

Susan Baines, Andrea Bassi, Judit Csoba and Flórián Sipos (eds) (2019), *Implementing Innovative Social Investment: Strategic Lessons from Europe*, Bristol: Policy Press, £75.00, pp. 236, hbk.
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This book is poorly served by its title. It provides a solid set of research reports on important directions of social policy change across Europe. Increasingly, and as the chapters and conclusion map in detail, the past years have brought two trends. One is towards decentralised governance in which the local level has greater decision-making authority and thus discretion about programme design and delivery. The second is that both design and delivery choices are being co-produced, made in collaboration with partners, whether from the voluntary sector, social economy or even commercial sector. The book tracks these trends in 10 countries of the European Union, and uncovers similar processes. Chapters map efforts by local actors to address some of the most difficult, indeed sometimes “wicked”, problems confronting social policy today – extreme and entrenched poverty, rural isolation, exclusion of youth from labour market participation, integration of immigrants and refugees, and so on.

Each chapter examines one or more policies and their implementation by municipal or (sometimes) regional authorities and other local actors, focusing on the strategies they have followed, including the partnerships developed. Each chapter carries out the analysis of the chosen case study in detail.

Particularly useful because often ignored in social policy overviews are the strategies for integration of immigrants, with both chapters providing examples of co-production. Inga Narbutaitė Aflaki analyses a partnership between Swedish municipal authorities and voluntary sector organisations in Göteborg to provide integration and support services for unaccompanied children seeking asylum. Nikola Borosch, Danielle Gluns and Annette Zimmer describe an innovative cross-sectoral network for improving labour market integration via counselling and support of migrants and asylum seekers in the region of Münster in northeast Germany. A non-profit organisation created the partnership, incorporating other non-profits, public and semi-public agencies, and commercial actors. The Polish case as analysed by Aldona Wiktorska-Święcka and Dorota Moroń, describes another situation; the only actor for change was a Catholic non-profit that drew from the example of Caritas in France, to implement programmes for labour-market insertion. These examples indicate that the lead in innovation may come from the public or non-profit sector, as well as illustrating the centrality of partnerships to local-level policy implementation.

Co-production was also part of the story about childhood interventions, although not quite in the same way. Andrea Bassi examined three cases in Emilia Romagna in northern Italy. The goals for childcare included community development as well as reconciling work and family, and a range of organisational actors were involved. The case of Manchester in the UK, as analysed by Jessica Ozan and co-authors, was quite different. The story of early interventions was one in which the driver was the objective of devolution (off-loading); the central government instituted Payment by Results (PbR) as a mechanism for financing local authorities’ interventions for “troubled families.” In this case, co-production was individualised, the responsibility of social workers and family members (p. 44).

Nor was co-production found only at the local level. Two case studies examine the strategies of central governments, using funds from the European Union, to take the lead and propose programmes for local actors. In Finland, as analysed by Kaisa Sorsa, the Youth Guarantee provided one-stop support for youth (under 25) to promote labour market inclusion. It was an initiative of several ministries at the national level that created the framework and then instituted multi-level governance arrangements at the regional level, with horizontal involvement

of third-sector organisations. Co-production was across sectors as usual, but also with an emphasis on including young people in actively shaping their own future. A similar stress on the active role of youth is present in the Greek case study provided by Alexandra Koronaïou and co-authors. Youth vocational training and employment interventions were organised from the centre, with active involvement of national level actors such as unions and employers as well as other interveners at the local level.

Co-production is not the only model, however. The Hungarian case describes efforts to revive households' self-sufficient agricultural production, as analysed by Judit Csoba and Flórián Sipos. Municipal authorities were responsible for this anti-poverty strategy. The Spanish case in contrast, is one in which Michael Willoughby and co-authors examine "energy poverty", a case in which a cooperative was the main actor. It too was an innovative response to poverty during austerity. The cooperative has existed since the beginning of the 20th century, and the chapter describes its efforts to respond to the circumstances of energy poverty in these first decades of the 21st.

As the 10 case studies illustrate, the examination of strategies ranges widely. Under-examined concepts such as energy poverty and self-sufficient household production in rural areas receive the attention they merit as social policy issues. So too, as mentioned, does integration of migrants and asylum seekers. Visionary projects such as the Dutch *Green Sticht* (*sticht* means convent) that created a small neighbourhood focused on social solidarity in which social idealists could live side-by-side with previously homeless residents with intellectual disabilities, addiction and so on, is yet another example described by Alfons Fermin, Sandra Geelhoed, and Rob Gründemann.

The case studies are all fascinating examples of municipal or non-profit local efforts to address real social challenges. Many of them are also innovative. Why then claim that the title serves them poorly?

The answer is simply that these fascinating cases provide little evidence that actors, public or not, rely on any version of the "social investment paradigm" that the editors used in the title and summarised in the introduction. Rather than choosing cases based on actors' objectives for "social investment" as a paradigm for productive social policy, case selection was made on the basis of the *instruments*, albeit those highlighted by social investment advocates, as well as the European Union's goal for fostering social cohesion. These instruments and that objective are not unique to social investment, however. As the important work of Pierre Lascoumes and Patrick Le Galès (2007) and colleagues demonstrates, instruments are not neutral. Principles implanted in their design shape consequences. Moreover, Peter A. Hall's (1993) classic argument taught that paradigms depend on the objectives set for the instruments embedded in it; the same instrument can serve several paradigms. An instrument such as non-parental childcare can have multiple and sometimes competing goals, from simply providing a custodial environment while parents work to promoting democratic citizenship or to privileging accumulation of human capital. Implementation and design details will be widely different for these three objectives depending on the policy paradigm or welfare regime.

The instruments for life-course interventions and activation discussed in Part A and B have been around for a long time, deployed for various goals. Emilia Romagna has a decades' long tradition of progressive and collectively managed childcare; indeed, it is where the Reggio Emilia model of care emerged in the 1960s. The otherwise excellent chapter by Bassi does not take the time to describe how (or if) the social investment objective of "human capital formation" was used to redesign or rethink childcare; indeed it seems to tell another story, one about solidarity. The UK case is problematic in another way. The chosen programme for "Troubled Families," instituted by the Coalition Government in 2011, has been castigated as neo-liberal (as the authors note, p. 46). The chapter's authors do not try to dismiss this characterisation by

showing how it is *really* social investment. They simply argue that it seems to have had some positive results. Such results hardly prove that it is social investment and not neo-liberalism, however.

Part B deals with another long-standing policy instrument. Readers receive no guidance, however, about whether the active labour market programmes (ALMP) are meant to be social investments. There is no question they target youth and seek to include them, but chapter authors do not identify how these ALMP differ from the ALMP of the classic welfare state (often accused of only “parking” the unemployed) or the neo-liberal versions promoted by the OECD’s Jobs Strategy in the 1980s (often accused of being a form of workfare). Finally, Part C, focused on extreme poverty and exclusion, certainly analyses cases in which social cohesion and inclusion is the goal. The section simply drops the discussion of social investment, however, without taking the opportunity to mention that making interventions for such difficult social categories is the blind-spot of the social investment approach: investing in human capital and labour market activation is simply not enough in situations of marginalisation. Multiple criticisms (also recognised by the authors in the introduction, p. 5) have made this point, yet the section remains mum on the matter.

Overall, rather than trying to squeeze their book into the faddish “social investment paradigm”, the available pages would have been better used to systematically describe how the policies implemented are truly innovative, as compared to their pasts. The conclusion does an excellent good job, here. It simply puts social investment aside and focuses on governance, co-production, challenges faced by professionals, and so on. Perhaps the editors felt compelled to reuse the labels of the EU Horizon 2020 grant that financed the project. Nonetheless, it is sad that the book title sends readers down a road to confusion, while the introduction does not prepare them as well as it could and should have for this important comparative report on two key trends in social policy at the local level.

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Social Mobility and Education in Britain: Research, Politics and Policy draws on a substantial body of research conducted by its authors over many years with many collaborators. Given that, one might be concerned that it would struggle to draw out a consistent narrative. However, this is certainly not an issue with a carefully plotted account providing a persuasive