

MASTER THESIS

Social Policy and Social Interventions



A qualitative study on food bank clients in Rotterdam: food bank versus 'alternative' state-run social welfare provisions

Rosanne F. Oomkens 3123537

**Supervisors: Dr. Marcel Hoogenboom & Dr. Barbara Da Roit
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**Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences
University Utrecht**



Universiteit Utrecht

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**FOOD BANK CLIENTS IN ROTTERDAM:
SAME PROBLEMS, DIFFERENT RESPONSE**

Rosanne F. Oomkens, June, 2008

Abstract

With this master thesis I graduate from the English master program 'Social Policy and Social Interventions' that I followed at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Utrecht University from September 2007 till July 2008. The last years food banks received wide media coverage, in the Netherlands, but also worldwide. It appears a new kind of social 'tapestry' of private initiatives (re)emerges that replaces the bureaucratic state machinery. The food bank is private initiative as it is a non-state, self-governing initiative that carries out charitable activities of a structured, continuous and organized kind within society. This qualitative study explores why food bank clients make use of the food bank and what state-run provisions they do (not) make use of, and most importantly why (not).

On the basis of in-depth interviews with 37 food bank clients and eight informants (Food Bank, social workers, client managers of social service (SoZaWe) it became clear that several factors highly influence claiming or not claiming certain provisions. On the provisional level, knowledge of the provision appears to be most important. On the administration level the net balance of beliefs and feelings with regard to the (expected) procedural outcomes of the claiming highly affects (non) use of provisions (transaction costs). Of the client level factors, which accordingly influence the previous levels, social skills, educational level, command of language, attitudes and perceptions and social consequences seem to be most influential.

Food bank clients have been categorized in terms of the reasons for (non) use of provisions, including the food bank: 1) Ignorant client: passive attitude, little knowledge of provisions, negative outcome transaction costs state-provisions, simplicity food bank positively influences use. 2) Victimized client: passive attitude, expects others to solve problems, low score on perceived eligibility state-provisions, negative outcome transaction costs state-provisions, little trust in state but high trust in food bank. 3) Care-avoider: no knowledge of provisions, sometimes fully isolated autochthon, sometimes allochthonous, then social network negatively influences claiming provisions, 4) Optimistic client: optimistic future perspectives, which sometimes lead to non-claiming of both food bank services and state-run provisions. 5) Knowledgeable client: active attitude, high knowledge of provisions.

People mainly make use of the food bank because they are aware of its existence (mostly social workers make people aware of the food bank), they feel the subjective need to make use of it and they consider the application procedure as relatively easy which supports them in claiming usage. State-run provisions that are used by many food bank clients are (semi) automatic services like health care allowance. Non-use of state-run provisions is mainly the result of ineligibility, but it is also often the result of lack of knowledge about a provision. Use of other state-run provisions like special assistance is mainly the result of the active attitude of the client or because of the active role of the care network (e.g. client manager, social worker).

Rosanne F. Oomkens, June, 2008

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Preface

With this master thesis I graduate from the English master program ‘Social Policy and Social Interventions’ that I followed at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Utrecht University from September 2007 till July 2008. The idea to write my master thesis about food bank clients in Rotterdam arose during the brainstorm session on possible research topics. Initially my interest went to out to the introduction of contractualization in the care and health care sector. However, when Dr. Marcel Hoogenboom started talking about “a new kind of social ‘tapestry’ of private initiatives that replaces the bureaucratic state machinery”, I was immediately enthusiastic. In the media I read and heard a lot about food bank clients. I believed the food bank was an utterly interesting example of the rise of these new private initiatives. Little scientific research has been done about food banks in the Netherlands. I was wondering who the food bank clients are, why they are making use of the food bank and which state-run social welfare provisions they make use of and if not, why not?

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Rosanne F. Oomkens

¹ Wishes to remain anonymous

Chapter 1: Introduction: the food bank, a new form of social tapestry ?

§ 1.1 The rise of food banks in the Netherlands

In August 2005 the USA Today wrote: “Dutch poverty grows, thousands rely on handouts”, referring to the growing number of food banks in the Netherlands. Next to a photo of a Dutch food bank, they placed the following text: “People wait in line for their food at the Voedselbank in Rotterdam. The Voedselbank, or Food Bank, is a private group for people that can no longer depend on state help.” - The AD (2006) headed: “Heavy criticism for food banks.” - In 2006, the Labour Party (PvdA) asserted: “Within four years we want to get rid of the food bank.” They argued that food banks in the Netherlands should be redundant. - In December 2007 the Dutch newspaper Trouw wrote: “Food banks will grow rapidly in 2007.” In December 2007 NRC Handelsblad reported: “Rather going to the food bank than to social service.” In March 2008 the ANP wrote: “Many more people going to the food bank.”

The last years food banks received wide media coverage, in the Netherlands, but also worldwide. Both the number of food banks itself as well as the number of clients grew drastically. In February 2006 the Food Bank Foundation Netherlands (SVN) reported that they served 8.000 families on a weekly basis and that the demand was growing. In the beginning of 2007 10.000 families made use of the food bank and in 2008 the number rose to 13.000. Currently there are about 105 registered initiatives. (ANP, 2008; Food Bank, 2008). The Food Bank wants to reduce (hidden) poverty and food waste in the Netherlands. The bulk of the food that is distributed by the food banks is donated by food producers, processors, and retailers. This food is donated because it cannot be retailed due to manufacturing errors or damage during shipping, handling, and storage, or because the items are perishable and no longer of retail quality or nearing expiry dates.

The organization is fully dependent on volunteers and it appears only a few food banks receive some form of government subsidy, meaning they rely heavily on private gifts. Within five years the Food Bank aims to be active everywhere in the Netherlands. (Food Bank, 2007). Currently, there are food banks in approximately 30 municipalities. This development has drawn a lot of attention from politicians, the media, churches etcetera, not in the last place because the existence of food banks evokes questions about the quality of the Dutch welfare state and the attitude the Dutch have towards poverty.

Clients of the food bank

Research conducted by Regioplan (2006) on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment provided insights in the profile of the food bank client. It was concluded that clients who are vulnerable in the sense of risk factors are over-represented: it concerns a disproportional high number of single-parent families, low-educated people, and people with a non-Dutch ethnicity. An intriguing conclusion of the report is that for 72 percent of food bank clients social benefits are their main source of income, from which the WWB-benefit (Work and Social Assistance Act) appears most often. Interestingly, only 36 percent of food bank clients make use of debt guidance services and only 13 percent of food bank clients participate in reintegration projects. Unfortunately, the research does not provide insights in the reasons *why* food clients do not make use of particular social welfare provisions and how they experience receiving help from an organization set up by civil society in contrast to receiving help from the state. In other words, how clients experience support provided by a private initiative compared to support of the government is not discussed.

Contextual factors

Very often people point to the so-called ‘slimmed down’ welfare state as *the* cause of the rise of new private initiatives such as the food bank. It is plausible that recent developments within the welfare state contributed to the rise of new private initiatives. However, the growth of food banks in the Netherlands took place in a wider context than within the context of welfare state developments alone. The increasing growth of private initiatives should therefore also be examined in the context of changing cultural norms and values that are taking place in the Dutch society.

Poverty

The Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP) predicts that in 2008 the percentage of households with a low income will decrease to 7.9 percent; a decrease of almost two percent in relation to 2005. It is expected that in 2008 530.000 households have to come by on € 870 per month. (SCP, 2007a). Some people believe it to be ‘shameful’ and ‘ignominious’ that a phenomenon as the food bank exists in a thriving country like the Netherlands. According to them, poverty in the Netherlands is merely ‘relative’. Others say it ‘scandalous’ that there are people who are dependent on the help of the food bank and blame the Dutch government for the increasing growth of food banks.

The Poverty Monitor 2007 developed by the SCP (2007a), provided insights in the poor side of the Netherlands.² In 2005, 10 percent (660.000) of the Dutch households were living in poverty. Obviously, for low-income households it is more difficult to make ends meet, which may result in financial problems. In 2007, 13 percent of the Dutch households were in payment arrears and often they cannot afford certain outgoings. 60 percent reported to have insufficient money to heat their homes and even more than 60 percent reported that “replacing worn out furniture or taking an annual holiday are beyond their financial means. Almost half the households on low incomes say they have difficulty or great difficulty making ends meet” (SCP, 2007a).

The above information raises three questions: how is it possible that in a relatively prosperous country as the Netherlands still 660.000 have difficulty or great difficulty making ends meet? And, why choose 13.000 families in the low-income category to make use of the food bank in 2008? Or why is the immense popularity of food banks both in terms of clients as well as media attention a fairly recent phenomenon? It could have something to do with a decreasing acceptance of poverty in the Netherlands. However, it could also be possible that it is a sign of acceptance of poverty; in the past people did not want to make use of it, but nowadays they ‘accept’ these forms of help in order to make ends meet. It is also possible that the food bank is mainly a supply-driven phenomenon and that, through the improved accessibility its popularity is on the rise.

Rise of new welfare paradigm

The last decades, major changes have been taken place within the Dutch welfare state. An aging population, decreasing birth rates, an increasingly flexible labor market, the individualization of society and the process of globalization; it all led to a modernization of the welfare state. “From the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, there was an ongoing debate in the literature about the “crises” of the welfare state” (Gilbert, 2004: 11). The welfare state became a victim of its own success. Rodger (2000, cited by Reese, 2001) argues that “there has been a move away from the “welfare state”, which provides a range of goods to its citizens through legal entitlements, and a movement towards a “welfare society”, which provides welfare through private means.” Do both the initiators as well as the clients of the food bank believe the social welfare provisions of the state are insufficient to provide a minimum level of income? Or do people nowadays prefer help provided by private initiators rather than support

² Most of the data presented in the 2007 edition of the Poverty Monitor generally covered the period up to and including 2005.

made available by the state? The first idea refers to difficulties concerning the financial sustainability of the welfare state. The latter assumes a mismatch between state-run social welfare provisions and eligible recipients or changing norms and beliefs from the recipients' point of view. Also, it addresses the issue of organizational problems of the welfare state.

“Crises” of the welfare state

“(I)n the realm of structural change, immense fiscal pressures are projected in response to the interaction of mature social security systems with socio-demographic trends” (Gilbert, 2004: 32) such as the aging of the population. Due to these trends governments are approaching a tax ceiling that will be difficult to raise for political and economic reasons. Due to demographic and fiscal necessities, intense pressures are put on industrialized nation-states to focus public expenditure on those most needy. (Gilbert, 2004: 135). As a result, benefits have become less generous and access to social welfare provisions is limited.

It can be assumed that due to these changes that took place in the welfare state the relationship between the state and its citizens has changed. The developments in the Netherlands in the social policy context are characterized by concepts like efficiency, privatization, competition, individual responsibility, participation, and rehabilitation. This development may have implications for the way in which citizens or social welfare recipients experience support provided by the state and the extent to which it is believed to be sufficient to make ends meet.

Organizational problems of the welfare state and complexity of society

In the realm of the complexity of modern society individuals have to face nowadays, the work of Beck cannot be discounted. Through various developments such as the focus on (paid) work, rehabilitation and responsibility, modern society puts new demands and controls on individuals. “One has to win, know how to assert oneself in the competition for limited resources – and not only once, but day after day” (Beck, 2002: 2-3).

The role of institutions may play a role in this context as well. The large state bureaucracies that were once created to deal with risks present in society appear to show signs of failure. Activities that were formerly carried out by the nation-state or centralized trade unions have been relocated onto both the private as well as the charitable sector. According to Lash bureaucracies are in crises: “There has been a move toward complexity, indeed towards

“chaos” (in Beck, 2002: x-xi). Could it be true that the “chaos” partly created by large state bureaucracies pushed citizens into the arms of private initiatives? And do these private initiatives deliberately pursue a policy aimed at reducing the perceived complexity? To put it briefly, are there certain developments going on in the Dutch society which could possibly lead to a need for (creating) new social bonds or a need for direct help provided by new forms of private initiative?

§ 1.2 Theoretical relevance

In this part I will briefly discuss prior empirical research regarding private initiatives and food banks in particular, in order to demonstrate how this research fits in with the present state of research and theoretical discussions in the field of private initiatives.

The discussion about the growth of food banks in the Netherlands is inherently related to the concept of ‘private initiatives’. In the past decades we have seen an utterly interesting development: the return of private initiatives on a lot of social domains. Not only in the Netherlands, but worldwide as well. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider the role private initiatives play and why people make use of it.

The example of the great success of food banks seems to illustrate the growing of a new kind of social tapestry of private initiatives (or nonprofit sector) that replaces the bureaucratic state machinery and that is fully led by civil society. These initiatives operate outside the confines of the market and the state. However, “despite a significant expansion of research, the nonprofit sector remains the “lost continent” on the social landscape of modern society” (Salamon, Sokolowski & Anheier, 2000: 1). Therefore, more research is needed to explore the field of private initiatives that has recently emerged in today’s modern society.

Many of the existing studies and literature (for example Zapf, 1984, Selle, 1993, Weisbrod, 1998, Anheier and Daly, 2007) concerning the curious persistence and recent resurgence of private initiatives (or non-profit sector as some authors call it) focus very much on the financial aspects of the (welfare) state, herewith excluding other possibilities for the persistence and predominantly, recent resurgence, of private initiatives. Therefore, a need exists to focus on a broader array of possible explanations for the resurgence of private initiatives, for example, changing cultural norms and values or the assumption that people

nowadays live in a much more complex world than people did 50 years ago. When explaining this, it is important to bear in mind that it is debatable what the direction of the link between the demand for and the supply of private provisions is. When I started this research I did not know if private initiatives were supply or demand driven. It has proven to be very hard to discover the direction of this relation. By asking both food bank clients (about their reasons for visiting) and food bank initiators (about their reasons for setting up the food bank) I gained some insights in the direction of the relationship.

The example of food banks in the Netherlands does not only provide knowledge about the growing importance of new private initiatives, it also demonstrates why food banks itself are flourishing: how come so many people are making use of it? With this study, knowledge will be gained about why people make use of private initiatives, why certain people do (not) make use of alternative social provisions provided by the state and why a group of people makes use of both private initiative services as well as making use of state-run alternatives.

§ 1.3 Research question

The **central question** of this research is:

Why do some people make use of food banks whereas they do not make use of certain 'alternative' social welfare provisions provided by the state, while others choose to combine the use of social welfare provisions provided by the state and support provided by food banks?

To be able to answer the above question, the following sub questions have to be answered:

- *What services do food banks provide?*
- *What social welfare services aimed at securing a minimum level of income exist that are provided by the state?*
- *What is the overlap/difference between the social welfare provisions provided by the state compared to the services provided by food banks?*
- *Why do people make use of the food bank?*
- *Which social welfare services provided by the state are (not) used by food bank clients, and why (not)?*

The word 'choose' in the central question might appear naive at first sight. However, its baseline does justice to and fits in with existing governmental policies that have the cult of individual responsibility as its core (Van Oorschot, 1998: 1). The concepts of choice and individual responsibility, in relation to social welfare services, are characteristics of the activating welfare state. The latter concept has become an increasingly dominant concept in both Europe and the United States. The activating welfare state is a turn away from broad-based entitlements and automatic benefits, to a new enabling approach that is characterized by concepts as selective support based on behavior and income, active citizenship (responsibility and participation) and choice. (Gilbert, 2002). It has to become clear if food bank clients actually feel responsible for the use of social welfare provisions they are entitled to and if the use of certain provisions, including the food bank, is a deliberate and well-considered choice.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to find out *why* people make use of the food bank and if they do this *instead of* making use of alternative social welfare provisions provided by the state. By thoroughly studying the case of the increasing growth of food banks in the Netherlands insights will be gained in: 1) why food banks exist, and thereby also gathering knowledge about 2) why private initiatives exist, 3) why people choose a privately initiated social welfare provision instead of, or in combination with, state-run alternatives, and 4) how food bank clients experience the various forms of support (food bank versus state).

Terrain specification: mapping the field of food banks in the Netherlands

This research concerns food banks that are affiliated with the Food Bank Foundation Netherlands (SVN). The places where the food is actually handed out to people are called handout or distribution points. There are in total 47 food banks that operate under the banner of the Food Bank. In each city or municipality there are various handout points. An overview of the cities or municipalities where a central food bank is located, which is affiliated with the Food Bank, can be found in appendix 1.

This study will only focus on the handout points in Rotterdam. Rotterdam is part of the region of Rotterdam-Rijnmond. This region covers Rotterdam, Barendrecht, Capelle aan den IJssel, Binnenland, Krimpen aan den IJssel, Maassluis, Hoogvliet, Oud Beyerland, Schiedam, and Spijkenisse. In Rotterdam there are in total 48 handout points, from which many are somehow affiliated with a church or parish.

Chapter 2: Writing past, explaining present

In this chapter I will provide a brief history of private initiatives in the Netherlands in order to explain the relatively unique character of the food bank in relation to the existing ‘private’ initiatives in the Netherlands. This unique character might explain why people make use of the food bank. In the historical context, special attention will be paid to the field of poor relief and social work as these sectors are related to poverty (related) problems. Thirdly, I will deal with the dominant and alternative theories concerning the emergence and recent resurgence of private initiatives. It is often claimed that cut downs in government spending lead to a decrease in services provided by the state. It is then argued that people step out of the confines of the state to search for alternatives. This argument is debatable and therefore alternative theories on the emergence of private initiatives will be discussed as well so that a more complete picture of the use of the food bank and (non) use of state-run services emerges. The (minimal) existing literature on food bank clients in the Netherlands and previous research on non-take up of social welfare provisions will also be discussed. Thereby knowledge can be gained about the reasons for (not) making use of the food bank and state-run provisions.

§ 2.1 History of private initiatives in the Netherlands

Medieval times – 19th century

In medieval times the nonprofit sector was already apparent in many Western European countries. Congregations and churches carried out charitable activities. The institutional roots of the sector were provided by the guilds that provided solidarity schemes. During this time, the nonprofit sector depended predominantly on the generosity of wealthy individuals and churches. Fields in which these organizations were active were health care, poor relief and education. Sometimes these functions were combined. (Veldheer & Burger, 2001: 222). However, the role of the local governments was not insignificant. Israel (1995, in Veldheer & Burger, 1999: 7) stresses the important role of city authorities in the 17th and 18th century concerning poor relief. Town governments funded many charitable institutions. Local authorities were not only financially involved, but also in terms of administration and policymaking. It is important to realize that care arrangements were not only inspired by the Christian’s love of one’s neighbor. De Swaan (1988, in Veldheer & Burger, 1999: 7) has demonstrated that social control and economic motives were important reasons for the elite to organize the care for the needy and poor; it helped to create “a regional relief equilibrium”.

Isreal (1955, in Veldheer & Burger, 1999: 7) confirms this by saying that “economic necessity, bourgeois pride and competition between cities were just as important as charity, if not more so.” What is furthermore apparent in the period up till 1870 was the intertwining of city authorities with churches and private groups in both funding and sustaining welfare initiatives in the field of health care, poor relief and education. (Veldheer & Burger, 1999: 20). However, in the 19th century a debate arose concerning poor relief about the responsibility of the public and the state for the care for the weak. The Poor Act of 1854 laid down that individuals were first of all responsible themselves, then their families and relatives, then the church and last of all the state. (Burger & Dekker, 1997: 5).

1870-1945

Developments in various fields of non-profit activities differ, though there are certain similarities as well. The process of pillarization and the posture of the Dutch government are crucial for our understanding of the current size of the nonprofit sector. In the pillared society (from the second half of the nineteenth century until the 1960s) “the expansion of welfare state services such as education, health care, and welfare work took place along denominational lines” (Van Holthoon, 1988, in Veldheer & Burger, 2001: 226). In this context it is important to pay attention to the role of class struggles as well. In the period 1880-1900 the aristocrats (liberal, catholic and protestant) succeeded in delaying the set up of sanctioned social arrangements regulated by the state. They wanted to control financial support for workers and the poor. The resistance of the old order against modern social regulations was initially successful. Around the turn from the 19th to the 20th century the influence of workers and organizations of the self-employed grew and pressured by these groups, the aristocrats eventually aimed at a form of ‘sanctioned private initiative’³. (Hoogenboom, 2003: 268). Mainly in the field of education of the poor and various forms of culture, the bourgeois and middle class elite played an important role. This “bourgeois civilizing offensive” was an important force for the development of the non-profit sector. (Veldheer & Burger, 1999: 20). So within the pillared society class struggles were still visible.

During the period 1870-1945 initiatives gradually changed from being church-related towards being publicly funded initiatives. The role of the state became increasingly important. (Veldheer & Burger, 1999: 21) The state did not take over the delivery of services, but became financially more involved in poor relief and education and they set rules for those wanting to supply these services. However, the Poor Acts of 1854 and 1912 explicitly stated

³ Sanctioned private initiative (*gesanctioneerd particulier initiatief*) is a combination of private initiative and state coercion. The state steers, regulates and protects existing and new initiatives. (Hoogenboom, 2003: 111).

that poor relief is mainly the task of private groups, also in financial terms. (Van der Voort, 1994, in Burger et.al, 1997: 5). In the beginning of the 1930s the restrictive financial politics of Colijn threatened the existence of private initiatives. Whereas his precursors stimulated the emergence of private initiatives in the field of poor relief, Colijn cut down expenses and strictly regulated poor relief resulting in bureaucratization processes. The relationship between private initiatives and the poor slowly came to an end. Associations and foundations searched for a new role to be fulfilled: the task of social work. (Hoogenboom, 2003: 252).

1945-present

In the period from 1945 to the present the central government influence expanded markedly, extending across all areas of care and welfare. (Veldheer & Burger, 1999: 21). The summit of right-wing reform politics arose with the introduction of the Social Assistance Act (*Algemene Bijstandswet*) of 1962. This act replaced the Poor Relief Act of 1912 that made the private initiative responsible for poor relief. From the late 1920s the role of churches and private initiatives was slowly taken over by municipalities and the state, first financially but later on also in executive terms. The symbolic meaning of the Social Assistance Act was significant as it made the state responsible for the care of the poor and needy. (Hoogenboom, 2003: 276).

The process of de-pillarization⁴ led to declines in church visits and church membership, but it also meant that people did not stick that much to their pillarized group anymore. (Dekker & Ester, 1996, in Veldheer & Burger, 2001: 226). However, the strong linkage between the private, nonprofit sector and the Dutch state did not disappear with the process of de-pillarization. The expansion of the welfare state contributed to both the growth and decline of the pillarized structuring of society. The fact that the government publicly funded the activities of these pillarized organizations led first of all to a strengthening of the pillarized structure. However, public funding also meant these organizations became highly dependent on the government. As a result of this, the financial crises of the 1970s and 1980s had serious consequences for the confessional organizations as the crises led to cuts in public funding. (Aquina, 1988; Kramer, 1993, in Veldheer & Burger, 2001: 226). In this context, Aquina (1988) and Kramer (1993) argue that this led to mergers of various confessionals institutions. They stress that these organizations were still “unequivocally private and nonprofit: hardly ever did state agencies assume their functions” (in Veldheer & Burger, 2001: 226). This

⁴ De-pillarization was evident in the willing merger of the Dutch Catholic and socialist labor unions in the mid-1970s (the Protestant union chose the stay on its own), and even more significantly, in the combination of the long-antagonistic Catholic and the two Protestant parties into the Christian Democratic Party in 1980. (Burger & Veldheer, 2001: 226).

implies that whether or not the state ‘assumes’ the function and role of private initiatives determines the true private and nonprofit character. In my opinion, this line of thinking is too much based on the idea that the existence of private initiatives is predominantly related to the demise of the welfare state. It is shortsighted to define something as a private initiative simply because the activities are not carried out by the state. It might be true that the state did not carry out that specific function itself, but as the state still subsidized a great part of the activities, it is debatable if we can still talk about ‘private’ initiatives.

Mainly as a result of the high costs of the welfare state in the 1970s, some important changes can be detected in governmental policies in the 1980s and 1990s. These changes included cuts in public expenditure, slimming-down the civil service, territorial and functional decentralization, privatization, and deregulation. As nonprofit organizations received less state support, they had to look for other sources of income. Market activities became an important source of revenues, but it also meant that nonprofits had to work more professional. The processes of commercialization and professionalization are often seen as the most important consequences of changing government policies. (SCP, 1989, in Veldheer & Burger, 2001: 227). The overall result is that the nature and culture of the nonprofit sector changes.

Size and scope Dutch non-profit sector debatable

Sometimes it is being argued that in the past century the Dutch nonprofit sector grew enormously. (e.g. Burger & Veldheer, 2001: 221). However, many of these initiatives are still a governmental arm, executing governmental policies. This study focuses on the resurgence of civil society private initiatives. These type of private initiatives differ a lot from private initiatives as they were known at the beginning of the twentieth century and the ones that we can still recognize in today’s society as implementers of government policies.

Burger (1999) argues that the Dutch nonprofit sector is not only large in relation to the entire Dutch economy, but that “it is also very large relative to its counterparts elsewhere in Western-Europe and world-wide” (Burger et.al. 1999: 149). In relative terms, Burger argues, the Netherlands has the largest nonprofit sector worldwide. (1999: 150-151). However, this does not mean that we are talking about ‘true private initiatives’ here. The way Burger puts it here, sounds as if the Netherlands has a very large civil society. The question is, can we still talk about the nonprofit sector in the Netherlands as an expression of civil society actions?

Over the course of the 20th century the role of the Dutch government altered the ‘old’ forms of

private initiative, as public payments became the major source of income for private initiative organizations. Herewith, the nonprofit sector has grown tremendously. (Burger et.al, 1999, Burger & Veldheer, 2001). Due to these developments, I believe the following division can be made within the nonprofit sector: 1) the private initiative as an operating/implementation arm of government policies (which I call public PIs), and 2) private initiatives as organization set up by civil society acting (relatively) independently from the government (which I call civil society PIs).

The fact that private nonprofit organizations deliver many collectively financed services is a typical feature of the Dutch welfare state. In the delivering of educational, health care, welfare work and social security the direct role of the state is minimal. Health care and welfare work are dominated by private nonprofit organizations in terms of service provision. However, in welfare work the financial role of the state is significant. Private nonprofit and employer's and employees' organizations take care of the delivery and administration of many welfare state provisions, but the financial sources come from compulsory fees of employers and employees or directly from the government. (Burger & Dekker, 1997: 3-4).

It becomes clear that in the Netherlands the nonprofit sector is dominated by collectively organized solidarity over private charity. In a way one can speak of *path dependency*: once a country has designed its care and welfare system in a particular way, it is likely that later on when new arrangements are set up, these arrangements are build on the same premises. (Hoogenboom, 2003: 271). Burger has demonstrated that there is a close, cooperative relationship between the state and crucial parts of the nonprofit sector; relationships that have emerged in the Dutch society in the sixteenth century with the care of the weak. (Burger et.al, 1999: 155 and Veldheer & Burger, 1999: 7). Research conducted by Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier (2000) demonstrates that the major sources of income for nonprofit organizations in the 22 countries they studied are fees and public support, rather than philanthropy. (Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier, 2000: 5).

Due to the fact that it is extremely hard to retrieve the 'true' private character of nonprofit organizations, it is very difficult to determine the exact size and scope of the field of private initiatives in the Netherlands. A different definition of private initiative or nonprofit sector means a different size and scope of this phenomenon as well. Due to the continuing privatization, professionalization, marketisation and reorganizations within the nonprofit

sector in the 1990s, it has become even harder to recognize the ‘true’ private character of the Dutch nonprofit sector. A broad field of private, but predominantly public funded nonprofits resulted from the “ongoing processes of professionalization and deconfessionalization of the institutions of the old “PI” (Burger & Dekker, 1997: 25). Burger and Dekker (1997: 25) also point to the increasing independence of former state agencies as a reason for the expansion of PIs. In my opinion it is misleading to talk about ‘private’ initiatives in that context since the largest part of these PIs (almost 60 percent) derives its revenues from the public sector. Another 38.8 percent is retrieved from fees and charges and only 2.7 percent has philanthropy as source of nonprofit revenue. (Burger et.al., 1999).

The process of convergence, which refers to preference in policy making for contractual relationships between the state and other organizations, erases the borders between public and nonprofit sector even further. Interestingly, whereas in 1997 Burger pointed out the possible convergence towards the public sector, in 2001 Burger drew attention to the possible convergence with the market sector. In 2001 (243) Burger and Veldheer argued that due to the introduction of market principles in the nonprofit sector, it would be more difficult to discern the differences between nonprofit organizations and commercial, for-profit organizations. They even argued that certain types of initiatives would completely move into the commercial sector. However, signs are looming that new private initiatives have emerged that are not or minimally linked to the commercial sector and the government. Examples of this are food banks, neighbourhood fathers in large cities, and churches taking care of illegal asylum seekers. The literature demonstrates that the food bank seems to be a relatively unique case as it is non-state and non-market, unlike most Dutch non-profit organizations.

§ 2.2 To be defined: ‘private initiative’

Internationally, there are a wide variety of other terms in use for describing the field of nonprofit organisations; these include the third sector, the voluntary sector, and the independent sector, and each has its own descriptions and prototype organisations. (SCP, 2001). In order to be able to make it possible to compare countries, a common description was needed: nonprofit sector. In the Netherlands though, the concept of a unitary nonprofit sector has always been problematic. In the Netherlands nonprofit organizations are traditionally referred to as “societal midfield” or “private initiative” (Burger et.al, 1999: 145).⁵ These decisions about what constitutes private initiative are debatable and arbitrary. However, this

⁵ From this point I will refer to the phenomenon of food banks as a “private initiative”, however, since this term is internationally often referred to as “nonprofit sector”, I might refer to “private initiatives” as the “nonprofit sector” when citing authors or during theoretical discussions. 19

does not mean that the definition is unnecessarily vague; it points out that the borders of the private initiative itself are unclear. Private initiatives are really about civil society in the sense that citizens play a leading role in initiating these initiatives. (SCP, Willink, 2002: 34). However, this makes the discussion about civil society (which some people believe to be interchangeable with the concept of private initiative) and the intertwining of the nonprofit sector with the public sector even more confusing. “Nowadays, a clear distinction has to be made between civil society, defined as a compilation of voluntary associations with a certain corporate social goal – indeed based on citizenship, corporate responsibility and private initiative – and the non profit sector; being an anthology of private organizations who do not strive for profit but that are not necessarily based on social deeds”. (SCP, Kreuger, 2002: 83-84). To some extent the concepts overlap, but they cannot be simply equated. The government is of course not part of the nonprofit sector, but it has become clear that in modern society the government is often engaged in the nonprofit sector. As Kreuger points out: “The state subsidizes, influences, steers, and regulates, but it is very hard to determine uncontroversial if a certain organization, as a result of governmental dependency, cannot be counted as a civil society organization” (SCP, 2002: 83-84).

This means it is also difficult to make a distinction between what I referred to as ‘public PIs’ and ‘civil society PIs’. The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (1995) shows that the Dutch nonprofit sector is mainly (90 percent) concentrated in fields that are most heavily subsidized: education, care and welfare. This suggests that the existence of the Dutch nonprofit sector is heavily dependent on state subsidies; this makes it hard to see the nonprofit sector as an expression of corporate responsibility, private initiative and citizenship.

This study will focus on initiatives that are an expression of corporate responsibility, private initiative, and citizenship. The food bank is such an initiative. This study focuses on the private initiatives in the field of social care and welfare provision. Activities may involve the expenditure of money, effort and time, but welfare is the objective of such expenditure; it is always non-profit. This does not mean that these types of organizations are not allowed to exploit market activities in order to earn money to finance their activities to realize the organizational objectives. Private initiatives do not involve relations between individuals or within families, kin groups or neighborhoods. Private initiatives aim to serve the common good. Moreover, private initiatives receive no state subsidies. For the purpose of this thesis I

believe that, ideally, *a private initiative is completely non-state, self-governing and carries out charitable activities of a structured, continuous and organized kind within society.*

§ 2.3 The curious persistence and recent resurgence of the private initiative

Now that insights have been gained in the history of the nonprofit sector in the Netherlands it is required to focus on theories that deal with the resurgence of the private initiatives as these theories help us in answering the question why people make use of the food bank. By illuminating the roles private initiatives fulfil possible explanations for the great attraction for the food bank appear.

The food bank: complementing or substituting state-run provisions?

Private initiatives fulfill certain functions and roles. Anheier and Daly (2007) describe the roles philanthropic foundations play in modern society. According to them, philanthropic foundations are voluntary institutions or organizations that assign private resources at the benefit of the public. Interestingly, they also recognize that these organizations do not merely “convert private funds to public use” (2007: 3). They make a distinction between individual giving to religious and charitable causes and institutions that support a recognized public purpose by means of a “regulated and institutionalized form of donating, managing, expending and distributing private resources” (2007: 3).

This description of philanthropic foundations chimes with the definition of private initiatives as developed in paragraph 2.2. The roles philanthropic foundations fulfill as set out by Anheier and Daly can therefore be applied to the concept of private initiatives as well. According to Anheier and Daly (2007: 13-14) these roles are: 1) *Complementarity*: private initiatives tend to manifest itself as a ‘gap-filler’ in the domains struck by public budget constraints. 2) *Substitutions*: private initiatives take on functions otherwise or previously supplied by the state. This type of role is a characteristic of what I called the ‘public PI’ as private initiatives often have become providers of public and quasi-public goods. The state has out-sourced various tasks but still pays for executing these activities. 3) *Redistributive role*: private initiatives engage in, and promote, the redistribution of economic resources from higher – to lower-income groups. 4) *Social and policy change*: private initiatives promote structural change and stimulate the recognition of new needs and they empower those excluded by society. This change can be either progressive (change status quo) or

conservative (opposing to change and preserve status quo). 5) *Promotion of pluralism*: the promotion of diversity in general.

In their research of the nonprofit sector among 22 countries Salamon, Hems and Chinnock (2000: 15, 16) discovered the following roles of the nonprofit sector, starting with what they believed the most contributive functions: 1) *the service role*: nonprofit organizations provide collective-type goods and services. In some Central and Eastern European countries it was believed that the role of nonprofits did not differ sharply from the roles of the state. A larger number of countries though, identified a state completing or supplementing role for the nonprofit sector. 2) *The innovation role*: two types of innovation were distinguished: 1) to demonstrate new approaches to social problems, and 2) to address previously unmet or unsatisfied needs and demands. 3) *The advocacy, expressive and community-building role*: evidence for these roles was less compelling than for those roles mentioned before. The involvement of nonprofits in these roles is considerably less developed. However, people expected nonprofit organizations to contribute to the domains of advocacy, expression and community building. Salamon, Hems, and Chinnock (2007: 25) conclude that nonprofits are performing various roles and state they are doing this with fewer drawbacks than people often assume. This “plus” that nonprofit organizations provide is reflected in their “added flexibility, responsiveness, and innovativeness”.

Interestingly, the last description implicitly presumes that private initiatives never emerge as an *alternative* for social welfare provisions provided by the government. They point to the *completing* or *supplementing* role, but not to the *substituting* role. This would mean that food bank clients make use of the food bank as a *supplement* to state-run provisions. This raises the question if food bank clients think state help is insufficient. If not, there have to be other reasons why people make use of the food bank. Anheier and Daly contrarily point out that private initiatives take on functions ‘otherwise’ provided by the state. However, it is not totally clear what they exactly mean with ‘otherwise’. It could refer to ‘otherwise’ as in fulfilling tasks ‘that could also be fulfilled by alternative state provisions’. In this case there are for example various ways to assure a minimum level of income: 1) by means of state support, or 2) by means of private initiative support. It could also refer to ‘otherwise’ as in ‘services that were previously funded and implemented by the state but now they are only funded by the state but implemented by private initiatives’. This shows more knowledge is

needed on the roles private initiatives fulfill in domains where services with same underlying idea, for example securing the fulfillment of basic needs (such as the food bank compared to certain state-run provisions), are provided by both the government and private initiative organizations.

Cuts downs in government spending *the cause of (re)emergence private initiatives?*

Many scholars have sought to explain the curious persistence, and recent resurgence, of the private initiative. An understanding of how this happened provides insights in why the food bank keeps growing and how the increasing popularity can be explained. It sounds plausible that the *use* of the food bank is related to the *unavailability* of state-run provisions. So, clients make use of the food bank due to cut downs in government spending. Or is this assumption shortsighted? In this line of thinking Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier (2000) pose three different theoretical approaches to explain the persistence and recent resurgence of the nonprofit sector: 1) the heterogeneity theory, 2) the interdependence theory, and 3) the social origins theory, to explain the emergence and persistence of the nonprofit sector.

According to the heterogeneity or market failure/government failure theory, the market has an inherent limitation in producing public goods. Nonprofit organizations therefore function to meet the unsatisfied demand for collective goods left behind as a result of failures of both the market and the state. Interestingly, in their data no relationship could be found between heterogeneity and the size of the nonprofit sector. Also, it appeared that the nonprofit sector is larger in countries with generous government spending, hereby contradicting the hypothesis predicted by the market/government failure theory. Moreover, there appeared to be a negative relationship between the level of private support of the nonprofit sector and the size of the sector. Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier concluded that the main idea of this theory, that nonprofits fill in for an absent state or inherently limited market, turned out to be wrong. (2000: 7). According to the interdependence theory one could speak of (next to market and government failure) voluntary failure as well. Nonprofit organizations have difficulties in being truly self-reliant. As a result, tied relationships emerge between nonprofits and the government. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between the actual level of governmental support of the nonprofit sector and the actual size of this sector. It turned out that this variable alone explains almost 50 percent of the cross-national variance in the size of the nonprofit sector. This shows the substantial power of the

interdependence theory. (Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier, 2000: 12).

The interdependence theory has substantial power, however, it does not specify under which conditions those relationships between the state and the nonprofit sector emerge. Contrarily, the social origins approach unambiguously recognized the nonprofits' "embeddedness in broader social, political, and economic processes" (Seibel, 1990, in Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier, 2000: 2). The social origins theory approaches the nonprofit sector "as an integral part of a social system whose role and scale is a byproduct of a complex set of historical forces" (Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier, 2000: 21). This means that the different character and structure of social forces in a particular country also imply differences in the size, shape, and character of the nonprofit sector in that particular country. Based on the theory of Esping-Andersen, which recognized different types of welfare states, Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier (2000: 16) developed a model that could explain the differences in nonprofits in various countries.

Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier (2007) conclude that the nonprofit sector is larger in countries with generous government spending. And thus, they argue, the idea that nonprofits fill in for an absent state or inherently limited market, turns out to be wrong. However, this conclusion needs some rethinking as it presumes causality; it assumes that the nonprofit sector is small in countries with low government spending and large in countries with high government spending. The conclusion is fairly shortsighted as it discounts the possibility that government spending could also be *one of the causes* for either a small or large nonprofit sector, meaning there are more factors which affect the size of the nonprofit sector. Moreover, the way of thinking of Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier shows that the nonprofit sector, as they define it, is highly interrelated with the government. In that sense I suppose their study focuses on a not so interesting part of nonprofit organizations, namely those organizations heavily subsidized and operative as an executing arm of governmental policies. Their study shows a change in the implementation of government policies (a focus on privatization and contractualization) rather than actually providing information about the changes we see in the field of initiatives that are initiated by civil society and that are *real* complementations to or substitution of government policies instead of being part of it.

Additionally, I have my doubts if these theories can explain the emergence of food banks in the Netherlands. The theorists did not make any reference towards either the supply or

demand driven character of non-profits. They relate the size of the non-profit sector to government spending, but they do not state if new initiatives emerge because the initiators feel a need to start a new type of organization or because there is an increasing demand for new types of organizations. I am aware of the fact that this is hard to retrieve. However, I do believe it to be worthwhile to at least consider the character of initiation as it is an important explanatory element in discussing the (re)surgence of private initiatives. Moreover, these theories leave changing norms and values within a society aside. Also, they do not refer to the *organizational* and *administrational* character of the welfare state; they merely point to public spending within the various types of welfare states. Moreover, the level of government spending does not seem to explain how people *experience* services with similar purposes provided by either the state or private initiatives.

From rationalization towards reflexivization

Existing literature often stresses the importance of the level of government spending when the persistence and recent resurgence of private initiatives is concerned. However, the above literature shows these theories are not flawless. Moreover, the theory on the level of government spending was insufficient in order to answer the question about why people make use of the food bank. In this section a look will be taken at alternative explanations: the complexities of modern society; living in the world risk society. (Beck, 2002; 2006). These possible explanations are not discussed because they are oft mentioned in nonprofit sector literature (because they are not!), but because there are reasons to believe they can at least partly explain the growing usage of the food bank.

The way institutions in the Netherlands are organized may play a role in this context. Weber's image of large state bureaucracies is that of ones that are created in order to organize people and the world around them. Weber introduced the idea of the "iron cage" that was, he said, a result of both the tendencies of modern bureaucracies as well as modern individuals. "Both phenomena are the outcome of the same process of "modernization", which is to Weber primarily a process of "rationalization" – the institutionalization of goal-oriented rationality" (Hoogenboom & Ossewaarde, 2005: 601). The behavior of individuals can be shaped collectively through the modern bureaucratic institutions that are created on the basis of goal-oriented rationality. The result was that people became "prisoners" of modernity. The reason why modern man accepted dominance of modern bureaucracies was because they believed in the legitimacy of the modern bureaucracy. (Hoogenboom & Ossewaarde, 2005: 602).

Interestingly, the large state bureaucracies that were once created to deal with risks present in society appear to show signs of failure. Both Beck and Giddens argue that the process of rationalization turns into a process of reflexivization. They state that in the second or late modernity the legitimacy of the institutions and organizations of modern society are being challenged; it is no longer taken for granted. These institutions are not only large state bureaucracies but also the nation-state, science and technology. Beck refers to this period of late modernity as a “risk society”. He furthermore argues that “the door of the iron cage of modernity is opening up” (Beck, 2000: 222) and argues that in the late modern society is reflexivized. (Beck, 2002; 2006). Herewith he refers to the fact that modern man reflex on the disorganization and incoherence that have resulted from “the unforeseen consequences of modern institutions” (Delanty, 1999, in Hoogenboom & Ossewaarde, 2005: 605). Also Giddens argues that rational, goal-oriented bureaucracies are being replaced by reflexivity. The “legitimacy crises” of bureaucracies mean the goal-oriented rationality is eroded and different rationalities are competing. According to Beck and Giddens the process of reflexivization, “the opening up of the iron cage, will result in a chaotic and disordered society” (in Hoogenboom & Ossewaarde, 2005: 612). Modern state bureaucracies, the rules they were characterized by and the power in the hands of officials who represented the bureaucracies, are not experienced as legitimate anymore. This leads to a weakening and destabilization of bonds between bureaucratic institutions and individuals. This may have two consequences that might occur simultaneous: 1) an increase in supply of services provided by non-state organizations and 2) an increase in demand for non-state, private services.

As state bureaucracies show signs of failure, a relocation of the implementation of government policies is taking place. Activities that were formerly carried out by the nation-state or centralized trade unions have been relocated onto both the private as well as the charitable sector. According to Lash state bureaucracies are in crises: “(F)unctions which were once taking place at the interface of institution and individual in the role are now taking place much more intensively and closer to the individual. (...) There has been a move toward complexity, indeed towards “chaos” (in Beck, 2002: x-xi).

In the realm of the complexity of modern society individuals have to face nowadays, Beck states: “Opportunities, dangers, biographical uncertainties that were earlier predefined within the family association, the village community, or by recourse to the rules of social estates or

classes, must now be perceived, interpreted, decided and processed by individuals themselves” (2002: 4). Through various developments such as the focus on (paid) work, rehabilitation and responsibility, modern society puts new demands and controls on individuals. “One has to win, know how to assert oneself in the competition for limited resources – and not only once, but day after day” (Beck, 2002: 2-3). These new tendencies, partly created by the state to compensate for the failures of the modern state bureaucracy characterized by rules and regulations, stresses the individuals’ responsibility. Interestingly, Beck mentions the concept of “sub-politics”; new norms, values and commitments that “rule out the institutionalization of granted scripts, impersonal transcriptions, and classifications” (Beck, 1992, in Hoogenboom & Ossewaarde, 2005: 607). With this concept he refers to new institutions and actors that rise up against or avoid state bureaucracies. These ideas of Beck and Giddens raise the question if a new kind of social tapestry of new private initiatives is developing that replace the bureaucratic state machinery. This would imply that new forms of private initiatives are supply-driven. In that sense the rise of private initiatives can be seen as a revitalization movement that is focused on constructing social institutions that are more satisfying than previous or existing social institutions. (Wallace, 1959). Reynolds (1976: 628) affirms this idea by saying that certain play groups start to an exploratory and innovative search for systems of meanings in times of a quickly changing environment where “institutionalized behavior proves unrewarding and established constraints weaken.”

The weakening and destabilization of bonds between bureaucratic institutions and individuals could mean that people are looking for new types of social bonds because in some way the legitimacy of the state is being questioned. If it is true what Giddens has argued, namely that rational, goal-oriented bureaucracies are being replaced by reflexivity, it means a social transformation is taking place as individuals and the private sector have increasingly greater responsibility. Hearn (1980: 300) argued that people sometimes respond to serious social changes “by meaningfully reaffirming social bonds”. The change in social life can disrupt the collective *nomos* severely. In this perspective Fritz (1961, in Hearn, 1980: 302) mentions that people have the ability to see that others “are basically like themselves”. Constructive responsive to societal breakdown is what Turner (1969, in Hearn, 1980: 303) refers to as “*communitas*”. *Communitas* during liminal stages and minimizes uncertainty. (Hearn, 1980: 303). This could mean that individuals are *looking* for new social bonds, but it can also mean that the private sector responds to this societal change by initiating arrangements outside the

confines of the state. In the case of the food bank, the initiators may be believed there to be a need to set up an arrangement that is fully non-state (for different reasons) and clients may experience help from the state as too complex. This situation would explain on the one hand why people make use of the food bank (a combination of supply and demand driven) and also why certain clients do not make use of particular state-run provisions.

In this context it is worthwhile to take a look at some tensions that are observed in the modern welfare state between the goals of social security systems (based on social-democratic premises) and the way these goals are implemented (based on liberal conceptions). “This ideological contradiction is believed to lead in practice to very detailed legal rules, to in-depth inquiries into the private lives of claimants, both intended to separate ‘deserving’ from ‘undeserving’ claimants, and to bureaucratic and passive administration.” (Van Oorschot, 1991: 16). This can eventually lead to the phenomenon of non-take up of social welfare provisions. Also Ringling (1981, in Van Oorschot, 1991: 17) points to the “passivity of the administration”. Social policy measures based on the conception of citizens as fully rational beings are likely to suffer from the ineffectiveness of the state. “Non-take up implies ineffectiveness and injustice in the implementation of a social security scheme.” (Van Oorschot, 1991: 16). As a result, it can even be a factor that results in people experiencing poverty. This means that it is possible that the increasing popularity of the food bank is related to the non-take up of social welfare provisions. In that case it can be assumed people that are looking for new forms of help, not provided by the state.

§ 2.4 Profile of food bank clients

In the media, a lot has been written and displayed about food banks recently. Worldwide there has been published about food banks as well. However, many (scientific) studies have a national or local character which makes it not very useful in order to gain knowledge about Dutch food bank clients as the information about food bank clients appears to be context-bounded (culture, type of (welfare) state, level of poverty). Unfortunately, in many studies in the Netherlands only a small number of informants (<15) is involved, or food bank clients have not been interviewed face-to-face but they have filled out a survey or information about them is merely retrieved through social workers and/or food bank volunteers. Moreover, present studies merely present descriptive data. Little is known about the actual motivations of people to make use of the food bank and about how they perceive help provided by the

food bank compared to state-run support.

Research conducted by Regioplan (2006) on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment provided some insights in the profile of the food bank client. The study mentioned several reasons why a certain group of people has to live below the social minimum. The first reason is the Linking Act. People who are in the Netherlands illegally do not have the right to social security. Secondly, food bank clients have debt problems. It gets very difficult to get by on social benefits if people have to pay off debts with the received social security payment, especially if people do not participate in debt guidance but if they have to pay off their debts directly to (commercial) creditors. Another reason was that some people do not have an income for a certain period of time because their application for social security payment is still running. Others face a (sudden) change in their living situation. People whose living situation suddenly changes face difficulties when trying to adapt their spending pattern to this new situation. Reasons for a sudden change in people's living situation can be: unemployment, divorce, omitted WAO benefits, detention breadwinner et cetera. The last reason brought up by Regioplan (2006) was that respondents often indicated that often food bank clients have multiple problems. Frequently it concerns an accumulation of unemployment, psychosocial symptoms, and debts. Part of the food bank clients appears to face difficulties in surviving in the complex world we live in nowadays. The report did not specify what was actually meant by this 'complex world'.

It appeared that for 72 percent of food bank clients social benefits are their main source of income, of which the WWB-benefit (Work and Social Assistance Act) appears most often. 83 percent of the respondents has debts, of which two-third (66 percent) indicates their debts are more than € 5.000, - in total. 63 percent makes use of Health Care Allowance, 41 percent of Child Benefits and 54 percent of Rent Allowance. No more than 27 percent makes use of Special Assistance and only 25 percent of pardon community taxes. 36 percent of food bank clients make use of debt guidance services and only 13 percent of food bank clients participate in reintegration projects. (Regioplan, 2006). But why does only 36 percent make use of debt guidance services while 83 percent has debts? And how come 27 percent makes use of Special Assistance while most clients are social benefits? There can be various explanations: It could be that they do not make use of these services because they are not entitled to it. It could also be that people *choose* not to make use of certain public services for whatever reason. A last explanation could be that they do not know what services they are

entitled to or can make use of, so they are not aware of the supply of social welfare services.

The research by Regioplan (2006) asked clients about how they came by before they went to the food bank. Some clients said they would save on quality of life, meaning they went to a cheaper supermarket or did not eat fish or meat. Some even skipped meals. Others made use of help provided by family and friends. Many people let their debts increase in order to survive. Unfortunately, this research was based on a questionnaire with clients. This means clients had to choose between answers made up by the researchers. As a result, it is questionable if this research provides real insights in the world of the food bank client.

Many people wonder whether or not food bank clients are already ‘in the picture’ among social workers or other forms of social care and welfare services. Regioplan (2006) concluded that a large part of the clients is already in contact with for example the GGZ, debt guidance, or social work. These organizations register the client for food bank support. Another group, mainly elderly people and illegal immigrants, has been put forward by the church. They are not in contact with other social welfare services. A third group is referred to as ‘care avoiders’. These people do receive a food package but do not make use of other social welfare services such debt guidance services or social work. These last two groups constitute the smallest part of the food bank clients. These people are however an utterly interesting group as they deviate from the traditional food bank client characteristics.

§ 2.5 Non-take-up of social welfare provisions

The high non-take-up of social welfare services among food bank clients, as it appeared from the research by Regioplan (2006), has led to a lot of attention from society, politicians and the media. The non-take-up of social welfare provisions is known to be a relatively frequent phenomenon according a report by the SCP (2007b: 140). Research on non-use of provisions is not new. One of the first to do research on non-use was Kerr (1983). Kerr (1983, in SCP, 2007b: 21) designed the so-called ‘threshold model’ which encompassed six thresholds that had to be passed before people would claim a particular welfare provision: 1) perceived need, 2) basic knowledge, 3) perceived eligibility, 4) perceived utility of the benefit, 5) a positive net balance of the beliefs and feelings with regard to the (expected) procedural and social outcomes of claiming, 6) perceived stability of the individual’s socio-economic situation.

Kerr observed that non-users could be divided in two groups: 1) ‘deciders’ (those who

deliberately do not make use of a provision), 2) ‘non-deciders’ (those who do not weigh pros and cons). In 1982 Ritchie and Mathews also developed a model considering causes of non-use. According to their model there are two barriers: 1) subjective need and 2) provision is regarded as a solution for solving current problems. The rest of the decision-making process is like a “trade-off”: positive (perceived benefit of additional income and perceived extent of security that claim will be granted) and negative (effort and fear of rejection) factors decide whether a person claims a certain provision. Ideas about receiving these forms of support and identification with the providers can work out either positive or negative. (SCP, 2007b: 23-24). Economists have a somewhat different approach. They believe that behavior – so also non-use – can be seen as the result of cost-benefit analysis. The benefit is extra income and costs are psychological and social consequences, transaction costs (bureaucratic red tape, travel costs) and gaining knowledge. (SCP, 2007b: 25).

Blank and Ruggles (1996, in SCP, 2007b: 27) adapted and nuanced this traditional economical model. They concluded that there are two types of eligible persons: 1) a relatively deprived group with low income expectations for the future who almost immediately and on a long-term basis make use of social welfare provisions and 2) a less deprived group who – usually correctly – expects an increase in income on the short run and therefore does not claim a certain provision. Currie (2003, in SCP, 2007b: 28) argued that from recent research literature it could be concluded that the social environment of a potential eligible person plays an important role if the reduction of ‘costs’ is concerned. It was argued that members of a social network can inform each other about provisions but it could also be the case that a person feels less stigmatized when he recognizes that other people in his social network also make use of certain benefits.

Van Oorschot (1994, in SCP, 2007b: 30) stated that this costs and benefits analysis is only applicable to those who know a provision exists. If people do not know it exists or if people are convinced they are not entitled to a certain provision, there is a real threshold for claiming a provision. It has to be recognized though that factors such as ‘basic knowledge’ and ‘perceived right of eligibility’ will play a less important role in the decision-making process on use and non-use when the provision is granted (semi) automatically. According to Van Oorschot the most important reason for non-use of social welfare provisions is that people are not aware of its existence. Non-users who were aware were stopped by the idea that they were not eligible. He did not find evidence that negative ideas about benefits-dependency or fear of

stigmatization led to major thresholds. Other procedural aspects such the complexity of application papers did appear to play a role. (Van Oorschot, 1994: 248-249).

A more recent study by the SCP (2007b) explored the non-use of housing benefits (now replaced by rent allowance), Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (Wtos), the local taxes exemption scheme, supplementary assistance and long-term minimum-income allowance. “Subjectively perceived need for a provision and the anticipated transaction costs are the main factors influencing people’s claim behavior” (SCP, 2007b: 147). Interestingly, social and psychological consequences played a rather limited role. In means-tested provisions a certain degree in non-use appears: non-use because the process is too complex or cumbersome, especially when the amount they will receive is relatively small.

Conclusion

The literature study demonstrates that the Dutch nonprofit sector is dominated by collectively organized solidarity over private charity. This means the food bank, as a completely non-state organization, has a relatively unique character. Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier (2007) concluded that the idea that nonprofits fill in for an absent state turns out to be wrong. It is debatable though if the idea that a high level of government spending is related to a large nonprofit sector is right as Salamon et. al. focused on what I called public private initiatives (PI). It can be concluded that for the emergence of public PI’s this theory is applicable, but that for the success of the food bank one has to look at alternative explanations such as the organizational aspects of the welfare state. Activities that were formerly carried out by the nation-state have been relocated onto both the private and charitable sector. It seems likely that with the food bank a new kind of social tapestry developed that bypasses the bureaucratic state machinery because it has an inherently non-state with a voluntary nature. This would (partly) explain why people *do* make use of the food bank, but not of certain state-run provisions. It appears that the most important factors that determine the (non)-use of provisions are knowledge about the provision, subjective need, perceived eligibility, perceived utility of the benefit and the outcome of the net balance of the beliefs and feelings with regard to the (expected) procedural and social outcomes of claiming. It is not clear however, if these are also the most important factors for food bank clients if the (non) use of the food bank and state-run provisions is concerned. It is plausible that there are reasons to believe that the scores on these factors differ for the food bank compared to state-run services.

Chapter 3: Methodology

§ 3.1 Methods

In order to answer the central research question I made use of qualitative research methods. In this thesis there has been a close relation between collecting and analyzing the data and eventually developing a typology of food bank clients. This typology is based on the data collected through in-depth interviews with both food bank clients themselves and other informants such as social workers and client managers of SoZaWe. With this explorative study I investigate the *why* and *how* of the decision-making process of food bank clients.

§ 3.2 Selection criteria

Selection distribution points and food bank clients

The Food Bank (SVN) provided me with a list of all the 48 handout points in Rotterdam and their contact details. This study only deals with clients from various handout points in Rotterdam. Even though I focus on one city I do believe this research reveals interesting and relevant conclusions that apply to other, though similar, municipalities or neighbourhoods as well because the typology (chapter 6) of food bank clients enabled me to take out the results of this unique context in order to theoretically generalize the results to similar locations. It may be true though that in a different neighbourhood a certain type of client is more prevalent than in another neighbourhood. It is also possible that in a city or neighbourhood with a very different number of inhabitants and a very different composition of the population a type of client appears (for example a small village in the province of Groningen) that is not covered in my typology. Though in general I believe the food bank client typology has the ability to be applied in different types of neighbourhoods and municipalities because the factors on which the typology is based can be applied in different contexts.

In consultation with the Food Bank handout points were selected on the basis of their location. It was being assumed that the type of food bank client differs per handout point. According to the Food Bank it is likely that the location of a handout point is a marker for the type of client. Figure 3.1 in appendix 2 demonstrates how sub-municipalities differ on certain variables.

I am interested in finding out why (not) people make use of the food bank and state-run provisions. In each context, or based on different characteristics, people can have different

experiences about the food bank (Regioplan, 2006) and state-run provisions (Van Oorschot, 1994; SCP, 2007b). Therefore, when selecting the handout points and food bank clients, I made a distinction between two types of neighbourhoods: 1) socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and 2) socio-economically advantaged neighbourhoods. According to the facts in figure 3.1 (appendix 2), Charlois and Feijenoord exemplify the first type of neighbourhood and Prins Alexander and Kralingen-Crooswijk the other type. The handout points I volunteered at for two or three weeks for three hours a week (so in total I volunteered nine times) are: 1) Charlois: Bethelkerk, 2) Feijenoord: Maranathakerk, 3) Prins Alexander: Ommoord/Zevenkamp, 4) Kralingen-Crooswijk: Wijkpastoraat Crooswijk. ‘Unfortunately’ it turned out that the handout point Kralingen-Crooswijk was located in one of the poorer parts of the neighbourhood, so the initial idea that clients from this handout point exemplified people from a socio-economic advantaged area did not apply. As a result I have mostly interviewed people from low socio-economic areas. The *location* in the neighbourhood is thus very determining for type of area; maybe even more determining than the neighbourhood itself. This is comprehensible as most handout points are located in poorer parts of the neighbourhood. For example Hilleegersberg, a predominantly rich neighbourhood in Rotterdam, does not have a handout point.

In terms of clients I tried to select those who are a representation of the total group of food bank clients. This was not easy as there was not much data to compare to except the research by Regioplan (2006). According to Regioplan the total group is: 40 percent singles, 20 percent married/living together, 45 percent single parent families, 25 percent aged group < 30, aged 30-50 years old 60 percent, 20 percent of 50+, 50 percent people with children, 50 percent people without children, 35 percent male, 65 percent female, 50 percent Dutch ethnicity, 50 percent non-Dutch ethnicity, 68 percent no/low education⁶, 21 percent middle-high education⁷, and 10 percent high educated⁸. In general my findings correspond these numbers although I had interviewed relatively a lot of allochthonous people, relatively many woman and fewer younger people. I got the impression that women, older people, and to a lesser extent allochthonous people, were overrepresented among food bank clients. One has to remember that in my research 37 clients were interviewed, which makes it not useful to express data in percentages.

⁶ No education, primary education, pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO).

⁷ Secondary vocational education (MBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO), pre-university education (VWO/gymnasium).

⁸ Higher professional education (HBO), university.

It might strike that all of the handout points are related to a church. The Food Bank has told me that most of the handout points are affiliated with a church. In that sense the Food Bank is a *new* type of private initiative whereas the hand-out points can be seen *old* type of private initiative as the churches have historic confessional roots in carrying out charitable activities. I do not believe this to influence the type of clients I met heavily as people in principal do not have the choice to go to a specific handout point. Clients are registered externally, through for example social work. Then the Food Bank refers them to a certain handout point in their neighbourhood. (Regioplan, 2006, Food Bank, 2008). Thus, people cannot directly apply for a package themselves. Nonetheless, I included the topic of religion in the interview that enabled me to find out if religion has played a role in the decision to visit the food bank. It turned out that only very few clients went to church or the mosque on a regular basis. Many of them did believe in God but did not practice their religion.

As the basis for the interviews with both the clients themselves as well as with the other informants I developed model 3.2. With these themes I was able to answer the formulated sub-questions. An exploration of the first theme enabled me to find out what state-run social welfare provisions are (not) being used by food clients, for what reasons and how they experienced it. The second theme covers various issues that provide information regarding the world view food bank clients have; in what kind of situation do they live, how do they deal with this situation and how do they experience the world we live in nowadays? These eight domains of social life as developed by the NIZW (National Institute of Care and Welfare⁹) are actually created as a model for social support of homeless aimed at their reintegration into the society. However, I believe this model is a good way to get a clear overall picture of the food bank clients and the context they live in. The third theme investigates the question of *why* people started to go to the food bank and how they experience receiving help from the food bank. The third theme concerns background variables and is integrated in the model to get further details about the context they live in. With this model I was able to detect the profile of food bank clients and their reasons for (non) use of provisions by means of a ‘person-in-context’ approach. This approach recognizes that personal characteristics and the context of people influences their decision-making process.

⁹ By the NIZW it is referred to as the “Eight Steps Model”

Model 3.2: Themes interview food bank client

<p>1) Social benefits/state-run social (welfare) services 1.1 Use social benefits/state-run social (welfare) services 1.2 Reasons for (non) usage 1.3 Experience 1.4 Needs, wants, expectations</p>	<p>3) Food banks 3.1 Causes 3.2 Reasons for usage 3.3 Experience with food bank</p>
<p>2) Domains of social life 2.1 Finance 2.2 Housing/residence 2.3 Social behavior 2.4 Mental condition 2.5 Physical condition 2.7 Motivation 2.8 Involvement in (work) activities</p>	<p>4) General background 4.1 Age 4.2 Ethnicity 4.3 Education 4.4 Religion 4.5 Status of residency 4.6 Household composition</p>

Selection informants care network

Apart from the 37 food bank clients eight other informants have been interviewed as well. I interviewed two persons from the Food Bank, two client managers from Social Service (Dienst Arbeid & Inkomen Gouda and SoZaWe Rotterdam), a social worker from House of Hope, a social worker from Welzijn Charlois, the coordinator of the largest hand-out point in Rotterdam (Crooswijk) and a social worker from the Albeda College. Some food bank clients experienced difficulties in expressing their feelings and found it hard to explain why they made a certain decision. Thus one of the reasons for interviewing other informants was to check the information provided by clients themselves. Also, the ‘experts’ are often in close contact with the food bank clients and it was assumed that their knowledge about both clients themselves but also about procedures of the food bank and SoZaWe would provide a more complete picture of the reasons for (non) use of the food bank and state-run provisions. The interviewees were encouraged to revise earlier answers of other interviewees. I decided to interview these people separately in order to avoid conformation to the group leader. The identity of the other interviewees was not revealed. This freed them to some extent from their personal biases and it allowed them to freely express their opinions and encouraged open critique. The great variety in the group of informants led a comprehensive picture of food bank clients. After I collected the information I distilled the knowledge of this group of informants and looked for similarities and differences in reasons for (non) use of provisions (including the food bank) among food bank clients. For a detailed overview of the eight informants and the main reasons for interviewing this particular person see appendix 3.

Selection social care and welfare services to be studied

In this research I studied the use of various social care and welfare services: social work, psychiatric help, debt guidance, reintegration, WWB, WIA, Wajong, WAO, special assistance, long-term minimum-income allowance, health care allowance and rent allowance. The main sources for this information were the website of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Justice¹⁰ and SoZaWe Rotterdam¹¹. I selected these provisions because I expected these to be most relevant for this research as it is a combination of low-barrier (easily accessible, clear eligibility criteria, absence means-test, absence complex rules, initiative not fully at side of client, large amount granted) and high-barrier services (means-tested, supplemental character, complexity of rules, vague eligibility criteria, focused on stigmatized groups, small amount granted, initiative at side of client). This enabled me to find patterns in use and non-use per type of service. In this research all these services are referred to as 'state' or 'semi-state' provisions.

§ 3.3 Collecting & analyzing data

I collected the data through individual, semi-structured, taped interviews with both food bank clients as well as with the other informants¹². Moreover, I analyzed existing information infrastructure: I studied publicly available documents from both the Food Bank well as from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Justice and SoZaWe Rotterdam. I analyzed envisioned governmental policies regarding the provision of social welfare services aimed at securing a minimum level of income, other provisions such as debt guidance and social work and the policies of the food bank regarding their reasons for existence, the procedure and their ideas about food bank clients.

Transcripts of the interviews were developed and analyzed. Analytic techniques included the 'constant comparison' of 'concept construction' as used by grounded theory adherents (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The process of data collection and data analysis took turns. In the end, a coding scheme was developed that was applied to the data. Based on the outcome, a typology of food bank clients is constructed.

¹⁰ www.szw.nl

¹¹ www.sozawe.rotterdam.nl

¹² One of the informants (Van der Want, Albeda College) has been interviewed by phone as she was, due to time limits, unable to do a face-to-face interview.

§ 3.4 Sample size and non-response

In total 37 food bank clients and eight other informants have been interviewed. New food bank clients have been added to the sample until methodological saturation was reached. After having interviewed 30 clients I did not feel I gathered new insights. The non-response was 36 percent. The most important reasons were 1) the person did not speak Dutch or 2) the person said he/she did not have enough time to be interviewed. Both the atmosphere at the hand-out point and the role of the volunteers influenced the number of people interviewed. In Charlois and Feijenoord the volunteers did not mind me asking clients to be interviewed but they did not 'promote' it either. In Alexander the co-ordinator of the hand-out point was very active, which resulted in a high number of interviewed clients. In Crooswijk there was a very nice atmosphere with many clients staying for a coffee. As a result people did not mind waiting as they would have stayed anyway.

Chapter 4: How food bank services and state-run provisions differ

Before the central question can be answered, it has to become clear what services for people with a low income are provided by the state and the food bank. It is also discussed how they differ, because the nature of a provision could influence the reasons for (non) use (SCP, 2007b). This mainly concerns differences in terms of *type* of service, eligibility criteria and differences in the application procedure. These factors could possibly influence whether or not a person claims a provision. Differences in both services might explain why people do use the food bank but do not use particular state-run provisions.

§ 4.1 Income support and other (semi) state-run services for people with a low income

Social protection

In the Netherlands the state provides income support for people who are unable to provide for themselves due to illness, long-term incapacity to work, unemployment or retirement; this is called social protection. Social protection can be divided into: social security (national insurances and employee insurances), social assistance and old age pension provisions. People with an income below the social minimum (dependent on personal situation) can get a surcharge. In certain cases a surcharge might not be enough to reach the social minimum (for example if your latest wage was lower than the social minimum). In that case people can get supplementary benefits. (UWV, 2008).

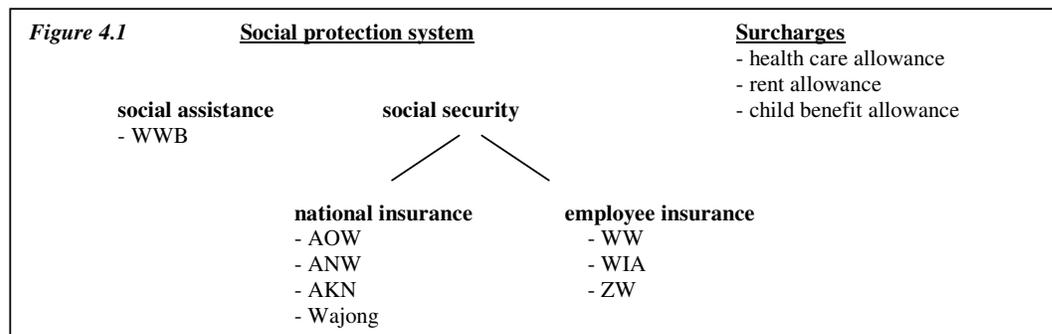
The present Dutch social protection scheme is developed around three key pillars:

1. **National insurance:** covering all citizens entitled to old age (AOW) or survivors' pensions (ANW), child benefits (AKW), and disability benefits for young people (Wajong). This insurance is compulsory and is not means-tested. Contributions are income-related, while benefits are flat rate at subsistence level. National insurance is administered by the Social Insurance Bank (SVB);
2. **Employee insurance:** covering risks of unemployment (WW), long-term disability (WAO, WIA) and sickness (ZW). This insurance is compulsory for employees and the self-employed and is not means-tested. Contributions are a percentage of wages and benefits are wage-related;
3. **Social assistance:** accessible to all citizens. Social assistance aims to ensure a basic income level when insurance arrangements are not applicable. It is based on the principle that citizens are deemed capable of supporting themselves independently. Social

assistance benefits approximately equal the social minimum level. The social minimum is not the same for everybody; it depends on your personal situation and the amount varies between 70 and 100 percent of the minimum wage. The system is non-contributory, paid from general funds, is means-tested and the level of payment is adjusted annually to changes in wages and prices. Local authorities are responsible for social assistance benefits. The Reformed Social Assistance Act (WWB) introduced in 2004 has put a greater emphasis on self-activation. A precondition for receiving assistance benefits is that people must actively look for work and accept any reasonable job offer. For an overview of social assistance benefits amounts see appendix 4. (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2008).

People can also apply for particular surcharges to cover particular costs.

Surcharges: Health Care Allowance, Rent Allowance: people have to apply for this only once. Child Benefit Allowance: usually people do not have to apply for this. If they already receive Health Care or Rent Allowance the Tax Service automatically sends an application form. Child Care Allowance. (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2008).



Income support in Rotterdam

The municipality of Rotterdam, in particular the department Social Service and Employment (SoZaWe), supports people with a low income in various ways: special assistance, long-term minimum income allowance, and pardon (community) taxes/debts.¹³

Special assistance (BRUG): if people, due to certain *special* circumstances, have to make expenses they cannot afford, they can apply for special assistance. SoZaWe can (partly) reimburse these costs by assigning special assistance. There are a great variety of costs people can request for special assistance, such as a baby package or furniture and household appliances. For the entire BRUG overview see appendix 5. Usually people have to buy the items they need themselves first. SoZaWe assigns the reimbursement once they have received the required items (proof of eligibility). (SoZaWe, 2008). In the past special assistance was

¹³ This study will mainly focus on the use of type of benefits (if applicable), health care and rent allowance, special assistance, debt guidance, budget control, social work/RIAGG. 40

“categorical”. Nowadays client managers look more at people’s personal situation and really focus on those most needy (client manager, Dienst Arbeid & Inkomen Gouda, 2008).

Long-term minimum income allowance: this is an arrangement for people who have to rely on a minimum income for at least five years and who have no prospects of enhancing their income through work. The stringent criteria might affect the use of this provision negatively.

Pardon (community) taxes/debts: people with a low income can apply for waste product levy and estate taxes for users cancellation. (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2008).

Apart from financial contributions, people can also make use of other forms of help such the Municipal Credit Banks (GKB), social work, psychiatric help, budget control and reintegration projects. The Credit Bank is part of help provided by the municipality. Budget control and reintegration project *can* be provided by the municipality or by a semi-municipal organization that is fully or mostly dependent on subsidies from the municipality. Social work and psychiatric institutions are mostly fully dependent on municipal subsidies. Even though these services do not provide support in terms of money, they do help people with financial problems to pay of their debts (GKB, budget control), or they can help finding out how people ended up in the grave financial situation and find out what can be done in order to deal with these problems (psychiatric help, social work), or they can help people in finding a job which accordingly might create new possibilities (reintegration project).

Client manager

In the past social benefits assistance was financed by the Dutch government. Four years ago a study was done to measure the number of social assistance benefit receivers that was acceptable per municipality. It turned out that Rotterdam scored way above that norm. From that moment on, the number of clients within limits are funded by the government and if a municipality has more clients than the allowed norm, it has to be financed by municipalities themselves. Till March 2008 Social Service and Employment (SoZaWe) in Rotterdam was divided in nine districts, with each one office (one district had two offices). In March 2008 the situation changed and now there are five offices in Rotterdam that are called ‘work square’ (*Werkplein*). Social assistance benefit (WWB) receivers all have a client manager working at SoZaWe. Eight years ago the function ‘integral client manager’ was introduced. This integral client manager had a certain caseload (for example 130 clients per fte) and fulfilled every task that was linked to a certain client (intake, administration, work). Thus, each client had one contact person at SoZaWe. On the first of March 2008 a reorganization took place at

SoZaWe. The job of the client manager was split up in six different positions. A distinction was made between the department ‘work’ and ‘income’. ‘Work’ entails a client manager ‘work’, ‘reintegration’ and ‘activation’. The terms refer to the distance of the client to the labour market. ‘Income’ includes ‘intake’, ‘administration’ and ‘fraud’. Since the new system was introduced all clients, even those who have been on social assistance benefits for more than ten years, have been of will be called because they have to be grouped again among different client managers ‘work’. Whereas in the past clients had one contact person they now have three or four. They have two client managers income (one who does the intake and one client manager administration) and for ‘work’ the position of the client managers consists of three or four people. So, people receive a letter saying: ‘your client manager income is X and your client manager reintegration is A, B, C, and D.’ During the intake a client manager has to inform the client about possible social welfare services. However, it appears that whether or not this is done correctly, depends on the nature of the client manager. Unless the client asks for it, there is never a follow-up-check to see if clients are, in a new situation, entitled to certain provisions.¹⁴ The reorganization at SoZaWe could make it more difficult for clients to get in contact with SoZaWe as they have more contact persons, which might be confusing. Deterioration of accessibility may eventually lead to an increase in non-take up of provisions.

Debt guidance

The Municipal Credit Bank (GKB) plays an important role in debt resolution in the Netherlands. These non-profit organisations are owned by the municipalities, to which they are financially responsible. They have a number of ‘products’ designed both to prevent over-indebtedness from occurring in the first place and to help resolve it when it occurs: debt prevention activities, coaching, structured analysis of the client’s budget, issuing of a restricted bank card, “responsible credit” (small loan), budget management and debt resolution (strongly formalized). (European Commission, 2006: 2).

Reintegration

A precondition for receiving social assistance benefits is that people must actively look for work and accept any reasonable job offer. If all attempts fail, social services will assist in finding work or providing training facilities. If the claimant refuses to cooperate, social services may impose sanctions. The UVW is responsible for the project only if applications receive unemployment, sickness or Wajong benefits. The municipality cooperates with various reintegration organizations and determines the outflow percentage.

¹⁴The information about the SoZaWe Rotterdam and the role of the client manager was provided by a client manager from SoZaWe Rotterdam and a client manager from Dienst Arbeid & Inkomen Gouda

§ 4.2 The scope of food bank services

§ 4.2.1 “Right place, right time”

Clara Sies, one of the founders of the Food Bank Foundation Netherlands (SVN) said that the idea to start the food bank simply “appeared out of thin air”. It is a real “living room project” that started because in 1986 both Clara Sies and her husband Sjaak Sies did not have a job and ended up being on social assistance benefits. They were told to be too old for finding a new job so they were told by social service to do voluntary work.

In 1984 the first food bank idea blew over from France, though it was always small-scaled and had never been that ‘successful’ as the Food Bank nowadays. Three years before the food bank was set up, in 1999 (the Food Bank was set up in 2002), there was a similar initiative in Brabant in the South of the Netherlands. According to the Food Bank this idea was completely burned down. The Netherlands was not ready for such an initiative. The initiator of the Food Bank said the Food Bank has brought the bottom side of society to the surface level, something that has always been denied. The initiators of the Food Bank were very surprised by the response to their initiative; from the side of the volunteers, care-seekers but also the media. The enormous media attention led to a huge increase in both the number of initiatives and food bank clients. The initiator responded: “We never expected this. But apparently it was highly necessary.” Unfortunately, apart from the abovementioned, no information is available about previous initiatives in the Netherlands.

§ 4.2.2 Application procedure

Help provided by the food bank is in principal available for a maximum period of three years, linked to the maximum period of debt guidance service, though exceptions are possible. The procedure is as follows: a client can apply through an aid providing organization such as social work, home care, RIAGG etcetera by means of an application form. The food bank client has to come to a handout point on a date set by the food bank and pick up the food package. Most handout points are open on Friday and a few on Thursday for about two or three hours. In exceptional cases the food package can be delivered at home in consultation with the handout point and/or the Food Bank. The Food Bank has set up certain criteria in order to determine if someone is eligible for the food bank. The applying organization determines if a person is entitled to make use of the food bank. The starting point is the *disposable* income that people have left every month to buy food, clothes and the like after fixed expenses such as rent, gas/water/energy, insurances, and interestingly also debts, have

been paid. If the disposable income per household per month falls under the following amounts, a household is eligible for the food bank:

1-person household:	€ 150.00
For more-person households this amount is increased by	€ 50.00
and/or for each child that belongs to the household	€ 25.00
For example: 2 parents with 2 children = € 150 + 50 + 2 * 25 =	€ 250,-

On the application form it has to be stated for how long the applicant will make use of the food bank. Periodically it has to be tested whether a person is still entitled to a food package.

§ 4.2.3 Services Food Bank: increase in clients and expansion of services

Presently the Food Bank serves 13.000 families nationally and approximately 1.800 in Rotterdam Rijnmond. From the start of 2008 there have been 666 applications, 678 granted of which 232 in January (the difference in ‘applications’ and ‘granted’ is because some people applied in 2007 and were ‘granted’ in the beginning of 2008), 4 in process, 55 rejections, and 647 cancellations (people who signed out). The capacity of the food bank has not been reached yet according to the initiator of the Food Bank (2008), however, the capacity in Rotterdam differs from other parts in the country. The Food Bank (Rotterdam) only provides a basic food package and municipalities have to supplement that themselves. The Food Bank is planning on having more sheds throughout the country.

Apart from providing food, the food bank recently started a new project: *Maatjes Advies Plan* (Buddy Advice Plan). This idea resulted from the many complaints the Food Bank heard from clients about their contact with the state (mainly with SoZaWe). The Food Bank stated that clients experience the help from the state as complex; they simply do not know where to start. “This buddy comes to your house and literally sits around the kitchen table. Out of all the papers they can make one package and go to SoZaWe with that package and they will deal with it as *one* package instead of dividing the file among different client managers.” The project just started and so far they have seven applicants and seven volunteers. The Food Bank pointed out that several handout points also distribute leaflets about debt guidance, budget control, ‘dress for success’, and special assistance. This chimes with what I noticed during the visits at various handout points. She also stated that handout points themselves are allowed to have a ‘clothing bank’ for example. In the context of complexities food bank clients experience the initiator of the Food Bank also mentioned that they, if not on purpose, try to keep things simple. “We are anyhow closer to the clients than the government as clients

have a very suspicious attitude towards the government. We reach a group the government does not reach.” Concerning the Buddy Advice Plan, the food bank can be seen as a complement of functions that among others the client manager of social service is (supposed to be) doing; checking what people are eligible for. As a private initiative the food bank tends to manifest itself as a ‘gap-filler’ in the domains struck by public servants constraints.

§ 4.2.4 Relation between the Food Bank and municipalities

The Food Bank does not regard itself as a “supplement” to governmental policies; “we assume that in principal people should be able to come by on a minimum income. Therefore our criteria are below the minimum income level.” (2008) So, the Food Bank initiator does not think the amount set as a social minimum is too low. Some people do not reach the social minimum and the state offers various forms of help to ensure that people *do* reach this level. The initiator of the Food Bank believes this is the point where it goes wrong. Theoretically there are sufficient forms of help provided by the state, though they do not always reach those who need it. As a result some people end up below the social minimum level.

The Food Bank does not want any governmental or municipal subsidies, though some local initiatives receive small subsidies, but never on a structural basis; “that makes you dependent on the government and we do not want that. (...) We want to have a ‘signal’ function. People are caught in the bureaucratic red tape and the Food Bank woke people up. We expected politicians to respond to these signals.” Thus, their function is seen as ‘social and policy change’: a private initiative that promotes structural change and stimulates the recognition of new needs and they empower those excluded by society. The relationship between the Food Bank and municipalities varies. In some municipalities there is a closer relationship than in others. In general the initiator of the Food bank was rather positive about the relationship they had with the municipality of Rotterdam. They have several contact persons at SoZaWe they can call in case they come across a “severe case”. Currently the Food Bank is setting up a national board of directors but they do not want any government officials in that board, because they do not believe that to be “functional” as those people end up “controlling” an organization that (implicitly) criticises governmental policies.

§ 4.3 Food bank services versus state-run provisions: similarities and differences

The main difference between the help provided by the state compared to the help provided by the food bank is that the state provides help in terms of money and the food bank in terms of

food. The state provides help to secure a minimum level of income (WW, WIA, ZW, WWB etcetera) and support for those with a low income (special assistance, long term income allowance, health care allowance etcetera), sometimes to (partly) cover particular costs. The food bank actually provides help to those who, for whatever reasons, ended up below the social minimum level; the criteria for the food bank are below the social minimum level. So it is assumed that people should be able to come by on social assistance benefits. However, apparently there is a group that does not reach the social minimum level.

A big difference between the way the state looks at the social minimum compared to the food bank is that the state looks at the daily or monthly net income while the food bank looks at the *disposable* monthly income so after rent, energy/gas/water, insurances and ‘other fixed costs’, including debts, have been paid. This makes the eligibility criteria between both forms of help (state versus food bank) very different. If you want to apply for certain surcharges (health care allowance e.g.) to reach the social minimum because you have debts it is unlikely you will get it. The best thing the state can do is to offer help from the Credit Bank or checking if you can make use of special assistance, but you will not get additional social assistance benefits if your ‘normal’ benefits reach the social minimum. However, when you apply for the food bank while you already make use of various social welfare services provided by the state but you can still not reach the social minimum because you have debts, you will probably get a food package because the food bank sees debts as ‘other fixed costs’.

The procedure between both forms of help is the same in the sense that you have to bring your bank statements as a proof of eligibility to both of them. The food bank is based on the premise that help should be distributed on the basis of individual need, determined by a test of income. Furthermore, eligibility for the food bank is continuously monitored. So food bank support is very much determined by an individual’s financial circumstances. Eligibility criteria from the state differ per type of service. Certain forms of support (national and employee insurance schemes) are predominantly based on the principle of universalism; “welfare benefits should be made available to everyone as a social right.” (Gilbert, 2004: 135). The height of these benefits is means-tested though. Other types of help such as special assistance and surcharges are predominantly based on the selectivity principles; these benefits are distributed on the basis of individual need and focus on an individual’s personal (financial) situation. This makes support from the food bank more personalized in procedural terms, but it also allocates help to particular people that might lead to a stigma for that group.

Help from the food bank is also more personalized in a different way. A difference between the food bank and the state is that the state is relatively virtually anonymous whereas the food bank is unanonymous. The help (money) from the state comes from an anonymous institution whereas food bank clients are in (close) contact with those who make the support possible when they pick up their food package. However, contact with the state can also be unanonymous, for example in the case of the client manager (SoZaWe). For both the food bank and SoZaWE counts: does the client experience the contact as unanonymous and personal? If a client feels the person sitting in front of him totally does not understand his situation and feels the provider does not look at his personal situation, he might experience the contact as anonymous and impersonal. This may affect claiming usage of a provision.

Another issue is the fact that state-help is based on a social contract between citizens and the state; social rights of citizenship are balanced by obligations. (Gilbert, 2004: 158-159). So state-help has a reciprocal character. The food bank on the other hand (charitable activity), does not take equality as a starting point. The relationship between volunteers and recipients is inherently asymmetrical. (Hilton, 1993). Moreover, social care and welfare as provided by private initiatives is not based on a social contract but based on charitable principles. However, this does not mean that the help from the state is symmetrical. It has become clear that the client manager of social service is in a very powerful position. This position might become more powerful as the person sitting in front of him is uneducated, feels insecure, and does not dare to ask for help. However, the basis of securing a minimum level of income is more or less regulated by law that makes state-support more formalized.

In general food bank services and state-run provisions are similar (they both provide services for people with a low-income) but at the same time the provisions are inherently different in terms of eligibility criteria, application procedure, premises on which help is based (social contract versus voluntarism) and the level of anonymity. It is plausible that these differences are linked to the use of food bank and non-use of state-run provisions.

Chapter 5: Same meat, different gravy

In this chapter I will present the results and findings of my research. It will become clear why clients make use of the food bank, what state-run provisions they do or do not make use of and why. A typology of food bank clients will be revealed that describes the differences in clients according their reasons for (non) use of the food bank and state-run provisions. In this chapter the central question of this research will be answered.

§ 5.1 Similarities and differences between food bank clients

§ 5.1.1 General characteristics

At the various handout points I have seen men, women, young people, old people, people with five children, people without children, people with a job, people declared disabled to work, a drug addict who was just released from prison, people from the Netherlands, Slovenia, Morocco, Congo, Aruba, optimistic people, depressed people and so on and so on. Apparently *the* food bank client does not exist. However, certain groups are clearly over-represented: single parents, women, 35+, allochthonous people (mostly Moroccans and Antilleans), people seeing a social worker or psychiatrist and no/low educated¹⁵ people. This view partly chimes with the research done by Regioplan in 2006. They concluded that 80 percent of the clients were either single parent or living alone. In their research nine percent of the clients were younger than 19 years old. In my research none of that category was interviewed. From my research it becomes clear that younger people (<25) feel more ashamed about making use of the food bank than older people. For that reason some of them were not keen on being interviewed. The neighbourhoods that I have chosen to do the interviews resulted in the relatively high number of allochthonous people. Regioplan stated that 34 percent of food bank clients had no education or only primary school. (2006: 18-20). In my research 28 out of 37 clients had no education or only primary school and/or mavo/vmbo.

The social worker from Welzijn Charlois, the social worker from House of Hope, the initiator of the Food Bank and the coordinator of the handout point Crooswijk all mentioned that many food bank clients had similar characteristics such as “long distance to labour market”, “lack of certain competencies”, “language problems”, “being in debts” and “not being used to certain new developments in society”. The social worker from Welzijn Charlois also said that in general they have similar problems, though they all deal with it in a different manner. This

¹⁵ No education, primary education, pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO).

can be “because they have different aims and motivations, or they do not have the motivation anymore”, to for example look for a job. The effect of these factors on the (non) use of the food bank and state-run provisions will become clear in the coming paragraphs.

§ 5.1.2 Why people make use of the food bank

It appears that the reasons why people make use of the food bank are multi-fold. The most important reasons are related to the awareness of the food bank, the need people feel to receive a weekly food package, the simplicity of the application procedure, the trust clients have in food bank volunteers and the pleasant (though mainly shallow) contact they have with the volunteers. However, there are certain barriers (shame and pride) as well that people have to surpass and which sometimes are not surpassed, resulting in non-use of the food bank.

Structural imbalance income and costs

It appears that clients make use of the food bank because they are not able to make ends meet. The reasons why people end up in the situation they are in right now, below the social minimum, differ. Some people have a structural imbalance between income and costs; for many people high rent costs is a stumbling block. There were also people who pointed out specific incidents that led to the situation they are in now: “I got fired and then it went wrong”, “my husband is a gambler”, “I have been in prison and I use substances”, “I lost my job, I got depressed, I started drinking and got financial problems”, “I got divorced and then my life was a mess”, “my wife was a kleptomaniac” or Tax Service paid them too much and they had to pay back the money. Some of these reasons are very much financially related while others point out that some people have difficulties in dealing with certain changes in life (unemployment, divorce, birth child). Some of the reasons were incidental (pay back Tax Service, divorce, unemployment). Due to these ‘incidents’ a deficit in income emerged. As a result, many clients started to lend money, resulting in (serious) debts. Apparently food bank clients face difficulties in dealing with unforeseen and accidental circumstances.

According to the social worker of House of Hope, the fact that many clients are in debt is partly the result of the unawareness of the demand of state-run social welfare services. “Debts arise because people know too late that they can apply for a certain subsidy. Or they do not know they have to suspend social assistance benefits when they find a job. Neither do they have any clue about the height of social benefits. They do not recognize when a certain

amount is too high. (...) Some just do not know how credit cards work or they are not familiar with the gas/water/light system we have here and they put the heater on 25 degrees and open the windows. Because of this they build up an enormous debt at Eneco. It could also be that people, accidentally, fill out forms incorrectly. For example for people from Congo it is not always clear what is meant by 'partner' or 'children, which ones? Those here or in Congo?'

The social worker of Welzijn Charlois and the coordinator of handout point Crooswijk mentioned that predominantly those who have been on (social assistance) benefits for a long time make use of the food bank. "People making use of the food bank are not looking onto a situation with more prosperity." This statement of the social worker of Welzijn Charlois is in fact rather contradictory to what the aim of the food bank is: the help is not structural; it is only there for a maximum of three years; it is not aimed at supporting people for the rest of their lives. The retrieved data confirms that many food bank clients depend on social assistance benefits, mainly social assistance benefits (WWB). Both care workers also thought the introduction of the Euro made life even harder for these people. The coordinator of handout point Crooswijk stated: "If you are on social assistance benefits for quite a while, problems arise automatically. They cannot save any money. This is an extremely vulnerable group. Something small can cause major problems."

The application procedure: setting your pride aside

Another factor that contributes to the high number of applications for the food bank is the simplicity of the application procedure. Many clients did not have to wait long before they could actually go to the food bank and pick up their food package (varied between three days in exceptional cases and three weeks). Two persons mentioned they had to wait for three months. The fact that they had been rejected twice before almost led to a non-claim for the third time, but the subjective need of the food package led to a third claim. It appears that almost all people applied through their social worker or psychiatrist. Some of them went to a social worker only once, just to let him or her apply for the food bank. It is unclear how they ended up at a particular social worker. Only one person said her client manager applied for her. The initiator of the Food Bank explained this as follows: "social workers, compared to client managers, really see what is happening behind the front door", as a result they are better able to define what necessary help would be for a particular family. However, in Crooswijk social service (SoZaWe) often puts forward people for the food bank. It appeared that most

offices of SoZaWe Rotterdam do not send people to the food bank directly; most of them send people to a social worker. However, in the district Noordrand client managers do a financial check for the food bank themselves sometimes. The simplicity of the application procedure and the fact that many social workers draw attention to the food bank leads to a high number of claims for food bank support.

Many food bank clients experience today's society as "tough" and "harsh". Some people also referred to "high expectations society has"; "it is just not easy (...) you are forced to work, even if you can't". In this same line of thinking another person said: "it is tough nowadays, especially for children and single mothers (...), you have to go to school and you have to work". She felt she could not keep up with the current pace in society. Another woman mentioned that she found society "demanding". It appears that especially those people who get counselling from many different institutions (e.g. debt guidance services, psychiatrist, home care worker, social service) feel that they are not fully 'in charge' of their own life; they simply do not feel in *control* of their life. This could be due to the fact that decisions about their spending pattern, financial situation, health situation etcetera are all taken by others. The complexity many food bank clients experience in daily life makes the use of the food bank, with its relatively simple and easy process, an interesting option. As a claimant you need to bring your bank statements as a proof of eligibility, someone from the care network (often a social worker) checks *if* you are eligible, and within one to three weeks you know if you can go to the local handout point. The saying 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' seems to be appropriate in this context.

Interestingly, ideas on the number of people who refuse food bank support differ. The initiator of the Food Bank and the social worker of House of Hope argue that refusal does not occur often. The Food Bank explained that occasionally it does happen that people want to go to a different handout point than the one in their own neighbourhood because they feel ashamed towards their neighbours. Both women argued that few people reject the possibility of going to the food bank. "When we suggest the food bank they realize how perilous this situation is they are in. (...) We do see though that some make use of the food bank and after a while stop going because they say the food is too often outdated or because they do not like the food. They do have to leave behind that particular lifestyle which has brought them into trouble because of high debts. (...) It is not always clear why people are not going anymore." (Social worker House of Hope).

Contrarily to what the initiator of the Food Bank and the social worker of House of Hope stated, the social worker from Welzijn Charlois and the coordinator of handout point Crooswijk said that there are quite some people who do not want to go to the food bank. These are mostly people who just ended up in a situation of having to come by on social benefits. Usually they think, “I can manage it myself. They think ‘it will be okay, I am just going to work on it.’” The group who *does* accept help is mainly the group who has been on social benefits for a longer time. According to the coordinator of handout point Crooswijk shame is the most important reason why people *do not* go. She believed the refuse rate to be higher among allochthonous people, which has according to her something to do with their culture. Handout point Crooswijk has a lot of Turkish and Moroccan clients. The coordinator gets the impression that predominantly Turkish and Moroccan people do not easily show or admit they have problems. “These cultures have a very strong community. They feel ashamed if, within the community, it turns out they have to rely on a food package.” She argued that feelings of shame are even more apparent among Moroccan women who are abandoned by their husband. “For them it is even a bigger step to go to the food bank.” She does not believe that those Turkish or Moroccans people coming to the food bank are less religious than those who are not coming. She based this on the fact that most of their Turkish and Moroccan clients refuse to take the meat that is in the food package. However, also autochthonous people find it hard to admit they need help. People are afraid to be stigmatized when going to the food bank. “Many people have a certain pride to manage things themselves, sometimes at any stake.” According to the social worker of House of Hope it is true that people feel ashamed, “but when we suggest it, most of the times they accept it.”

The initiator of the Food Bank, the social workers of House of Hope and Welzijn Charlois and the coordinator of handout point Crooswijk explained the ‘success’ of the food bank a combination of both an increase in demand but also an increase in awareness among clients because they are made aware of it more often and the food bank has become more accessible. Interestingly, both social workers from House of Hope and Welzijn Charlois stated that people do not ask for food bank support themselves. “I never had a person who asked for it himself. People always come here with general questions like ‘help, it don’t know how to get out of this situation!’” (Social worker House of Hope). Thus, people come with a general call for help. This means that if a person makes use of the food bank highly depends on whether or not a social worker draws attention to it. Apparently more people seem to have problems and

visit a social worker. At the same time many social workers *do* draw attention to usage of the food bank and that contributes to the high number of applications for a weekly food package. However, for some people shame and pride lead to non-claiming for food bank support.

Usage food bank: shame and gratefulness go hand in hand

It became clear that many people feel ashamed about going to the food bank. However, at the same time they are very grateful about receiving a food package. The first reaction of clients on the question how they experienced making use of the food bank was something like “pleasant”, “the volunteers are sweet” or “I am very happy with it”. Some people mentioned also some negative things about the food bank. A few people told that the food was sometimes or often outdated. Though most heard was that they felt ashamed of going to the food bank. One said: “it was a really big step to come here. Now I am over it, because you see many other people here as well.” It appeared that men felt ashamed more often than women. One man even stated that, even though the contact with the volunteers was “great”, he found the food bank rather “oppressive and unpleasant” because he “hated” being dependent on other people. He did not mind getting help from the state (“I always pay tax”), but he found getting help from people who did not expect anything in return he found rather unpleasant.

Another pattern is that the older people are, the less ashamed they feel. Also, non-Dutch persons felt ashamed more often than Dutch people. One 23-year old Dutch-Surinam girl said “I had to set my pride aside of course, I am only 23.” Most people who felt ashamed did not stay to have a chat with other clients, they mostly got the food package and left. A 24-year old Indonesian girl was very nervous when visiting the food bank. Each time she went she was afraid people would recognize her. However, in these examples it is more likely that these girls felt ashamed because of their age than because of cultural reasons. Though also some other, older persons (Dutch and non-Dutch) mentioned they found it a big step as it confronted them with the gravity of the situation they were in right now. They never expected they would need to go to the food bank.

Clients continue to make use of the food bank because they see it as a welcome supplement, but most clients would love to run their own business. The initiator of the Food Bank acknowledged that a weekly food package does not solve your problems, but she hoped it would give people some space to work at the real problems they have such as debts, because

“an empty stomach has no ears”.¹⁶ According to the social worker of House of Hope clients find the food bank support “very good”. “What you do see though”, she says, “it that once they realize they receive help they become more picky. The moment they realize there is a solution, some people become a bit careless. Especially Africans tend to have this, though of course this does not count for all Africans.”

Contact with the volunteers: shallow contact but great trust in volunteer

I found out that when the use or claiming of provisions is concerned, the trust a person has in the provider of the service, has a considerable influence. It became clear that many clients appreciated the personal aspects of help and the respectful way of approaching the clients. Some common remarks were: “It is pleasant because volunteers have “no expected return”, volunteers “show empathy”, “volunteers always help me with putting the crates in the car”, “the volunteers treat me in a decent manner”. I also asked them whether they had the feeling the volunteers understood the situation they were in. It appears that most of the clients had “good contact” with the volunteers. Most of them only had shallow conversations with the volunteers though. If people also talked about their problems with volunteers was very much related to the handout point they visited. All of the handout points offered coffee and/or tea for the clients. Some clients stayed to have a cup of tea or coffee and had a little chat with other clients. There were also clients who just packed their food package and left immediately. All the clients who did talk about their problems with volunteers felt the volunteers understood the situation they were in. Interestingly, there were also people who only had small talks or shallow conversations with volunteers but still thought the volunteers understood their situation, even though they never talked about it. This seems to point out the great ‘trust’ food bank clients have in the volunteers, because it is merely an assumption; ‘these people know what I am going through’, while there is no grounded reason to think that.

It is likely that the positive idea food bank clients have about volunteers enhances the likelihood of applying for the food bank. Many clients thought the food bank would be, and is, different than other forms of support, because it is non-state. Their general ideas about the state are predominantly negative (this topic will be scrutinized in the next sub-paragraph) and as a result their initial reaction is positive when the social worker suggest making use of non-state support.

¹⁶ This sentence was first pronounced by William Booth, the English Methodist vicar who established the Salvation Army in 1865. (Leger des Heils, 2008). 54

I expected that food bank clients would highly appreciate having contact with other clients. However, it appears this is only the case minimally. Some clients stayed to have a coffee with other clients, but even then conversations were shallow. A few argued they left immediately because they felt rather uncomfortable. These were mostly young people who felt ashamed of going to the food bank. It was striking that all the clients who were interviewed at handout point Crooswijk had a very good relationship with the volunteers. They even went as far by saying that they not only ‘understand’ their situation, but that they “are in a similar situation”: the volunteers were their equals. At that handout point a group of 15-20 clients always stayed there for about two hours to talk with each other. One of the clients said that she was always “looking forward to go to the food bank on Friday”. There was one woman though who said she felt different from the other clients; “we are fellow-sufferers, but I do not feel like that”. She said other clients often criticized her for her snooty way of talking.

§ 5.1.3 (Non) use of state-run provisions: action is the proper fruit of knowledge...

Action is the proper fruit of knowledge. But what if knowledge is lacking? Food bank clients make relatively little use of certain state-run provisions. It appears this is mainly due to the lack of knowledge of that particular provision. However, other factors play a role as well if the non-use of state-run provisions is concerned. The question is what services do clients make use of and how come some people are aware, or feel aware, of the supply of state-run provisions while other are or do not?

Dependence on social benefits

Of the 37 clients I interviewed four persons had a part-time job. Most of the food bank clients interviewed are on social benefits of which the WWB appeared most often, followed by WIA or Wajong benefits. Only very few had sickness or unemployment benefits. These results differ from the conclusions from the Regioplan research in 2006. They stated that 43 percent of food bank clients were on social assistance benefits (WWB), 23 percent on unemployment benefits and nine percent on WIA benefits. For a full overview of the state services used by the interviewed food bank clients see appendix 6.

Health care and rent allowance

It becomes clear (see appendix 6) that many of the interviewed food bank clients make use of health care allowance and rent allowance. It is likely that this is (at least partly) due to the

(semi) automatic character of the provision. Every year people automatically receive a form from Tax Service to fill out. This is at least the way many clients experience it. When asked whether or not they had health care and/or rent allowance many said “of course” or “yes that goes automatically”. About half of the people who did not have rent allowance did not have health care allowance either. Some people did not have rent allowance because they did not rent but bought a house. Interestingly, when people were asked if they had health care and rent allowance many people initially said no, but when I went more in-depth it turned out that they *did* get it, but that it automatically went to debt guidance, so they considered it as receiving no allowance. According to the Regioplan research in 2006 66 percent of clients received health care allowance and 54 percent rent allowance. These somewhat relatively low percentages can be explained by the fact that in the Regioplan research clients filled out a survey; as a result clients might have ticked the ‘no’ box because they thought ‘my allowance is going to the credit bank’ while they actually did get it.

Special assistance and long-term minimum income allowance

Relatively few people made use of special assistance. It turned out that many people were not familiar with this type of provision. When asked if he made use of special assistance one guy said: “I don’t know how that works! I leave it all to my social worker and they can figure it out!” This shows the passive attitude apparent among various clients. Most people who had special assistance knew they could make use of it because they either heard it from their client manager, their social worker, friends or relatives told them or they read the BRUG booklet (special assistance) themselves. This shows the importance of the local care network and the social network. It appeared that quite a few people did not know at all what special assistance is. One woman said that she never applied for anything because “I am never entitled to things so I don’t even bother to look at it”. This negative way of thinking and low level of perceived eligibility is apparent among several clients. When I asked a 53-year old woman if she had special assistance she said: “No”. When asked why not she continued: “I don’t get that”. Then she was asked again: “Why not?”, “I don’t get anything”. Another woman who did not apply for special assistance said: “I don’t ask for anything, that’s the problem.” Some people simply did not know why they did not have special assistance or long-term minimum income allowance. Some applied for both special assistance and/or long-term minimum income allowance but have not received it yet or are waiting for a response from SoZaWe. It turned out that only a few received long-term minimum income allowance. Those who did, most

often also made use of special assistance. This relation can be explained by the stringent criteria of both provisions. A person ineligible for special assistance is probably also ineligible for long-term minimum income allowance. Interestingly there was one woman who said she *choose* not to make use of these services; “in the last two years they (social service, RO) helped me really good so I did not apply because I leave it there for those who do need it”. It has to be mentioned that special assistance is a one-off provision in the sense that it is no structural provision whereas long-term minimum income allowance is; this might lower the perceived utility of the provision among clients.

The client managers of Dienst Arbeid & Inkomen Gouda and SoZaWe Rotterdam partly understood how come that clients are not aware of special assistance. They both agreed that client managers, some in a more latent way than others, draw attention to this provision. Both stated that the interaction between the client manager and the client might play a role as well and said that “some client managers are more tended than others to explain about special assistance.” Though, there is always a ‘quality control manager’ who looks at individual decisions, especially with client managers who just started and client managers always have to report about their decisions.

The client managers of Dienst Arbeid & Inkomen Gouda and SoZaWe Rotterdam did mention a reason for the high number of non-users of special assistance among food bank clients. They explained that a “granite file” exists. This ‘file’ contains people who have been on social assistance benefits for a long time. It is unlikely these people will stream out one day. When these people received benefits for the first time there was no emphasis on activation. If these people do not have an active approach themselves, it is unlikely they are aware of social welfare provisions. The intake was for example ten years ago and if they do not ask for it, they never talk to their client manager. Since the first of March 2008 also these people will be called up in order to group them again in terms of distance to the labour market¹⁷. In general though, the common idea nowadays is “limit new applications”. This means that most energy is put in young people who just ended up being dependent on benefits. However, clients of SoZaWe do receive a ‘client newspaper’ (klantenkrant) every two months that informs them about social welfare provisions.

Debt guidance services

Many of the interviewed food bank clients make use or made use in the past of debt guidance

¹⁷ According to the client manager of SoZaWe Rotterdam

services (such as the Credit Bank). Some did not participate in such a project because they did not have debts or only some minor private debts. Six out of 37 clients did have debts but did not make use of debt guidance services. It appeared that some people also have debts at SoZaWe because they received too much social assistance benefits. According to the research conducted by Regioplan (2006: 22) only 36 percent made use of this service while they stated that 83 percent had debts. Unfortunately they did not ask for the reason of non-participation. From this thesis it becomes clear that of the six clients who did not participate, one *chose* not to because “I like to pull the strings and I think I can manage it myself”. One 67-year old man from Aruba did not participate because he had no clue of what type of services he was entitled to or could make use of. Two persons did not make use of it while they did apply. It was unclear why they could not participate. Another person said her social worker helps her to pay off debts. The social worker of House of Hope mentioned that the route of debt guidance could easily take two and a half years. “It is very bureaucratic and these institutions are extremely busy.”

It turned out that out of those making use of debt guidance services some were (very) positive about it while others were (very) negative. Those who were negative about it mainly pointed out the “bad” contact they had with their contact person. “They don’t stick to the appointments we made”. Some also felt their contact person did not inform them and keep them updated well enough. Interestingly all the people who made use of it in the past, and thus finished the trajectory, were mainly positive. They did say things like “it was harsh”, or “tough”, and “you will never get used to it”, but they also said: “they did everything for me, I did not have to take care of anything myself” and felt they helped them. So they thought that in financial terms it was difficult but in terms of contact and help it was good. One 38-year-old Dutch woman even said: “it went really quick! And what I really liked is that they come to your house and congratulate you when you are finished, that was great!” Some referred to the interplay between them and the other person: “if you stay calm everything will be okay” or “it is just like everywhere else, some people are nice, some are not”.

Paid work / voluntary work / reintegration project

A few of the interviewed clients had a part-time job. Some did not work because they had WIA or Wajong benefits. It appeared that quite some people did not have a job because they felt ‘unable’ to have a paid job at the moment. They simply felt they could not handle it

because they had many different problems. Relatively many clients were declared disabled. Many single mothers did not work because they just got a baby or they had young children at home. As a result they do not have to participate in a reintegration project.

A precondition for receiving social assistance benefits is that people must actively look for work and accept any reasonable job offer. Interestingly, only some people who were interviewed participated in a reintegration project though many were on social assistance benefits. Most clients who participate in a reintegration project were relatively young (younger than 35) and became dependent on social benefits recently. Some older people (50+) said they used to participate in a reintegration project but quit for various reasons. One 55-year old man from Aruba said: “Those young people there tell me what to do you know. It was boring with all those computers and that kind of stuff.” Other people participated in a project but were told that it was better for them if they did voluntary work instead of looking for a paid job. Some were declared disabled. A 60-year old woman could not participate in a project because social service told her they could not find her a job because she was too old. “Now I sit at home all day while I really want to work!”

Perceptions and awareness state-run provisions

What is striking is that quite some people, when being asked about the state in general, (for example in the question about the difference between state help and food bank support) are very negative: “it is a hassle”, “they send you from pillar to post”, “they don’t look at your personal situation”. However, when you ask them about their *personal* experience with for example their client manager, they are (very) positive: “I feel they (social service, RO) really help me”. Thus, their own personal experience is often more positive than their general view of the state. It appears that those making use of social work or psychiatric help seemed very positive about the contact they had with them and thought they helped them very well, while many seemed to be more negative about social service, debt guidance, reintegration project, tax service and budget control. Though, those who finished with the debt guidance trajectory were mainly positive. Interestingly, both client managers understood that some clients feel there is not enough personal contact. “In Gouda I am not even allowed to say my name when I pick up the phone.” “For some people it is big step to go to social service. They feel relieved when they see they are dealing with a ‘social’ client manager” (client manager Dienst Arbeid & Inkomen Gouda).

Almost all clients mentioned that the food bank is (way) “more personal” than state support. However, this does not mean that all clients thought the state was *not* personal. Some think the state does not have to be personal (e.g. in terms of contact between citizens and civil servants). So, the fact that many thought the food bank was more personal was no reproach towards the state, though some considered the personal help from the food bank as more pleasant but said you “could not expect” a personal attitude from the state. Many clients mentioned that the food bank “does not send you from pillar to post”. Others said: “these people know what it is like to have little money”, “these people are human, there (state institutions, RO) you are merely a number”, “you do not see the state. Like this, this is set up by normal people and not by the government”. Two people mentioned that they experienced the help from the food bank as more difficult as they knew these people whereas the state is anonymous. A few people stated they did not see a difference between help provided by the state or provided by the food bank. So it appears that many clients have a certain ‘trust’ in the food bank that they do not have in the state. They feel food bank volunteers understand their personal situation and they experience fewer complexities in food bank support compared to state support. What is striking, is that certain clients believe the state does not have and should not or cannot have a ‘personal approach’.

When eligibility for certain provisions is concerned, many people do not feel aware of the supply. It turned out that many clients have a (sometimes very) passive attitude when state help is concerned. “I don’t receive any papers whatsoever”, “sometimes you really have to ask for things yourself, how should I say it...they do not tell you everything”, (after telling that he is not happy with help from the state) “but what can I do? The only thing you can do is waiting”. One 28-year-old Dutch guy did not feel aware of supply basically because he *thought* the state does not pay anything for him, a view apparent among more clients. The low level of perceived eligibility is then a factor that contributes to the passive attitude of some clients. A 53-year-old woman from Curacao did not feel well aware even though she said that her client manager informs her well. Those who feel acquainted say that their client manager helps them very good, friends and/or relatives advise/help them or that because of all the negative things they have experienced in their life they know how to deal with different institutions. Some were rather neutral by pointing out the interplay between citizens and civil servants: “if you cooperate and if you are honest, it is good”. So also here the role of the care and social network appears to be important.

The initiator of the Food Bank, the social workers of House of Hope the Albeda College and the coordinator of handout point Crooswijk confirmed that food bank clients are not well aware of state-run social welfare provisions. The initiator of the Food Bank stated that many clients often have a “resigning” attitude; “many of these people have bumped their nose a zillion times.” She continued: “It is partly the feeling of passiveness and being powerless, like ‘I can never manage to do that anyway’.” The coordinator of handout point Crooswijk phrased this somewhat differently: “Among food bank clients there is a group who feels victimized.” This group has an attitude of “digging one’s heels in.” They make others responsible for solving their problems and thus have a very passive attitude. However, “many people have been on benefits for a long time and are simply tired of applying for certain surcharges and not getting it.” The social worker of Welzijn Charlois acknowledges that there is a group who completely lost control over their lives; “these people are tended to place the responsibility in the hands of others.” The social worker of House of Hope argued that some people do not want to take the risk of having special assistance since many BRUG (special assistance) arrangements are loans. “These people already have too many debts.” According to the social worker of the Albeda College, students are unaware of state-run provisions because they do not read the booklets and some do not have the social capacities to make themselves aware. Most students are aware of health care allowance. There is also a group who is fully aware and who makes use of everything they can possibly make use of. The informants agreed that for some clients the educational level and lack of communicational capacities are important factors for the non-use of social welfare provisions. The initiator of the Food Bank stated: “It is not for everybody that easy to write a letter or to tell a servant from Tax Service or the Housing Corporation in a decent and polite manner that you have a problem.”

Contrarily, the social worker of Welzijn Charlois thought food bank clients were pretty well aware of the supply of social services, though “there is a group you always have to point out to they can make use of certain services.” She believed that many people were aware because they have mostly been on social benefits for a long time, so “they often exactly know where to go to in order to get certain things.” The social worker of Welzijn Charlois also stated that some people “are just not in the system. They lack the motivation or do not have the motivation anymore. Sometimes we see that for example Africans and Antilleans are satisfied more easily. As a result they feel less pressure to look for a job or to push their client manager

to see what things they are eligible for. (...) They have different goals, a different attitude.” This woman argued that the problems people have are the same, but that they deal with it in a different manner. “Are you able to look for solutions yourself or do you place the responsibility in the hands of others?” According to her this has also something to do with the network you are part of, the extent to which you are integrated in the Dutch society, your health situation (both mentally and physically) and your educational level.

It appears that the initiator of the Food Bank, the social workers from House of Hope, Welzijn Charlois and the Albeda College and both client managers agreed that social service (SoZaWe) was not easily accessible. The initiator of the Food Bank and the social worker of House of Hope believe client managers do not look sufficiently at things people are entitled to. “They confine themselves to Eneco bills and rent debts.” The social worker of House of Hope thinks client managers simply do not have enough time to help people properly. This idea chimes with the view of the interviewed client managers: they are often forced to focus on finishing the application procedure as soon as possible. As a result they do not have enough time to go through the BRUG-booklet carefully for example.

The initiator of the Food Bank thinks that applying organizations do not look at other services people can make use of sufficiently. “Many people have various forms of help. I think each care-giver thinks: ‘another care-giver will inform him/her about this’, they all do their own job.” The social workers from House of Hope and Welzijn Charlois responded to this statement by saying that they always check the provisions people make use of and provisions they are entitled to. They look at where the money is going to, what costs they have and what kind of and how many debts they have. They said that many people do not even know they are entitled to provisions or they do not know how certain procedures work. Every three months House of Hope does a check to see if people’s situation changed. This is a relatively new policy as last year many food bank clients remained fully “out of sight”. After a year they came back and none of their problems had been solved. Also Welzijn Charlois checks the financial situation of people regularly. She also pointed out that the Municipal Credit Bank also closely looks at the possibilities in terms of social provisions; “of course they look at this as it might be another opportunity to pay off debts.” Interestingly, when the social worker of the Albeda College suggests the food bank to a student she does not look at whether or not they make or can make use of special assistance for example. “Theoretically students are

entitled to special assistance as well, but the last two years all the claims of students were rejected. That is why I am not even trying it anymore.”

In general though, it becomes clear that it is unlikely that neither the client manager, nor the social worker, nor the Municipal Credit Bank/budget control looks at the social provisions such as special assistance clients are eligible for. It is possible that a client does not make use of any of the above-mentioned forms of care provision. If they do not have an active attitude, they will not know what provisions are available and if they are entitled to it. Another possibility is that people are not eligible. Moreover, it appeared that client managers not always check provisions people can make use of. Also, if a person has been on social assistance benefits for a long time, he will never, unless he asks for it, meet his client manager. It could also be the case that the social workers I have interviewed check provisions people are entitled to regularly, but that this does not necessarily count for other social workers. Thus in the overall picture, it is not totally clear where in the chain (from gaining knowledge about a provision to claiming a provision) it goes wrong.

§ 5.2 Typology of food bank clients: same meat, different gravy

From the retrieved data it can be concluded that food bank clients can be divided in five types of clients. The typology is based on factors that influence the (non) use of the food bank and state-run provisions. The typologies are ranked on the basis of frequency of occurrence. So, the ignorant client is most apparent and the knowledgeable client is least apparent.

1) Ignorant client

Most of these clients have been on social benefits for a long time. When they first received social benefits (maybe ten years ago) the state did not require an active attitude. This group does not feel ashamed of making use of the food bank. What they mainly like about it is that it has little thresholds for them; especially the relatively easy application procedure is a reason for them to apply. Whereas they have little trust in the state, they have a lot of trust in the food bank. This type of client might have been an active client in the past. This type of client feels 1) that he cannot grasp developments within society and within the welfare state; this results in a passive attitude. He thinks: ‘I do not apply for special assistance because I do not know how that works’, or 2) in the past he had an active approach but experienced adversity. As a result he thinks ‘I do not apply because I never get anything anyway’. In general this client

scores low on social skills and educational level.

2) Care-avoider

Part of this group is relatively isolated and lacks both a social and a care network that can inform him about possible provisions. However, another part of this group *is* part of a large social network; these are mainly allochthonous people. Interestingly, their social network is one of the reasons for being a care-avoider. They do not speak Dutch, or minimally, and this together with minimal knowledge within their community about state-run provisions prevents them from making use of certain provisions. This is a group who sometimes/often refuses making use of the food bank, as they are afraid of being stigmatized within their community. They often end up at the food bank because of help from an ethnicity-based care/welfare provider (such as Welfare Foundation Antilleans and Aruba (SWA)).¹⁸

3) Victimized client

This type of client has a very passive attitude and places the responsibility of finding solutions in the hands of others. Moreover, their perception of the state is extremely negative; they find it complex, bureaucratic and do not have trust in the provider. In general they score low on social skills and educational level. They also score low on perceived eligibility; they often *think* they are not eligible. For the care network this is a difficult group as they have an attitude of digging one's heels in. This group has a lot of trust in the food bank volunteers, mainly because it is non-state. They feel the volunteers understand their situation, even if they never talk about their problems and have only shallow conversations with the volunteers. They feel that they are able to count on someone they *think* they can trust and who understands their situation. A part of this group has a lot of contact with other food bank clients. They feel bonded.

4) Optimistic client

This type of client ended up in the grave situation he is in relatively recently. These can be people who just lost their job or young people who are on social (assistance) benefits for the first time. These people think they will need food bank support only for a short period of time; they have the impression this situation will be temporary. For this group it is a big step to go to the food bank because it emphasizes the seriousness of the situation; making use of the food bank makes them face the facts. This group is also the group who does not want to make use of the food bank; they think 'I can manage it myself and do not need that'. Non-use of

¹⁸ In the above typology the eligibility of people is left out of account. It mainly refers to the decision-making process to claim or not claim a certain provision. 64

provisions mainly lies in the optimistic future perspectives. However, sometimes it turns out that they cannot manage it themselves and in that case the role of the care network becomes crucial; it make people aware that they really need a certain provision. For this type of client the perceived social consequences can be negative as they are afraid of being stigmatized.

5) Knowledgeable client

This client has good social skills and scores high on educational level. This client has a rational approach where the use of provisions and contact with institutions is concerned. Action is based on rationality, rather than on feelings. He recognizes that a good relationship with your client manager can be valuable. The role of the care network is minimal; this client figures things out himself. This type of client tries to do the utmost to get out of the grave situation as soon as possible. This type of client can still experience state-run services as complex but is motivated to continue. For this type of client the step to make use of the food bank can be big as he experiences it as shameful. The active attitude of the client and the ability to make a careful cost-benefit analysis if claiming of a provision is concerned, are the main reasons why he makes use of social provisions (food bank and state-run provisions).

§ 5.3 Factors influencing (non) use of food bank and state-run provisions

The time has come to answer the central research question of this study. *Why do some people make use of food banks whereas they do not make use of certain 'alternative' social welfare provisions provided by the state, while others choose to combine the use of social welfare provisions provided by the state and support provided by food banks?*

First of all it became clear that the word 'choose' in the central question does not do much justice to the reality since it appears that claiming use of the food bank is indeed the result of a (rather) well-considered decision but for most clients claiming state-run provisions is actually not. From the analysis of the interviews with food bank clients, the initiator of the Food Bank and various workers from the local care network (e.g. social work, SoZaWe) it appears that there is a difference in knowledge of provision, personal characteristics and in the way clients experience help from the food bank versus state-run support among food bank clients. This distinction results in a difference in the reasons why (not) they claim various provisions and how they experience the use of provisions they make use of. It is important to realize that there is a difference in 'claiming' provisions and 'making use' of provisions. There is a group that does not make use because they are *not eligible* and a group who does not make use

because they *do not claim* a certain provision. Unfortunately, I was unable to find out if those who did not make use of state-run provisions were actually eligible. Often fuss arises as a reaction to the limited use of state-run provisions among food bank clients. This study did not check eligibility for state-run provisions but it does show why some people claim a provision while others do not. From the interviews with workers from the care network it also became clear why some people do not claim usage of the food bank. This research demonstrates that reasons for (non) use of provisions are often multi-fold.

The most important reason why people make use of the food bank is because either people within their own social network or workers from the local care network make them aware of the existence of the food bank. Clients do not ask their social worker if they can make use of the food bank; most often it is the social worker or psychiatrist who makes a person aware of the food bank and suggests making use of it. The role of the client manager appears to be minimal in this context. Another important reason why people make use of the food bank is because they feel a 'subjective need' to receive a weekly food package. Apparently, they consider food bank support as a useful aid in making ends meet. Another factor that has great influence on the use of the food bank is the low transaction costs. When people consider the procedural outcomes of the claiming (travel costs to hand-out point, bureaucracy during procedure, complexity of application, the trust they have in the volunteers and the extent to which they feel they understand the situation they are in) they believe it to be worthwhile to claim usage of the food bank. Interestingly, it appears that the social skills of the client, the educational level and the command of the Dutch language *do not* play a big role if claiming use of the food bank is concerned. This is most likely do to the simplicity of the application procedure. It appears that people who have a very negative view of the state are very keen on making use of non-state support like the food bank. A factor that influences *non-use* of the food bank, or hesitation in claiming use, is 'negative social consequences'. Some people are afraid to be stigmatized within their community or neighbourhood. Another factor leading to non-use is low subjective need. This is most apparent among those who ended in the grave situation recently. Obviously there is also a group who does not make use of the food bank because they are not eligible.

I believe that the most important reason why some food bank clients do make use of certain state-run provisions while others do not is because some people are eligible while others are not, because some provisions (special assistance and long-term minimum income allowance)

have stringent criteria that only allows the most needy to make use of it. I was unable to check eligibility but, by far the largest group of food bank clients sees a social worker or psychiatrist and from the interviews with workers from the care network it appears that social workers regularly check provisions clients are entitled to because many clients have serious financial problems. This means it is unlikely that food bank clients do not receive a certain provision while they are actually entitled to it. Apart from that, many clients make or made use of debt guidance. Debt guidance service also checks eligibility for provisions. Interestingly, the role of the client manager is somewhat disappointing in this context. This brings us to the other factor that leads to non-use of state-run provisions: knowledge of the provision is lacking. The lack of knowledge is caused by a combination of factors. Many, if not most, clients are dependent on social assistance benefits (WWB). This means SoZaWe (social service) assigned them a client manager. During the intake this client manager should inform a client about possible services he can apply for. However, not every client manager does this as careful as they should do. Also, whereas social work regularly checks eligibility for certain provisions, a client only sees his client manager if he asks for it. SoZaWe does send out a newspaper every two or three months though, however, the interviewed client managers did not get the impression everyone reads this paper carefully. SoZaWe uses an approach that takes the individual responsibility as a starting point, but apparently food bank clients find it difficult to take initiative if contact with state organizations is concerned and many think SoZaWe should contact them instead of the other way around.

The lack of knowledge about provisions is also related to client-related characteristics. If a client has an active attitude, wants to get out of the grave situation as soon as possible, if he speaks the Dutch language, if he thinks 'I can manage to claim that provision' and if his social network or care network encourages him to apply for services it is likely a client will claim a state-run provision. If, on the contrary, a person has a negative and pessimistic attitude, or if he does not make use of any institution in the care network, or his social network hampers him to apply for a provision, or if his social network cannot inform him about the possibilities of provisions, or if he lacks the social skills to have a conversation with whatever state institution to ask for help, it is unlikely he will claim a state-run provision. Among food bank clients the lack of social skills, language problems and a negative and pessimistic attitude prevents many clients from gaining knowledge about state-run provisions. Some food bank clients *think* they are not entitled to services because in the past they have applied for several

provisions but they never got it. Many clients have a (very) negative connotation with state-run provisions. They think it is bureaucratic, complex and they feel the civil servant does not understand his situation anyway. This way of thinking prevents many clients, especially those who have been on social (assistance) benefits for a long time, to get in contact with for example SoZaWe. It is also possible that some clients perceive the utility of a certain provision as low. This means they do not believe it to be worthwhile to claim a certain provision. All this together leads to high transaction costs: a negative net balance of beliefs and feelings with regard to the (expected) procedural outcomes of the claiming (travel costs, bureaucracy, complexity, time, and trust in provider). An important factor that leads to *use* of state-run provision is the nature of the provision; (semi) automatic or not. It became clear that many food bank clients make use of (semi) automatic provisions as health care and rent allowance, but not of non-automatic provisions (more complex application procedure) like long-term minimum income allowance or special assistance. So the (perceived) complexity highly influences (non) use. Figure 5.2 provides an overview of the factors that influence the (non) use of provisions, including the food bank.

Figure 5.2: Factors influencing (non) use of provisions

Provisional level factors	Administration level factors	Client level factors: proxies	Eligibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge of provision ● Subjective need ● Perceived utility of the provision ● Type of provision (semi)-automatic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceived eligibility ● Transaction costs: a positive net balance of beliefs and feelings with regard to the (expected) procedural outcomes of the claiming (travel costs, bureaucracy, complexity, time, trust in provider) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social skills ● Educational level / language ● Social network ● Care network ● Attitudes ● Perceptions ● Experiences ● Social consequences (stigma) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eligibility versus non-eligibility

Thus, it can be concluded that food bank clients make use of the food bank because they are aware of it, they feel they need the weekly food package and they have positive beliefs and feelings with regard to the application procedure. Non-use of the food bank is due to ineligibility or feelings of shame and pride that prevent them from claiming usage. Non-use of state-run provisions is mainly the result of not being eligible. Food bank clients often use state-run provisions that are (semi) automatic. Also, the role of the care network is very important in order to make them aware of the existence of provisions. An active care worker can convince a client to claim a provision either by helping the client in the application procedure or by convincing the client of the utility of the provision or by simply informing the client about the existence of the provision. Negative feelings and beliefs with regard to the procedural outcomes of the claiming often lead to non-claiming. Claiming state-run provisions is for many clients related to complexity and bureaucracy.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this final part of the research I will go over the conclusions of this study. In the discussion part I will look at the findings and conclusions in the light of existing literature and place the research in the societal and policymaking context.

§ 6.1 The story so far...

Presently the Food Bank (SVN) serves about 1.800 families in the area of Rotterdam Rijnmond. The food bank is a private initiative as it is a non-state, self-governing initiative that carries out charitable activities of a structured, continuous and organized kind. The central question of this study was: Why do some people make use of food banks whereas they do not make use of certain ‘alternative’ social welfare provisions provided by the state, while others choose to combine the use of social welfare provisions provided by the state and support provided by food banks? 37 food bank clients and eight other informants (initiator Food Bank, social workers, client managers of SoZaWe¹⁹) have been interviewed in-depth.

The food bank helps people with an income below the social minimum level by providing its clients with a weekly food package. Recently, the food bank started a new project: Buddy Advice Plan (*Maatjes Advies Plan*). This project is aimed at facilitating the use of state-run provisions among food bank clients by means of helping them in claiming state-run provisions. Support from the state for people with a low income is provided in the form of money. Social protection in the Netherlands comprises all income support for people who are unable to provide for themselves due to illness, long-term incapacity to work, unemployment or retirement. Apart from this, the state provides certain allowances (health care, rent and child benefit allowance). In Rotterdam, citizens with a low income can apply for special assistance²⁰, long-term minimum income allowance, pardon (community) taxes/debts, and the RotterdamCard (at reduced tariff). Whereas the state provides help to secure a minimum level of income and support for those with a low income, the food bank actually provides help to those who, for whatever reasons, ended up *below* the social minimum level.

In terms of eligibility both forms of support differ as the state looks at the daily or monthly net income while the food bank looks at the *disposable* monthly income. The food bank is based on the premise that help should be distributed on the basis of individual need, as determined by a test of income. Eligibility criteria from the state differ per type of help.

¹⁹ Social Service and Employment

²⁰ If people, due to certain *special* circumstances like the birth of a child, have to make expenses they cannot afford, they can apply for special assistance.

Certain forms of support (national and employee insurance schemes) are made available to everyone as a social right. Other types of help (e.g. special assistance) are distributed on the basis of individual need and focus on an individual's personal (financial) situation. Help from the state is relatively anonymous whereas food bank support is not. Also, help from the state is based on a social contract between citizens and the state; social rights of citizenship are balanced by obligations. Contrarily, the relationship between volunteers of the food bank and its recipients is inherently asymmetrical.

In terms of reasons for (non) use of the food bank and state-run provisions it appears food bank clients can be categorized in five types of clients: 1) the ignorant client (dependent on social benefits for a long time, not ashamed of going to the food bank, simplicity of application procedure food bank leads to claim, little trust in state, lot of trust in food bank), 2) victimized clients (passive attitude, lack of individual responsibility, extremely negative attitude towards the state, pessimistic attitude), 3) care-avoider (part of this group lacks social and care network which leads to lack of knowledge about provisions, for the other group their social network (mainly allochthonous) prevents them from gaining knowledge about and claiming state-run provisions, non-use of food bank is the result of the fear of being stigmatized within their community), 4) optimistic client (ended up in grave situation recently, optimistic future perspectives lead sometimes to non-use of food bank and state-run provisions due to the lack of subjective need), and 5) the knowledgeable client (active attitude, knowledge of provision, good social skills, role of care network is minimal).

People make use of the food bank mainly because they are aware of its existence (mostly social workers make people aware of the food bank), they feel the subjective need to make use of it and they consider the application procedure as relatively easy which supports them in claiming usage. State-run provisions that are used by many food bank clients are (semi) automatic services like rent allowance. Non-use of state-run provisions is mainly the result of ineligibility. Claiming other state-run provisions like special assistance and long-term income allowance is mainly the result of the active attitude of the client or because of the active role of the care network (e.g. client manager, social worker). This demonstrates that the role of the care network is vital in terms of raising awareness about existence of provisions and in terms of supportiveness in claiming usage of food bank services and state-run services among food bank clients.

Conclusions in a wider context

Looking at the broader social and policymaking context the following can be concluded: there is a group of people living below the social minimum in the Netherlands. A part of this group receives a weekly food package that helps them in making ends meet. It appears these food bank clients have a structural imbalance in income and costs. This imbalance can be the result of difficulties clients experience in controlling their budget. For other clients an incidental financial mishap resulted in a structural imbalance in income and expenses because their tight budget does not allow extensive once-only expenses. Whereas a part of this group of food bank clients does not make use of state-run provisions aimed at securing a minimum level of income because they are ineligible, another group does not make use of this because they are unaware of its existence. The typology of food bank clients shows that there is a difference in the way people deal with and react to the government approach of focusing on individual responsibility. Many food bank clients appear to face difficulties in this, often resulting in a passive or victimized attitude. This study has shown that the role of the local care network is crucial in this context, both for the use of the food bank as well as for the use of state-run provisions like special assistance and minimum income allowance in order to ease their difficult financial situation. However, it also becomes clear that the role of social workers, debt guidance and budget control is utterly important in order to signalise problems so that it can be prevented that people eventually end up below the social minimum level.

Another utterly interesting conclusion is that this research demonstrates that among food bank clients the reputation of a private initiative like the food bank is better than the reputation of state-run provisions. Whereas state-run provisions are, in the eyes of food bank clients, characterized by complexity, bureaucratic red tape and long waiting periods, the food bank is characterized by simplicity and immediate action. This shows that a private initiative like the food bank, *merely because it is non-state*, attracts a certain group of people among those with a low income. For this group of people a weekly food package helps them in making ends meet or at least it facilitates clients in controlling their tight budget.

§ 6.2 Discussion

Theoretical reflections

The presented results are to some extent in line with and to some extent different from previous research on the rise of private initiatives, non-use of social welfare provisions and

food bank clients in the Netherlands. Referring to the possible roles Anheier and Daly (2007: 13-14) and Salamon, Hems and Chinnock (2000: 15, 16) ascribed to private initiatives it can be argued that the food bank fulfils the role of *social and policy change* (Anheier and Daly) and the *innovation role* (Salamon et. al.). The food bank demonstrates a new approach (characterized by simplicity, a personal approach, means-testing) to the poverty problem in the Netherlands, but they mainly address previously unmet or unsatisfied needs and demands of certain (excluded) groups of society. It is difficult to determine if it can be argued that the food bank is an alternative for state-run social welfare provisions as it appeared that 1) food bank initiators do not see their help as a *substitute* for state support; they assume it is possible to come by on a minimum income level and 2) by far the largest group of food bank clients has not made a deliberate decision to make use of the food bank *instead of* state-run welfare provisions. The food bank has a *signal* function in the sense that they demonstrate that there is a group in society that cannot come by on the social minimum and who face difficulties in their contact with the state. As a result a part of the food bank clients does not make use of certain provisions due to a lack of knowledge about these provisions. There is also a group that is not eligible anyway but still experiences struggles in coming by every month.

The theoretical approaches posed by Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier (2000) to explain the persistence and recent resurgence of the nonprofit sector were all linked to the level of government spending. In their approach they do not make a clear distinction between private initiatives that are closely related and subsidized by the government and those that operate independent from the state. From this research it appears that the ‘success’ of the food bank is the result of the improved accessibility of the food bank, the increase in awareness of the existence of the food bank among the care network, the need among certain groups in society for a weekly food package and the appreciation of food bank clients who apparently appreciate the type of support that is provided by the food bank. This need is, according to the Food Bank and according to the retrieved data, not directly the result from a decrease in government spending. This need has more to do with the complex and bureaucratic accompanying policies/approaches towards citizens that have individual responsibility at its core. The Food Bank was not initiated because the state decreased their spending but because there is a certain group the state does not reach. Also, a certain group experiences difficulties in dealing with complexities and, to a lesser extent, certain temptations (alcohol, credit cards) in modern society that sometimes leads to serious (debt) problems. The latter confirms the

idea that the rise of private initiatives is not so much linked to the level of government spending (so little government spending does not necessarily mean an increase in private initiatives) but that it has more to do with the administration level of provisions within the welfare state accompanied by the strong focus on individual responsibility and the difficulties some people face in making ends meet with a tight budget. I would not go as far as saying that modern state bureaucracies, the rules they are characterized by, and the power in the hands of officials who represent the bureaucracies, are not experienced as legitimate anymore. It does become clear though, that in general food bank clients have little trust in the state and they also indicate that state-run provisions are characterized by complexity. This creates a threshold when the claiming of state-run provisions is concerned. According to Van Oorschot (1994) the most important reason for non-use of social welfare provisions is that people are not aware of its existence. The outcomes of my research are in line with this conclusion. It appears that the following factors are crucial when lack knowledge of provisions is concerned: low educational level, lack of command of Dutch language, pessimistic attitude and most importantly, the minimal or passive role of the care network.

Limitations

The data collected by means of 45 in-depth interviews with food bank clients, the initiators of the food bank and various workers from the care network of clients provided me with insights in the world of the food bank client. However, as the respondents were gathered in a non-randomized way, it is hard to establish the external validity of the research results. Although relatively few workers from the care network have been interviewed, I believe the diversity among interviewed workers enabled me to come to the aforementioned conclusions. Only respondents who spoke Dutch or English have been interviewed. Thereby they could represent a different type of group than the general population of food bank clients. Nonetheless, insights have been gained about the reasons why people make use of the food bank and (why) not of certain state-run provisions. The semi-structured character of the interviews with food bank clients led to conversational interviews. A disadvantage of this is that certain topics were discussed with some clients while they were not with other clients. An advantage is that their normative views and personal experiences were at the core of the interviews, rather than my expectations. During the interviews there was a basic list of topics that was discussed with all clients. During the interviews with food bank clients I have been able to ask which social provisions they have claimed but unfortunately I was not able to

check if they were eligible for certain provisions which made it difficult to determine whether a person does not make use of a service because of ineligibility or because of other reasons. A comprehensive understanding of personal characteristics (length of dependence on benefits, eligibility) in relation to (non) use of social provisions is needed so that the exact mechanisms through which the decision-making process of food bank clients emerges can be uncovered.

What about tomorrow? Practical implications of this study

It has become clear that the success of the food bank is mainly the result of the increased awareness of its existence among both the local care network and among citizens. This probably means that the better the accessibility of the food bank is and the more people know about the existence of the food bank, the end of its success is not in sight. Regardless the fact if this is desirable or not, it will not solve the problems of poverty in the Netherlands. As it appeared that non-use of state-run provisions among food bank clients is in most cases most likely to be the result of ineligibility, problems of poverty will only be partly resolved by increasing awareness of state-run provisions. It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the reasons why people ended up below the social minimum. Many food bank clients have a structural imbalance between income and costs; often this eventually results in (serious) debts. Relatively new services such as budget control and debt guidance seem to be fruitful. Unfortunately, it appears these services are overwhelmed by new applications and this often results in a long waiting period for applicants. Therefore, there is still a lot to gain in the field of debt guidance and debt prevention. Nonetheless, there are still benefits to be gained by increasing the awareness about the existence of state-run provisions such as special assistance among food bank clients. In this context, the role of the client manager is very important. This study showed that the current approach of SoZaWe Rotterdam focuses on the individual responsibility of the client, but at the same time many food bank clients face difficulties in taking initiative when contact with SoZaWe is concerned. The reorganization at SoZaWe Rotterdam (resulting in clients having more than one client manager), will probably make SoZaWe even more inaccessible than it is right now according to food bank clients. The new project of the Food Bank, the Buddy Advice Plan, is an interesting development in this context. If this project expands, both in terms of clients and volunteers, a new type of arrangement emerges that functions as an intermediary organization between the state and its citizens. In a way that would be a serious development as it demonstrates that the state is incapable of reaching needy citizens.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1**Places of hand-out points Food Bank Foundation Netherlands according to city:**

- Amsterdam
- Anna Paulowna
- Beverwijk
- Breda
- Den Bosch
- Den Helder
- Deventer
- Eindhoven
- Enschede
- Goeree Overflakkee
- Gooi en Omstreken
- Gorinchem
- Gouda
- Haaglanden
- Haarlemmermeer
- Haarlem
- Hellevoetsluis
- Hoorn
- Leerdam
- Leeuwarden
- Leiden
- Lelystad
- Midden-Twente
- Moerdijk
- Naarden/Bussum
- Oost Groningen
- Oss
- Papendrecht
- Purmerend
- Rotterdam/Rijnmond
- Sliedrecht
- Spijkenisse
- Texel
- Tilburg
- Utrecht
- Vaassen(wenum wiesel)
- Veldhoven
- Velsen
- Venlo
- Walcheren
- West Friesland
- Zaanstreek-Waterland
- Zierikzee schouwenduiveland
- Zutphen
- Zwolle

APPENDIX 2

Figure 3.1

<u>2007</u>	Feijenoord	Charlois	Kralingen-Crooswijk	Prins Alexander
Job seekers	7.767	5.235	3.513	3.206
WWB-benefits	5.943	4.757	3.264	2.284
WAO (WIA), WAZ, WAJONG	3.714	3.111	2.195	4.039
% > 65+	11%	14%	13%	20%
% 18-34	25%	29%	33%	19%
% vocational and higher education	39%	46%	68%	62%
Safety monitor*	Threatened	Threatened	Attention	Safe
Average WOZ- value houses **	€ 114.600	€ 96.700	€ 163.100	€ 167.000

Source: CWI, COS, (2007)

* 1) unsafe, 2) problem, 3) threatened, 4) attention, 5) safe

** 2006

APPENDIX 3

Bertine Meindert: social worker from House of Hope²¹. She was interviewed because they deal a lot with Africans and Antilleans and I interviewed relatively few Africans. This enabled me to retrieve information about African clients.

Grietje Meijer: social worker from Welzijn Charlois. She was interviewed since one of the hand-out points I visited was located in Charlois. This way I could see if their view chimed with the view pictured by the clients themselves.

Clara Sies (Food Bank): by interviewing one of the directors of the Food Bank I gained a better understanding of why the food bank was initiated, how they operate and who their clients

Client manager Dienst Arbeid & Inkomen Gouda²²: this woman worked as both client manager 'work' and 'income' at SoZaWe Rotterdam from 2001-2004. She used to work as a client manager in Utrecht and right now she works as a client manager in Gouda. The fact that this woman did not work in Rotterdam anymore enabled her to look at the situation from a more distanced point of view. The fact that she worked in different cities enabled her to compare what she is seeing in different cities.

Raoul Klebach, SoZaWe Rotterdam: this man works as an integral client manager in Rotterdam for six years now. Before that, he was on social assistance benefits for 19 years. I believed Mr. Klebach could provide clear and comprehensive answers to my questions as he has experience with 'both sides of the counter'.

Marjo den Bakker: coordinator of hand-out point Crooswijk and Open Huis Crooswijk. She was interviewed because when I visited hand-out point Crooswijk I felt that the volunteers had a very close relationship with the clients. Interviewing her enabled me to find out things many clients were unable to formulate themselves.

Kristel van der Want: social worker of the Albeda College (ROC). She was interviewed in order to get a clearer picture of who the students are who visit the food bank as I had not been able to interview any students myself.

²¹ "House of Hope wants to stimulate the open and respectful contact between people and to support adults and children who are in a tough and difficult situation. In that way we hope to enhance the livability of the neighborhood and to improve the personal wellness of people, nobody excluded." (2008) House of Hope is located in the Tarwewijk in Rotterdam-Charlois; a neighborhood mostly populated by allochthonous persons.

²² Wishes to remain anonymous.

APPENDIX 4

Social assistance benefits norms (net amounts per 1 January 2008)	Per month	Holiday allowance	Total
<u>21 year till 65</u>			
Married or unmarried living together	€ 1.201,05	€ 59,23	€ 1.260,28
100% of minimum wage (together)			
Single parent	€ 840,74	€ 41,45	€ 882,20
70% of minimum wage			
Single	€ 600,52	€ 29,62	€ 630,14
50% of minimum wage			
Maximum allowance for single parent and singles of 21 till 65 year	€ 252,06	-	€ 252,06
<u>Younger than 21 years old</u>			
Benefits are based on Child Benefits			
Married or unmarried living together, both partners younger than 21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without child(ren) • With child(ren) 	€ 415,03 € 655,24	€ 20,47 € 32,32	€ 435,50 € 687,56
Married or unmarried living together, one partner younger than 21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without child(ren) • With child(ren) 	€ 808,04 € 1.048,25	€ 39,85 € 51,70	€ 847,89 € 1.099,95
Single parent	€ 447,73	€ 22,08	€ 469,81
Single	€ 207,52	€ 10,23	€ 217,75
<u>65 or older</u>			
Benefits equal net AOW			
Married or unmarried living together, both partners 65 or older	€ 1.259,71	€ 62,13	€ 1.321,84
Married or unmarried living together, one partner younger than 65	€ 1.259,71	€ 62,13	€ 1.321,84
Single parent	€ 1.132,09	€ 55,83	€ 1.187,92
Single	€ 918,48	€ 45,30	€ 963,78
<u>In institution without obligations</u>			
Single or single parent	€ 267,44	€ 13,19	€ 280,63
Married	€ 415,98	€ 20,52	€ 436,50

APPENDIX 5

- Baby package
- Mentor/budget control
- Lawyer
- Child care
- Costs interpreter refugees and entitled asylum seekers
- PGB (personal budget)
- Alarm equipment for people older than 75 years
- Travel expenses
- Return to Dutch Antilles or Aruba
- Tide over for single parents
- Money for rent and energy (youngster till 20 years with children)
- Clothing and/or shoes
- Bra's and swimming suits in case of a breast prosthesis
- Tide over in case of waiting for first social benefit
- Tide over in case of stolen wallet
- Tide over in case of drop of income with at least 25 percent
- Debts (pardon taxes)
- Bonus 65+
- Youth care own contribution law on youth care
- Clothing, shoes, and/or bedding in case of sickness or handicap
- Pedicure/foot care (for non-medical reasons)
- Contract, reparation costs and batteries for hearing appliance
- Bonus for chronically diseased and disabled people
- Fire loss/damage
- Hotel stay
- Household care
- Rent and energy costs
- Costs for moving and furnishing new house
- Furniture and household appliances
- Warmth bonus
- Bonus for people with high rent
- Bonus people with own house
- Course Unutilized Qualities
- Dress for Success
- Education Fund Rotterdam (Stichting Leergeld Rotterdam)
- (Long)-lasting - lend out – service
- Long-term minimum income allowance
- Travel expenses (various reasons)
- RotterdamCard
- Social legal advisers

APPENDIX 6

Table 4.1 Social benefits		Freq
Valid	WWB	23
	Sickness benefits	2
	Unempl. benefits	2
	Wajong/WIA	6
	AOW	1
	No benefits	2
	Total	36
Missing		1
Total		37

Table 4.2 Health care allowance		Freq
Valid	Yes	33
	No	3
	Total	36
Missing		1
Total		37

Table 4.3 Rent allowance		Freq
Valid	yes	29
	no	7
	Total	36
Missing		1
Total		37

Table 4.4 Special assistance		Freq
Valid	yes	8
	no	28
	Total	36
Missing		1
Total		37

Table 4.5 Social work		Freq
Valid	Yes	30
	No	4
	Unknown	3
	Total	37