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CALL FOR ABSTRACTS:

(deadline 30 March 2016 for abstract – 250 words)

Social innovation and food insecurity

Alex Murdock email: alex.murdock@lsbu.ac.uk

This panel builds on previous work involving panels at various third sector and social innovation conferences (ISIRC 2015, ARNOVA 2015 , ANSER 2015 and ISTR 2014). This has encouraged researchers in the UK, Europe and North America to develop work in this area. The work was initially focussed around food banks and these still represent an established phenomenon which are found in many countries. The model originated in North America and has significantly influenced developments globally. However, there has been limited published research on the actual operational model and relatively little comparative research. MacMillan in a presentation to ISIRC 2015 set out what might be the first attempt to explore the theoretical space associated with food banks and related food insecurity provision. He noted the following possible theoretical approaches:

Economic theories - state and market failure:

- *Demand heterogeneity* (Weisbrod, 1977) - voluntary provision arises in circumstances of market failure (to provide public goods) or state failure to meet all demands for goods
- *Contract failure* (Hansmann, 1980) – relatively vulnerable consumers find voluntary provision more trustworthy in the face of market information asymmetries
- *Entrepreneurship theory* (James, 1987) – theorising a supply side response to unsatisfied demand, based on faith and status motivations

Political and social theories - voluntary failure and other functions

- *Interdependence theory* (Salamon, 1987) – partnership of voluntary and state provision to mitigate the failures of each
- *Mellow weakness* (Seibel, 1990) – state delegates intractable social and political issues to a voluntary ‘dumping ground’
- *Shadow state* (Wolch, 1990) – voluntary provision incorporated into state projects serving to advance the interests of capital
- *Comparative advantage* (Billis & Glennerster, 1998; Billis, 2001) – voluntary provision involves plural stakeholders in close proximity to need and arises in response to particular states of disadvantage - financial, personal, societal and community.

However social innovation in response to food reaches well beyond the original food bank provision. This has taken a range of forms. Some have the characteristics of ‘social movements’ such as Incredible Edible and the ‘Real Junk Food’ movement which have spread rapidly to many countries. Some involve moving from the original perceived core

purpose of food banks as is shown by the 'More than Food' focus of the Trussell Trust in the UK.

Also innovation is found in respect of the operational aspects of food rescue and food insecurity and collaboration and partnership with both public and private sector displays often a synergistic relationship in which all parties derive a benefit. Perhaps for the private sector the phrases 'more than charity' and 'more than corporate social responsibility' may apply.

The area is contested in theoretical and discourse terms with food banks and related provision seen differently depending on perspective and assumptions. The main discourses have focussed around such aspects as 'poverty' and 'austerity' with discourses also relating to environmental, nutritional and educative aspects. Particularly in Europe and in the USA the 'civic-ness' of such provision is part of the discourse and concepts of both bridging and bonding social capital implicitly feature in the discourse.

Abstracts are welcome which focus on any aspects of this panel. Theoretical approaches are welcome and we would also welcome comparative work.

A call for a special issue of the Social Enterprise Journal will be issued shortly and papers submitted to ISIRC would automatically be considered for this issue.