this kind of welfare model have made attempts at redistribution, but their attempts are constrained in part by ambitions that the welfare state remains closed to new migrants.¹⁰

The third model is the social-democratic model, which is a combination of liberalism and socialism. In this model, lower-status workers enjoy rights identical with those of white-collar employees or civil servants, but benefits are graduated according to earnings. The model crowds out the market and aspires to universal solidarity in that all are dependent and will presumably feel obliged to contribute. One result is a system that includes transfers directly to children, and which takes direct responsibility for providing care to children, the elderly and the helpless. In terms of functionality, such a system works best if social problems are minimized and the majority of people work, in order for it to maximize the revenue it needs to deal with welfare obligations.¹¹

The typology is useful, although states tend not to follow a pure model and instead combine a mixture of elements. Scandinavian countries, for example, are seen mostly as social-democrats, although they also possess some crucial liberal elements. Continental conservative-corporatists also incorporate elements from both the liberal and the social-democrat models. In discussing migration in relation to the welfare state, it is therefore important to consider the specifics of a system, what migrants are entitled to and how they manoeuvre in response. To provide a case study, we turn to Belgium.

The Belgian Welfare State

According to the European Migration Network (EMN), the Belgian social security system combines a mainly contributory system of work-based social insurance and non-contributory system of social assistance. In Andersen's typology, the Belgian welfare state is a social-democratic model, given that the two major systems are complemented with social spending

¹⁰ Geddes, 2003.

¹¹ Andersen, 1990.

on child care, elderly care and parental leave.¹² Work-based social insurance provides replacement incomes as well as income supplements for certain costs, such as healthcare. The social aid system is not work-related, hence non-contributory. It is therefore financed by the general taxation system.

The Belgian welfare state is an inclusive one, with a general rule that every working person residing legally in Belgium is entitled to social security benefits as long as they fulfil waiting periods and make minimal contributions. Contribution is obligatory. Everyone – natives, permanent immigrants and temporary immigrants – must participate in the system through work. According to Andersen's social democratic model, this approach is motivated by a desire to maximize revenue, which is necessary for the Belgian system to carry social burdens.

For social aid or guaranteed minimum resources, the system covers all legal resident immigrants, but depending on their status, they may be excluded from specific sub-programs. Initially, these programs' eligibility criteria excluded other nationalities, but over time, it opened up to privileged groups of immigrants, such as EU citizens. Now, third country nationals are eligible for some social aid and sub-programs based on the length of their residence in the country. There is no evidence that Belgium has a disproportionately strong inflow of migrants or that its welfare system is a significant pull factor.

The EMN reports little difference in the treatment of Belgians and immigrants in the Belgian system. However, Belgium scores worst among all EU member states on unemployment levels among third country nationals. Their employment rate is just above 50%, compared to the 80% employment rate of the native population between 20 and 59. When they are employed, third country nationals earn significantly less than EU citizens and their contribution to the Belgian tax system is therefore significantly lower. The result of high unemployment amongst third country nationals is that they are over-represented in the unemployment program.

Looking at such numbers alone may support the argument that third country nationals benefit disproportionately from Belgium's generous welfare state. However, third country nationals tend to be faced with the challenge of having a limited labour market history, frequent changes of status between employment and unemployment, and jobs with lower incomes. The result is that the unemployment benefits they actually receive are far lower than for EU citizens. Despite the apparent generosity of social benefits, they heavily favor documented, employed immigrants working in regular jobs and making contributions to the

¹² B. Cantillon, 'The Paradox of the Social Investment State: Growth, Employment and Poverty in the Lisbon Era', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 21(5), 2011.

social security system. This may not favor third country nationals and certainly does not favor undocumented immigrants.

THE CASE OF AFRICAN DIASPORAS IN BELGIUM

To explore and compare how different diasporas behave in providing welfare to their members, we focus here on immigrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and immigrants from Kenya. In Belgium, people from Morocco are the largest non-EU immigrant group, followed by those from Turkey and from the DRC. The large number of Congolese immigrants in Belgium is closely linked to colonial history and their immigration has occurred in three main phases. The initial phase occurred before independence, which involved the migration of small groups of elite people who were highly mobile.

After independence, a second phase involved student migration, with funding from Belgian development assistance and supported by bilateral agreements between Congolese and Belgian universities. Most of these students returned to the DRC after their studies. By the 1990s, particularly after the end of the Mobutu regime, political instability in Congo led to increased and more diverse migration into Belgium. The number of asylum-seekers increased; by 2005, Congolese were the second-biggest group by number of asylum-seeker applications in Belgium.¹³ Some students who had initially come to Belgium temporarily ended up settling. The Congolese community became prominent, including its second and third generation Congolese groups.¹⁴

In the third phase of migration, there was greater illegal migration and several studies indicate that it has become a key component of Congolese migration.¹⁵ However, the proportions of Congolese by residency status are not well-documented and the claims are challenged by those of the Migrations between Africa and Europe (MAFE) project, which observes that irregular migration has been on the rise but maintains that the majority of Africans enter Europe through legal channels. The same study, however, reveals that return migration from Belgium to the DRC has been on the decline, suggesting that those who

¹³ *Belgium Country Report 2007*, Undocumented Worker Transitions – EU Sixth Framework Programme.

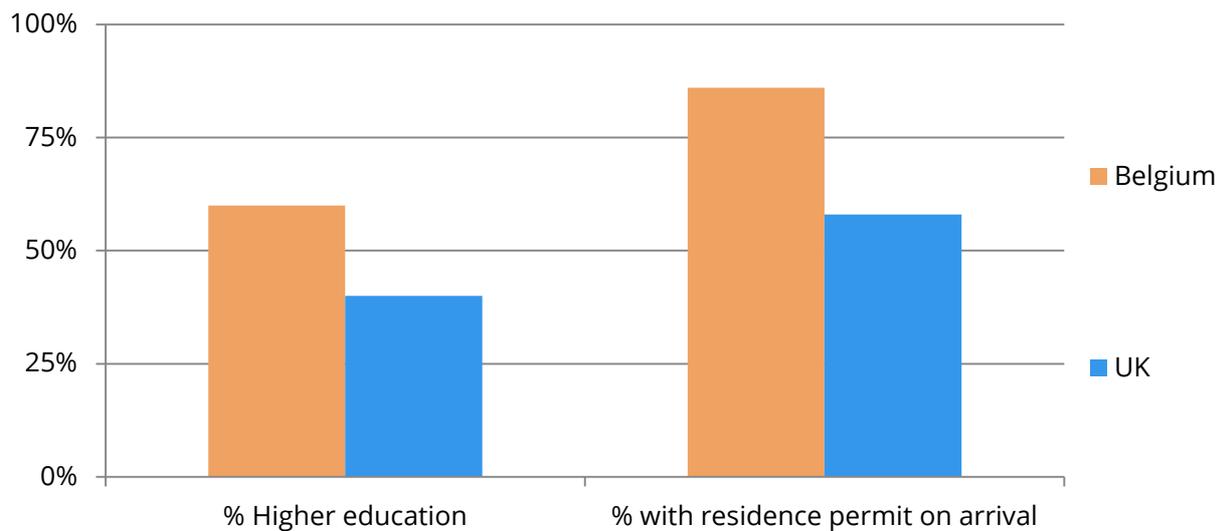
¹⁴ M. Godin, A. Rea, B. Herman and R. Thys, *Comparison between 'Networks of Development' in Moroccan Migrant Organizations and Congolese Migrant Organizations in Belgium*, No 1415, Working Papers from Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Center for Migration and Development, 2012; S. Demart, 'Congolese Migration to Belgium and Postcolonial Perspectives', *African Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Africa in a Global World*, 6, 2013.

¹⁵ J. MacGaffey and R. Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris. Transnational Traders on the Margins of the Law*, 2000; G. Ngoie Tshibambe D. Lelu, *Migration en République Démocratique du Congo*, *Profil National* 2009, OIM, Genève, pp 128.

initially enter Belgium as regular migrants may become irregular through overstaying.¹⁶

The standard of living of Congolese in Belgium has not been well-studied, but the type of visas they have suggests they are disproportionately from educated strata. For example, study visas are quite common and made up a third of applications in 2007. The migrants' level of education (Figure 1) likely means they are from relatively well-off DRC households. Of course, this does not translate smoothly into the same social status or relative standard of living in Belgium; middle class or elite migrants from poorer countries may experience difficulties in exporting their status to the West due to a combination of racial hierarchies, insertion into low status jobs or legal barriers.¹⁷ One indicator that these general challenges may be affecting the specific example of people from the DRC in Belgium is to be found in their unemployment rate, which was reported at 37.6% in 2011.¹⁸

Figure 1: Comparison between arrivals in Belgium and the UK
 (modified from data from the Migrations between Africa and Europe project)



People of Congolese background have formed a number of associations in the Brussels Capital region. Among other goals, these groups aim to develop their country of origin, organize migrants to advocate for common causes in Belgium and provide support to the local Congolese community. We return below to an example of such an organization.

¹⁶ *Belgium Country Report 2007*.

¹⁷ D. Conradson and A. Latham, 'Transnational Urbanism: Attending to Everyday Practices and Mobilities', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(2), 2005; L. McDowell, A. Batnitzky, and S. Dyer, 'Division Segmentation and Interpellation: the Embodied Labours of Migrant Workers in a Greater London Hotel', *Economic Geography* 83(1), 2007.

¹⁸ M. Godin and A. Rea, 'Belgium', in G. Urso and A. Schuster (eds.), *Migration, Employment and Labour Market Integration Policies in the European Union*, 2011, IOM.

Kenyans in Belgium

The number of French-speaking Africans may be higher due to linguistic ties, but there are also significant numbers of Anglophone Africans in Belgium. The Federation of Anglophone Africans in Belgium coordinates and facilitates activities to enhance the welfare of Anglophone Africans living in Belgium. These groups are significant and some are highly active. For example, the Facebook page of Kenyans living in Brussels has 77,000 'likes' and Kenyans have developed a number of practical activities run by the Association of Kenyans in Belgium and Luxemburg (AKDBL), which provides a case study for this report.

ACTIVITIES

Diasporas find creative ways to support struggling compatriots in their new homes. This paper focuses on two contrasting approaches in Belgium, one from an organization led by the Congolese diaspora and one from an organization led by the Kenyan diaspora.

La Tourkana

Immigrant women face challenges in finding employment, particularly those who are in the process of applying for asylum papers, irregular immigrants who are unemployed and low-skilled immigrants. These groups typically struggle to integrate and their difficulties in finding employment reinforce their marginalization. Furthermore, opportunities that are available to them in their countries of origin based on their talents are often not available to them in Belgium. For example, in their countries of origin, immigrant women from African countries may have produced a range of handmade products to sell for income, relying on public spaces, such as markets. In Belgium, such spaces are usually not available to them, and some, because they have an irregular migration status, want to avoid the authorities. They are therefore less likely to search for spaces to sell their products openly.

La Tourkana, an organization in Wavre, supports women who produce art and craftwork in different parts of Africa, through its transnational network and in Belgium. The organization collaborates with projects of similar intent, such as Project Femme Immigration. They select what they perceive as the best products and provide a space (in the form of a shop in Wavre) in which immigrant women's art is recognized and sold. In addition, the organization provides workshops to explain to migrant women their rights and hosts fair trade, networking and cultural activities, at which migrant women exchange experiences and link up with other organizations that provide different opportunities.

The literature on migration provides two definitions of a diaspora that apply to La Tourkana. On the one hand, a diaspora may be defined by a group of people *sharing links* to a home

country. This is clearly the case for some participants in La Tourkana, which has heavy representation by people from the DRC. On the other hand, a diaspora may be defined based on *mobilization*. La Tourkana's founder explains that, as a Belgian born in the DRC, she felt the need to make contributions to the DRC, particularly on the issue of violence against women and rape as a weapon of war.

As she developed this activism, she soon discovered that there were other women, including from countries such as Rwanda and Burundi, who were similarly motivated. In Belgium, her efforts to raise awareness on the issue gained 'natural' partners. She terms the partnership natural because collaboration was never planned, but rather grew from a process of empathy, identification with a similar cause and the need of activists and affected women to support each other, regardless of their origins. Politics in the countries of origin caused divisions at first, for example between Congolese and Rwandese women, but the common tragedy encouraged them to transcend differences and unite. In the same spirit, the organization supports all women, regardless of their countries of origin. Projects and activities now have participation by, for example, Syrians and Indians.

Association of Kenyan Diaspora in Belgium and Luxembourg

Compared to La Tourkana, AKDBL takes a less grassroots approach, but one that places civil society at the table with governments from the country of origin and the host country. Like the bigger Congolese groups, AKDBL represents a significant number of Kenyans, but not all fragments of the Kenyan diaspora. It is primarily led by highly-skilled, educated Kenyans, even though the services provided have a large outreach component and strive for inclusiveness. It is structured around the Kenyan government's diaspora engagement strategy. This structure allows AKDBL to follow EU policies from conception, to understand them, to engage with them and to be proactive towards them, which helps to mitigate the risk of becoming victims of new policies.

AKDBL is therefore acting more at the strategic policymaking level, including strong engagement with discourses on migration for development. One potential weakness of this focus – and the group's elite leaders – could be to exclude diaspora sub-groups with less grasp or interest in high-level policymaking. An interview with the President of the AKDBL suggested that this work is indeed done by highly-skilled and educated diaspora members.

Some of its direct assistance activities, however, showed a strong link between high-level work and migrant welfare at a grassroots level. AKDBL's approach takes into account the EU's current preoccupation with 'constructive migration', which includes an aversion to adopting the 'burdens of other societies'. AKDBL puts this into practice by focusing on protecting Kenyans from marginalization, or from the kind of destitution that would make them

'unwanted' migrants. AKDBL provides support by facilitating political participation, helping all kinds of migrants to contribute to policymaking on integrating migrants into the Belgian education system, and securing jobs for Kenyans.

At a political level, well-integrated members of the AKDBL who are eligible to run for political office in Belgium do so and the group supports them. These efforts highlight the commitment of some to participate in nation-building both in Kenya and in Belgium.¹⁹ In relation to policymaking, through the social and cultural affairs committee, AKDBL prioritizes advice on how to integrate immigrants in Belgium's education model. This is a far-sighted area in which to engage, with the theory that success in this area will accelerate access to opportunities for migrant families, especially their second generation. It is also an area of policymaking where a relatively high level of prioritization is shared by both migrants and by the Belgian government.

At a more grassroots and social level, the AKDBL strives to match Kenyan students or graduates in Belgium to working Kenyan expatriates in Belgium as part of an effort to find job opportunities. AKDBL also provide Kenyan graduates with information on career pathways and advice on accessing opportunities, such as obtaining work permits. In relation to state-sponsored welfare, it is notable that some migrants who are eligible for benefits do not claim them. AKDBL's experience suggests that even those who are eligible may not exercise their rights due to a lack of knowledge or ability to navigate the system. Providing such people information and support to claim their rights is part of the AKDBL approach to preventing Kenyan immigrants' destitution.

CONCLUSION

This report began with inspiration from the 19th Century Poor Laws and from arguments in Europe based on whether immigrants are attracted by generous welfare states. There is certainly theoretical and anecdotal evidence that this should be the case, but details of eligibility and access matter. The case of Belgium is interesting because it is nominally an expansive and generous welfare provider. However, it makes a strong distinction between natives and immigrants; it is certainly not generous to irregular immigrants. Just as importantly, welfare is tied tightly to employment, so diasporas with high unemployment will tend to receive relatively less in state-sponsored benefits. From one perspective, reduced access to the welfare state creates barriers to escaping poverty and achieving integration among the same groups that contribute most to fears of 'welfare tourists'. This is an ironic,

¹⁹ AKDBL reports it particularly likely that second generation Belgians of Kenyan origin now call Belgium 'home'.

self-reinforcing situation.

In exploring Congolese and Kenyan groups in Belgium, the examples described here show diaspora organizations taking responsibility for providing welfare and support to immigrants. The AKDBL approach has some interest in the state and on obtaining access to policy debates affecting immigrants. This approach gains legitimacy by aligning with host country interests, such as diaspora initiatives that link Belgium and the African Union. Below this level of activity, AKDBL is engaged in the kinds of support that might be expected from a well-functioning welfare state, such as provision of information to eligible claimants and support to link job-seekers with job opportunities. AKDBL fills this gap because the capacities are not there in the formal Belgian system and because AKDBL is more motivated to help mitigate destitution among Kenyan immigrants. As a welfare provider to other migrants, this approach is largely limited to documented and legal immigrants, with less effects expected on the undocumented and most marginalized immigrants. However, we found there is still some benefit that trickles down to less elite migrants, at least in terms of awareness of rights and some limited group solidarity and social support facilitated by AKDBL.

By contrast, La Tourkana provides an example of a grassroots organization taking on a greater burden of supporting marginalized and undocumented migrants. Such organizations seldom interact with the state, whether the state in the country of origin or in the host country. Their resources and focus are anchored firmly in civil society. They can ameliorate destitution even among the most marginalized, but their bridging role is more relevant to social and economic resources than it is to citizenship and state access.

While the approaches taken by these organizations are different, common lessons can be drawn. Their activities are perhaps less interesting just as 'migrant initiatives', but instead provide an example of how people become mobilized for collective purposes and actions, and how social movements are formed.²⁰ Marginalizing migrants, like most situations of marginalization, facilitates their mobilization and creates the need for supporting organizations that put less emphasis on the state and more emphasis on civil society as the provider of relief. For third country nationals, diaspora organizations will continue to play a role in relieving their destitute compatriots, regardless of the welfare state, since those most likely to fall into destitution are not eligible for social benefits anyway.

Finally, to return to the question of welfare as a pull factor to Belgium, we conclude with two points. First, the Belgian model is to a significant extent self-regulating on this issue. Those migrants who would gain the most from the system are also the ones who are documented,

²⁰ M. Sökefeld, 'Mobilizing in Transnational Space: A Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora', *Global Networks*, 6(3), 2006.

employed and are making contributions to it, so are unlikely to be benefiting 'unfairly' from it. Those who are documented, but oscillating between employment and unemployment, benefit less from it because payments are calculated on contributions made by the beneficiary. The group most likely to be unwanted by natives – undocumented and unemployed immigrants – are largely excluded from the welfare state. It is therefore unlikely that those who are unwanted are attracted by a welfare state which they cannot access.

Second, mobilization by diasporas to help the worst off among them needs to be considered when assessing the extent to which welfare restrictions will be an effective strategy to curb migration. On one hand, migrants as welfare providers to other migrants may put a floor under the pain of exclusion faced by people that the state excludes. On the other hand, choosing exclusion rather than engagement as the approach to reduce unwanted ills associated with migration seems unlikely to address a problem of visible, destitute people, the experience of which seems to motivate such policies in the first place.



FARSIGHT

SEE FAR, BE FIRST

To stay in touch, click below.

<http://seefar.org>

