Ik zou graag een abstract indienen voor het panel **C.3 Local social policy and representative justice, van Menno Fenger en Babs Broekema,**

Duco Bannink

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Does decentralisation of social policies support integration of social policies?

An increased emphasis on self-reliance and client-centredness and a shift from new public management to new public governance are seen as a fruitful response to problems of the welfare state. Self-reliance potentially leads to reduced cost. New public governance supports this, by allowing a stronger client-orientation. In general, we saw a shift towards the decentralized integration of social policies.

The main assumption supporting this shift in the welfare state is that decentralization of responsibilities leads to the integration of responsibilities. When social policy formation and implementation shift from the national to the local level, policy making and implementation occurs closer to the client. Therefore, we can arrange stronger client centredness and as such integrate the different sub-domains of social policy on the basis of client needs.

I argue that the main assumption of the shift is weakly informed. Decentralisation indeed allows a stronger understanding of the client, but there is no reason to expect that it also allows an increased capacity to integrate services. The doctor better understands the medical aspects of the particular client; the social work-official betters understands the social work-aspects; the teacher better understands teaching matters. Why would these actors better understand each other? That is, each other's understanding of the client? The actors that have a better understanding of the client are still actors that are integrated in their own policy domains.

I will discuss research from the Talma research group at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam on policy integration in the social and medical domain to argue that we cannot simply assume a connection between policy decentralization and policy integration.