

Local social innovation and the welfare state: exploring the possibilities for a mutually enriching relationship

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Improve: poverty reduction in Europe

- EU funded FP7 project Improve: Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (2012-2016, see <http://improve-research.eu/>)
- starting point: long standstill in poverty reduction In Europe, despite years of economic and employment growth (before crisis)
- limits of current macro-level social policies: explore social innovation as a source of inspiration for rethinking European welfare states

Welfare state and social innovation

- current wave of social innovations emerged in context of restructuring of welfare state (from late 1970s onwards)
 - new welfare mix, involving new civil society actors, private actors and stronger role for local governments
 - new social risks due to knowledge-based society, e.g. long term unemployment of low skilled

Welfare state and social innovation

- creates openness of welfare state institutions for local social innovations and social innovators
- analytical focus on governance relations between local social innovations and macro-level welfare policies:
 - *how is SI shaped by instruments and institutional conditions of particular welfare states?*
 - *how does SI tailors/combines macro-level instruments to specific populations at risk of poverty?*

Case: Kringloopwinkel (Flanders)

- Kringloopwinkels ('Life Cycle Shops'):
 - environmental entrepreneurs in social economy (WISE)
 - combines three aims and various policy instruments around re-use activities:
 - (1) re-use of old materials and waste reduction: co-operation with Flemish Public Waste Agency (OVAM), local environmental covenants, ...

Case: Kringloopwinkel (Flanders)

- (2) employment for long term unemployed:
employment subsidies (social workplace statute) and labour market re-integration trajectories ('art. 60' of public welfare centers)
- (3) provide second hand consumption items for low income households

Kringloopwinkel: an impression

RED ONZE PLANEET! RUIM OP!
 Breng herbruikbare spullen naar De Kringwinkel!

Gratis ophaling: maak een afspraak op 016 82 45 55

de kringwinkel
 Middeland



Repair Café
 Weggooien? Mooi niet! ANTWERPEN



LADDER VAN LANSINK 2.0

- A Reduce
- B Re-use
- C Recycling
- D Energy
- E Incineration
- F Landfill

naar
De Kringwinkel.
 Een samenwerking met

Recupel

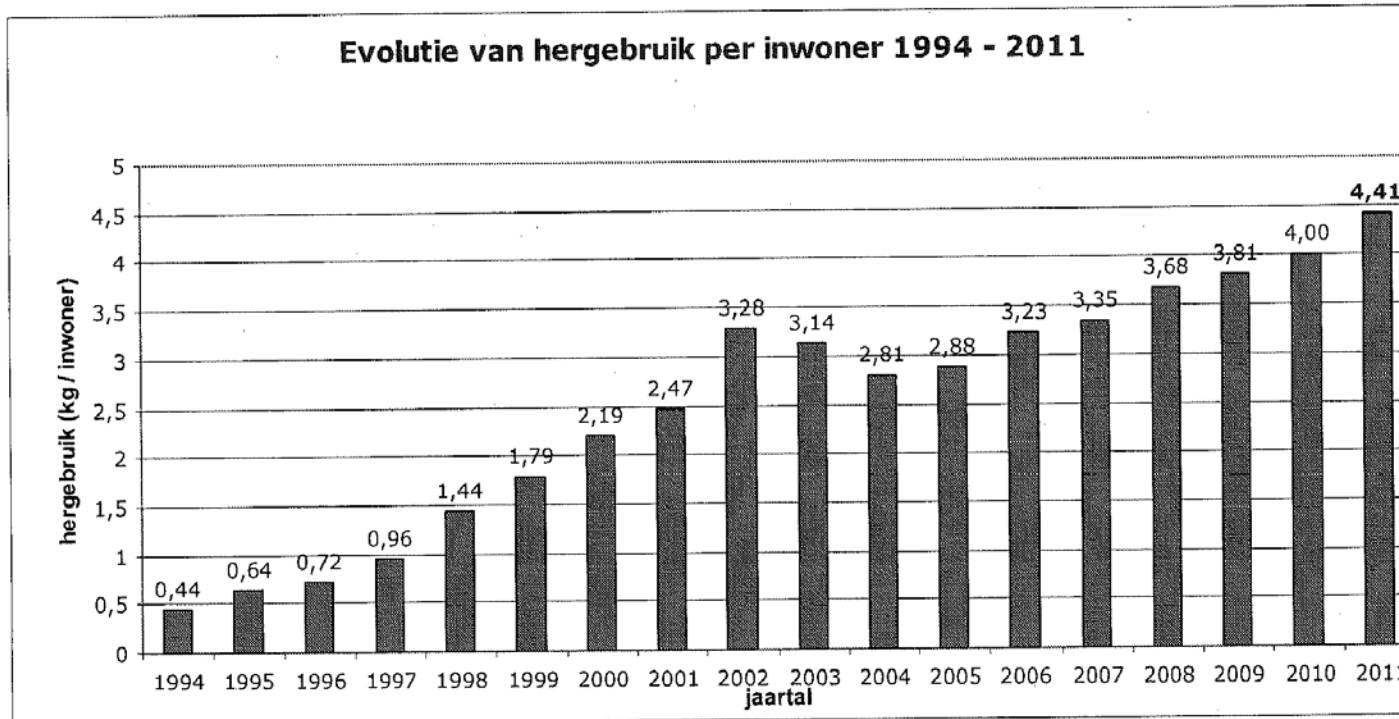
de kringwinkel
 antwerpen



Case: Kringloopwinkel (Flanders)

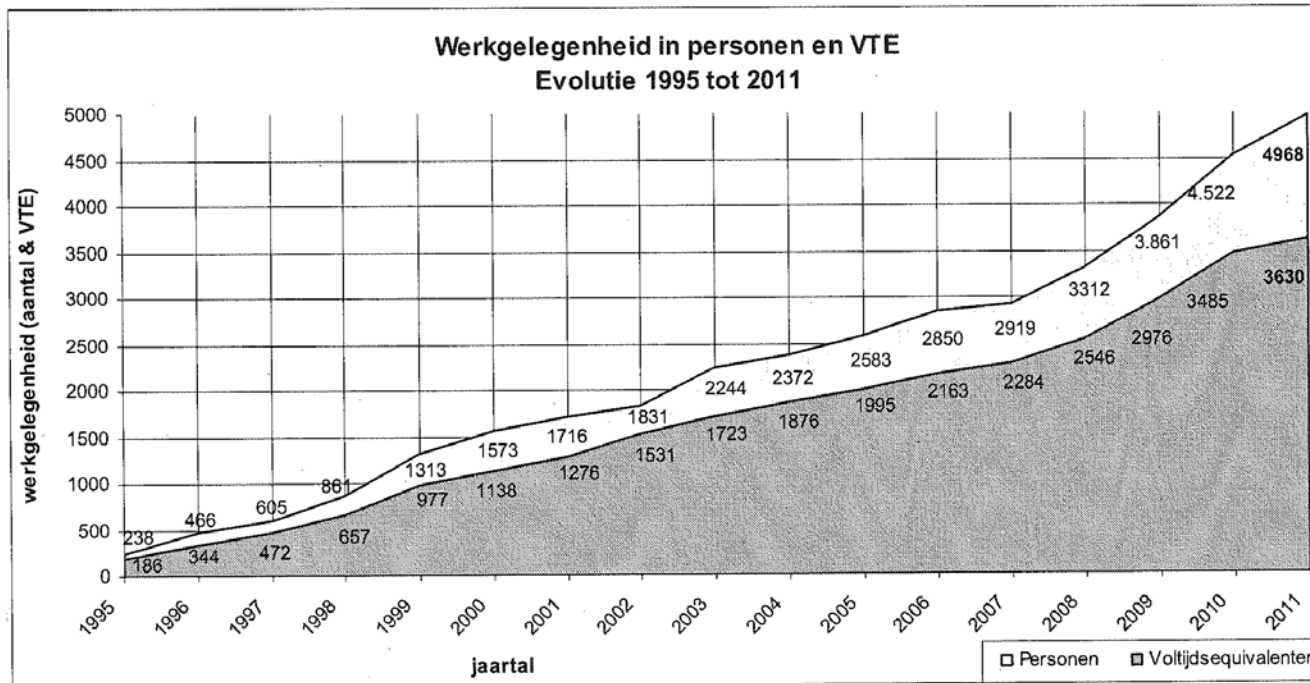
- initiated by civil society organisation (Elcker-Ik)
 - field trips, training and ambition to cover whole region (today 31 centres, 118 stores and 3.630 full-time jobs)
- locally grown and embedded
 - volunteers and donations, public welfare centers,...
- but also multiscalar: Flemish and European umbrella organisations (Komosie, Reuse) and co-operation (OVAM, SST) – *bottom-linked social innovation*

Case: Kringloopwinkel (Flanders)



Evolution of re-use per inhabitant, 1994-2011. In 2011 the Flemish Kringwinkelsector gathered 59.694 ton of donated goods. About 47% (27.886 ton) was re-used. Source: http://www.dekringwinkel.be/kw/over-ons/sector-in-cijfers_94.aspx

Case: Kringloopwinkel (Flanders)



Evolution of jobs in persons and FTEs in KLWs, 1995-2011. In 2011: 4.986 persons, which makes for 3.630 full-time jobs. 80 % of employees are employed 'socially'. Jobs include collection, sorting and repairing of goods and run the shops. One third of social workplaces in Flanders is a Kringloopwinkel.

Source: http://www.dekringwinkel.be/kw/over-ons/sector-in-cijfers_94.aspx

4/04/2014 – 4th Crises International Conference – Social Transformation through Social Innovation

Growth and upscaling

- growth in Kringloop sector driven by:
 - opportunities in reuse sector, room for creativity (e.g. local environmental covenants) and anchoring in waste reduction policy
 - growth and specificities of ‘social workplace’ statute (unique in Europe)
- upscaling supported by umbrella organisation

Growth and upscaling

- unity, solidarity and experimentation
(allows for different speed of development)
- uniform house style and communication
- stimulate process and product innovation

Hence: local variations, but standardization, professionalization and trend towards product and process innovation

Threats to social innovation character

- Mainstreaming and growth vs. ‘shop for the poor’
- Dependence on employment subsidies
 - Imposes limits to growth (initially addressed by growth of other statutes – Art.60 of PWCs)
- Pressure from EU competition policy
 - Legislative changes: ‘Tailored Work Decree’
 - Ambiguity of empowerment dimension (politics and measurability)
- Growth and environmental objectives, leading to professionalization and standardization:
 - less accessible for some unemployed groups and volunteers

Conclusions

- Importance of looking at institutional conditions for emergence, success and threat for social innovation
- Exploring links with welfare state:
 - capacity of local social innovators in tailoring macro-level employment subsidies to local social needs and environmental activity

Conclusions

- capacity of social innovators to link various aims and instruments (pragmatism, knowledge in action)
- capacity for mainstreaming and standardization (Isomorphism and new possibilities for innovation)
- importance of local context: innovation at different speeds