

Abstract for review

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Varieties of Helping the Poor. The Institutional Roots of Informal and Organized Giving of Money and Time across Europe

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Abstract:

Poverty remains a critical problem to most European societies, despite highly developed market economies and welfare states (Berthoud 2004, Cantillon 2011, Fourage and Layte 2005, Nolan and Whelan 2010, Vandenbroucke and Vleminckx 2011). If market exchange and public redistribution do not suffice to secure a basic standard of living, private help by citizens is a last means of alleviating poverty. Most basically, two forms of giving can be distinguished that vary by their level of formalization (Wilson and Musick 1997): citizens may either give to the needy informally, by providing "ad-hoc" support on the streets, or they provide help through an organization, e.g a charity. In addition, people can either provide material goods, like money or the can provide their time, in volunteer work. Yet, whether, how and what people give varies widely across individuals and countries (EC 2010, Havens, O'Herlihy and Schervish 2006, Piliavin and Charng 1990).

In accounting for these variations two problems of existing research stand out. First, while, many studies focus on "who gives" only little research has explicitly addressed "how" help is provided (Havens, O'Herlihy and Schervish 2006, Lee, Piliavin and Call 1999). Second, research on philanthropic giving heavily focuses on actor centered approaches, relating to certain motives, beliefs, resources or networks. Such explanations, however, cannot fully account for the large country differences in giving. Therefore a growing strand of research emphasizes the importance of certain contextual factors, like welfare policies, non-profit sectors or religiosity. However,

informal and organized giving might have very different institutional roots, resulting from the varying organization and institutionalization of philanthropic giving across Europe (Healy 2000, Kang et al. 2011, Stadelmann-Steffen 2011). Thus, how and to what extent do European citizens help the poor? Moreover, how can different patterns of organized and informal giving be explained across Europe for donations of money and volunteer work?

Theoretically, we develop an institutional approach, complementing the “crowding-out” approach of welfare state theory, with the “crowding-in” of the non-profit sector regime approach and integrating aspects on the religious roots of organized and informal giving. Explanations are empirically tested using a quantitative multilevel approach to the Eurobarometer survey on poverty (72.1), 2009, across 20 countries.

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