

# *Local Social Innovation and the Welfare State: which Role for the EU in Connecting Social Needs and Rights?*



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# 1. The EU and social innovation

- Cold and warm solidarity identified with national institutions of structural redistribution and local initiatives of direct social support
  - argument about spatial scale of solidarity
  - argument about nature of solidarity
- Politics of scale: which role does EU adopt in multi-scalar configuration of social policy making, including scalar alliance?
  - EU-national: coordination and regulation of national systems of social protection
  - EU-local: EU bypasses lack of control over national social policies by promoting local social innovation across Europe, notably through its funding mechanisms

# 1. The EU and social innovation

Of all cases with public funding (n=23), which have funding from government on	Case studies
<b>... municipal/provincial level</b>	<b>8</b>
... regional/national level	4
... European level	2
<b>... European + municipal/provincial level</b>	<b>6</b>
... European + national/regional level	2
... national/regional + municipal/provincial	1

- local dynamics with EU as preferred partner (EU-local alliance around social innovation) (indicative data, ImPRovE)

## 2. Cold and warm solidarities

- different nature of solidarities not well captured by distinction between warm and cold solidarity
- ignores affective effects of institutional forms of solidarity
- ignores experience of inequality and power differences at play in direct forms of solidarity

*“Niets is meer vernederend dan voedselhulp krijgen”*

*“De twee emoties die we het meest ervaren zijn schaamte en dankbaarheid.”*

(Ghys & Oosterlynck, 2015, Vlaams Steunpunt Armoede)

- direct versus indirect solidarity better term, but does not capture underlying problematique of interrelationships well

# 3. On social rights and social needs

- propose more adequate framework: analyse interaction between local social innovation and national welfare states in terms of needs and rights-based approaches
- social innovation is **needs-based approach**, focusing on needs that are not (adequately) serviced by market or government provisions:

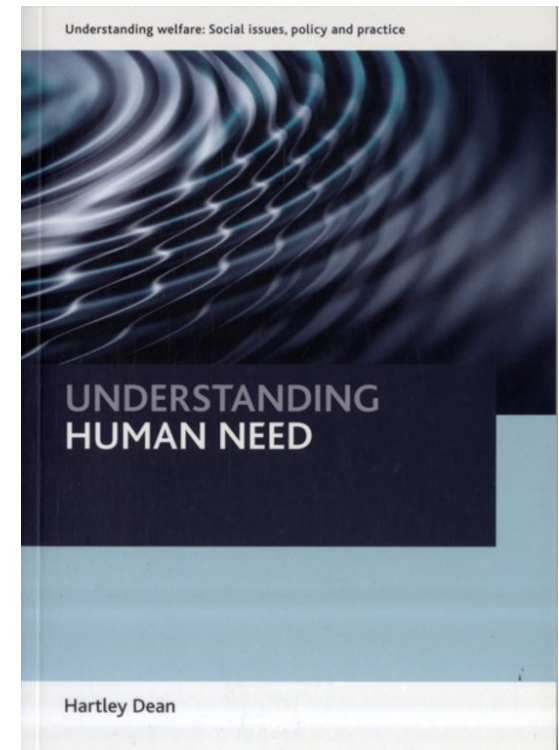
*“we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet **social needs** and create new social relationships or collaborations”* (Mulgan, 2010: p.3)

# 3. On social rights and social needs

- welfare states historically operate on basis of **social rights** agenda – social citizenship (ideal-typical)
- “specialised individual entitlements specifically created by social legislation in the context of a 'welfare state’” (Dean, 2015: p.3)
- opposed to charity: rights grounded in notion of **equality**:
  - equal treatment (guaranteed by government bureaucracy)
  - more equal relationship between givers and receivers (shared responsibility)
- institutionalisation of social rights in welfare states led to (overly) restrictive vision on social rights as solely legal-institutional in nature

# 3. On social rights and social needs

- to understand role of social innovation in welfare state change, need to adopt broader sociological definition of social rights
  - social rights are socially constructed: need to understand *social process* through which rights come about
  - starting point: human beings are both needy and social (Dean, 2015)
  - rights are constituted through naming, claiming and recognizing of human needs (Fraser, 1989)



# 3. On social rights and social needs

- social rights are ***socially negotiated human needs*** (post-Marshallian perspective on social rights) (Dean, 2013)
- analyse social innovation as process of identifying, interpreting and negotiating human needs to assess to what extent they strengthen or undermine social rights approach of welfare states and society's capacity to address them
- keep open mind on new social initiatives and their potential contribution to welfare provision
- explore on basis of extensive qualitative case study work of food banks (and social groceries) in Flanders from perspective of structural anti-poverty strategies

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/steunpunten/vlaams-armoedesteunpunt/onderzoek/sociale-innovatie/>



# 4. Case: Food Banks (in Flanders)

- Is it social innovation? (not same as question: is it desirable or effective anti-poverty strategy)
- yes, it addresses social needs ...

“De voorzitter nu was toen secretaris van het OCMW in Alken. Die zag dat er zoveel mensen waren die honger hadden. Die hadden enkel een klein beetje uitkering van het OCMW waarschijnlijk. En die is er samen met zijn vrouw mee begonnen. In de gangen van de OCMW kantoren stonden dan de voedselpakketten klaar.” (Ghys & Oosterlynck, 2015, VLAS-rapport 24: p.14)

“We vroegen leidinggevenden van voedselbedeelpunten naar wat volgens hen de belangrijkste motivatie van hun doelpubliek was om een beroep te doen op voedselbedeling (n52). Geldgebrek kwam duidelijk op één, daarna honger en als laatste isolement.”

(Ghys & Oosterlynck, 2015, VLAS-rapport 24: p.34)

# 4. Case: Food Banks

- ... and does through new collaborations and forms of governance (see e.g. FEAD)
  - however: governance innovation triggered by legitimacy problems in agricultural policy and anti-food waste policies, rather than poverty per se
- identifying needs?
- yes, and visible in repeated media accounts of increases in number of clients of food banks – stresses ‘hole’ in welfare state



The screenshot shows a mobile news article from hln.be. The top status bar displays 'Telenet', social media icons, signal strength, 4G, 60% battery, and 12:32. The browser address bar shows 'https://m.hln.be/nieuws'. The main image shows a group of people, including Sandra Bekkari, preparing food in a kitchen. Below the image is a caption: '© PHOTO NEWS - Sandra Bekkari (midden) toont da met simpele ingrediënten lekker kan koken.' The article title is 'Voedselbanken zien “explosieve toename” in aantal hulpbehoevenden'. The text below the title reads: 'Het aantal hulpbehoevenden dat zich vorig jaar meldde bij de voedselbanken bedroeg voor het eerst meer dan 150.000. “Een stijging van 10 procent”, zegt gedelegeerd bestuurder Jozef Mottar. “En we zien dat dit jaar helaas verder stijgen.” In Geraardsbergen gaf televisiechef Sandra Bekkari vandaag een workshop'. At the bottom, there are social media sharing icons for WhatsApp (42), Twitter, Facebook, and a red menu icon.

# 4. Case: Food Banks

- but is need well-identified? Is this a need for food or need for income?
  - presence and visibility of food banks in itself insufficient to engage in 'needs to rights' translation
- some policy work ('needs signaling to policy makers'), but little public claims making, appealing to shared responsibility for this need:

“Wij proberen ons bezig te houden met de essentie, en die essentie is directe hulp aan gezinnen die het moeilijk hebben.” (p.20)

“Wij werken alleen rechtstreeks, in stilte als ik het zo mag zeggen. Maar als wij met de stad samenzitten, dan zullen we heel scherp zijn. Maar we gaan er niet op straat mee roepen” (p.20)

# 4. Case: Food Banks

About Platform Noodhulp onder Protest ('Emergence Need under Protest')

“Ik wou die (organisaties die voedsel bedelen) eens éénmalig samenbrengen om te horen waarom ze dat doen en of ze dat blijven doen, want dat is toch niet meer van deze tijd. Maar eigenlijk is dat een platform geworden dat is blijven samenkomen tot vandaag, maar van begin af aan met een kritische inslag” (p.20)

# 4. Case: Food Banks

- how is need for food address in food banks?
- food banks themselves decide who gets access (no right)
- volunteers, not trained social workers, which leads to expectations of gratitude and personal judgments on deservingsness

“van gewoon dankbaarheid uiten tot emotioneel ‘eisend’, want sommige ‘klanten’ (ook van vreemde herkomst) beschouwen deze voedselpaketten als een recht. Desgevallend wordt hen wel duidelijk gemaakt dat de vzw (...) een vrijwilligersorganisatie is die helemaal géén verplichting heeft om een voedselpakket te geven” (p.30)

“De mensen van het Oostblok zijn veeleisend en dikwijls onbeleefd. Ze eisen meer terwijl onze Belgen dankbaar zijn voor wat hen voorgesteld wordt” (p.30)

# 4. Case: Social Groceries

- social groceries often presented as social innovation on food banks
  - focus mainly on relation between 'client' and 'food bank' and aim to create more equal relationship and offer more dignified service
  - offering choice + clients pay (below market prices)
  - integrate access to other social support
- social groceries reflected (limited) 'negotiation' of social needs, responding to complaints voiced about operation of food banks

# 5. Conclusion

- EU could do more with FEAD than use it as social policy instrument of last resort:
  - distributing funds and resources is not sufficient
  - needs to facilitate public deliberation about the needs that are made visible through its operations
  - provide support for voice of clients in this deliberation process