

The foundations of welfare: Bruges and Ypres

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Juan-Luis Vives' De Subventione Pauperum ("On assistance to the poor") is almost certainly the first commissioned academic report to be written on the organisation of social welfare. It was published for the City of Bruges nearly five hundred years ago, in 1526. It reviews the theoretical arguments and the literature of the time before making recommendations for the management and administration of social welfare provision. The Forma Subventionis Pauperum, published five years later for the city of Ypres, is arguably the first evaluation report. It reviewed the background, aims, methods and outcomes of social welfare policy, in an attempt to justify the provision of welfare to the religious authorities.

These books lay out methods and approaches for the delivery of social services within their cities. People without work should be helped to employment, or to start a business; employment should be developed through a programme of public works. People with disabilities, mental illness and chronic sickness should be treated seriously, and recognised for what they can do. Migrants should be helped, even if it is not possible to help everyone. Special efforts should be made to help people who are reluctant or too proud to claim. No-one should be completely excluded. And services have to be properly organised, records have to be kept, and the use of funds has to be publicly accountable and subject to audit. Bruges rejected Vives' scheme, but the principle was adopted by other cities and approved by the Spanish emperor. Ypres had needs assessments, takeup campaigns, and a health service.

These documents laid the foundation of contemporary social policy. They are classic works in Social Policy. If you don't know them, you should.

This paper reviews two of the earliest books about public administration: the *De Subventionis Pauperum*, a work by Juan Luis Vives for the city of Bruges, and the *Forma Subventionis Pauperum*, an evaluation of the policy introduced in the city of Ypres. The first book is a commissioned report reviewing arguments for the organisation of social welfare provision. It was written for the Senate of Bruges, by the request of a former Prefect, and despite a nominal date of 1525 it seems to have been published early in 1526 (Mattheussen, 1986, p 88). It combines a set of theoretical arguments and a literature review, with detailed prescriptions for the management and administration of social welfare provision in the city. The second is an anonymous report, reviewing the operation of poor relief in the city of Ypres, written to explain and justify the scheme to the religious authorities. It was published in 1531, just over five years after the introduction of its pioneering scheme for relief in 1525. It reviews the background, aims, methods and outcomes of the policy. These works are probably the earliest studies ever written in the field of social policy. There have been various social policies since ancient times, and of course there were things written about welfare and charity. However, most of what had been written before these texts - in the Bible or the Talmud, Maimonides in the *Mishneh Torah* (Maimonides, 1180) or Luther's *Ordinances on a common chest* (Salter, 1926) - were laws, policies or instructions, rather than discussions of the subject. For principles, people might have referred to classical texts like Cicero's *De Officiis* and Seneca *De beneficiis*, but neither is really about social welfare, and neither is recognisable

as a study of social policy in the contemporary sense. Both of these books are.

Reformation and reform

The period when these works were written was a time of major social change, reflected in the development of a new theology and the birth of Protestantism. The social organisation of the cities was not a new development; they had emerged over a long period. In part, this reflected the slow growth of a mercantile class; in part, too, the cities were defensive communities, which needed to protect themselves from the instability caused by war, disease and consequent displacement from the land. The development of the new industrial practices - reflected in some of the examples given in these works - was linked both expansion of the cities and to their growing importance.

The defensive character of the cities created some tensions with the traditional approaches to welfare and begging supported by the Christian church. Charity, in mediaeval times, was a duty to God, rather than to the poor. Religious foundations offered indiscriminate support to itinerant beggars, which facilitated the movement of people, often in unstable times. Charitable donations were a practical way of ensuring reciprocal support and the ability to travel for clerics, especially those in the mendicant orders. They were also a major source of income for the Church, at a time when it was increasingly criticised for corruption and excess.

Luther posted his theses at Wittenberg in 1517; the Diet of Worms, the critical meeting which established his opposition to the Church, was in 1521. Protestantism was a challenge to many of the practices of the Church; it was taken up in several city-states, particularly the cities of Germany and Switzerland. The protestant movement may have offered an ideology that appealed to the new bourgeoisie (Weber, 1904), but it did more than that: it also offered a programme of practical reform for those who resented the financial burdens that the Church imposed. Luther issued his ordinance for Leisneck on the organisation of welfare in 1523, Zwingli wrote his for Zurich in 1525 (both in Salter, 1926). Luther prescribed the creation of a common chest, administered weekly by ten guardians, but also directed:

“It is neither permitted nor allowed that any monk, loiterer or church beggar shall himself beg or instigate begging in our parish, in town or village. ... No male or female beggar shall be allowed in our parish, in town or village; for such as do not suffer from age or sickness must work or be driven away from our parish, from town and village alike, with the aid of the authorities.” (Salter, 1926, pp 90-1)

Zwingli's ordinance, similarly, was restrictive in tone. Its content is highly specific - it even names the officials who will carry out the duties. More generally, he specified that

“The following types of poor citizens and country folk are not to be given alms: any persons, whether men or women, of whom it is known that they have spent and wasted all their days in luxury and idleness, and will not work, but frequent public-houses, drinking-places and haunts of ill-repute. Such folk shall be given nothing in the way of Poor Relief until they arrive at the last stage of destitution ...” (Salter, 1926, pp 100-101)

Viewed in this context, it might be expected that arguments and prescriptions for welfare reform in Bruges and Ypres might be seen as part of the same development. There is a relationship, but it is not straightforward. Neither report is Protestant in form, even if at times

there are some trenchant criticisms of the Catholic Church, and although begging is restricted, the approach to welfare is far more inclusive. The contents of the reports are both more liberal, and more practically oriented, than might have been expected.

The De Subventionem Pauperum

Vives' text was written in two 'books' or parts. Book 1 is labelled, in the 1530 Paris edition, as being about private relief; Book 2, about public relief organised by the city. This is more or less right, but it is also potentially misleading; it is no less true that book 1 is concerned with general principles, and book 2 with practical administration. Most writers and commentators have only referred to the second book, and until very recently only the second book was available in English translation.

A considerable emphasis has been put on Vives' practical approach and his apparent experience as an administrator. There are things in the text, such as references to the situation of people with mental illness, that he probably could not have written if he did not have some direct contact with the people he was writing about. However, Vives was a full-time scholar and writer: even if he had some experience, which is uncertain, he was clearly an academic rather than a practitioner. He had moved to Bruges at the age of 20, after a period at the Sorbonne, and from 1517 he held a position at Louvain. Vives first expressed an interest in poor relief in a letter in 1522, which shows, Mattheussen argues, that he had formed an interest while still at Bruges (Mattheussen, 1986, 91-2); but in the period when the reform of welfare provision was being most actively debated, from 1523 to 1525, Vives was mainly in England, where he had a post in Cardinal College, at Corpus Christi, Oxford. However, he travelled frequently between England and Flanders and he returned to Flanders in the summer of 1524 to be married. He most probably learned about the plans for Ypres while he was still in England: Tobriner suggests that Lauwereyens, a former mayor of Ypres, and Vives were in London together in the Spring of 1525 (Tobrer, 1999, p 16). The suggestion, however, that Vives was working on the *De Subventionem Pauperum* much earlier (Norena, 1970, p 96n) is tenuous; he said in a letter that he was working on something stunningly ambitious, but several of his later works (particularly *De Disciplinis*, which has the same kind of aspiration as the French Encyclopaedia of the 18th century) were far more adventurous intellectually than this book is, and there is no good reason to suppose that it is the project on welfare reform that he was talking about.

It is possible that the request to review welfare in Bruges was a recognition of Vives' personal interests, and that he had a free hand as to how to interpret his brief. However, it seems unlikely that Vives was working wholly by his own lights. He was not directly paid for the work - he was rewarded with a silver cup, and the city paid for a translation of the book into Dutch (Watson, 1913, lxvii) - but he did the work as a service to the city, and he was engaged on the basis that the work needed to be done. Any working researcher in public policy is likely to be familiar with the issues around the "research relationship" (see e.g. Wenger 1987, Percy-Smith et al 2002) - the relationship between the researcher and the body sponsoring research. The question that should come to mind what Louis van Praet, formerly the prefect or mayor of Bruges, could have expected to see when he invited Vives to write his report - and, indeed, why the city should have paid to make the work accessible to the public afterwards.

Before this commission, Vives was already an established and respected academic writer. Though relatively young, he had published some major works, including *De institutione feminae christianae* (On the education of Christian women) in 1523 and *Introductio ad sapientiam* (Introduction to wisdom) in 1524. He had an unusually wide range of academic interests, and a belief in applied knowledge or “practical wisdom” (see Watson, 1913). Few people had written about the subjects that Vives was ready to tackle - for example, love, marriage, education and the role of women. Policy makers may sometimes engage academics because they want ideas about what to do, but that is unusual. More typically they commission work because they want justifications for action, because they want a reason to delay a decision, because they want an independent view about whether a policy is working, or because they want the seal of approval or legitimacy which comes from academic authority. The timing of the commission, when Mons and Ypres were to introduce schemes and Bruges was not, sets aside some of these possible reasons; it suggests that the commission was intended to review arguments for change, or to add legitimacy to the process of making decisions. The first of these, that Vives was simply asked to review the arguments, is possible. There were certainly disputes at the time within the polity at Bruges: Vives’ scheme was not adopted there, and it was thirty years before Bruges set up a municipal system. Vives could, then, have been commissioned in the expectation that he would present the arguments for extending the Senate’s powers and role. The revised edition of Vives’s work, published in the Paris version, adds these words: “Political rivalry, the cruel plague of every city, must be especially avoided.” (Mattheussen and Fantazzi, 2002, p 127.)

Beyond that, though, the structure of the *De Subventione* served a wider political purpose. In a period when the reform of welfare was strongly associated with a challenge to the authority of the Church, a proposal to invest the role in the secular authorities was highly controversial, and strongly linked to Lutheranism. The *De Subventione* mounted a defence of welfare reform that could still be accepted within the Catholic Church. Vives was not an orthodox theologian. If he was hardly a faithful adherent of the doctrines of the Catholic church, nor was he remotely sympathetic to Luther’s negative, condemnatory view of humanity (Norena, 1970, 292-3). Erasmus wrote of him, in a letter to Thomas More, that

“no other man is more fitted to utterly overwhelm the battalions of the dialecticians in whose camps he served for a long time.” (cited Watson, 1913, p xxiii)

If anyone could present the material in a way that could satisfy the religious authorities, it was Vives. He set out to show that reform had a good theological grounding, and he devoted the first book to the purpose. He was certainly aware of the political sensitivity of what he was writing: he commented privately that he had had to approach the subject with caution, “for fear of contradicting the happy effect that I was hoping for, for so many thousands of beings” (cited Guy, 1972, p.138) “Rather than initiating change”, Kingdon suggests, “intellectuals often justified the changes engineered by the practical business leaders of the community. ... [Vives’s treatise] may thus be regarded ... as more a consecration of reform already under way than an impetus to new reform.” (Kingdon, 1971, p 68) Ultimately, it was legitimacy, more than any plan for action, that Vives’s arguments supplied.

The Forma Subventionis Pauperum

The *Forma Subventionis Pauperum* was written to explain and justify the scheme at Ypres to the Faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne. The scheme at Ypres was not the first of its kind:

nor was it as innovative as the report claims. It was a direct imitation of a similar scheme in Mons, based on the prevention of begging, a requirement to work, and the payment of funds into a common chest (Soly, 1997). By the time this report had appeared, similar schemes had been adopted in Lille, Nieuwpoort and Oudenarde. The arguments have to be seen in the same political context as Vives' work. This reform of welfare was closely associated with the rise of Protestantism, and there were reasons to be fearful about the reaction of the religious authorities. The Ypres report pre-empted this reaction, shrewdly, by going to an independent authority. The report seems to have been written in 1530; it was published in 1531 along with the judgment of the Sorbonne (City of Ypres, 1531); the Faculty described the scheme as "healthy and pious, and not inconsistent either with the Gospel or with the example of the Apostles or of our forefathers." (Salter, 1926, p 76)

Although the arguments had to stand up to religious examination, there is rather less emphasis on Christianity here than there is in Vives' work. The report is more practically oriented than Vives' work - it includes, for example, considerations about the management of incomers or the audit of accounts - and there are far fewer quotations and literary allusions than there are in Vives. The first half is a defence of the policy, offering reasons and justifications. The authors - the work is mainly written in the first person plural - condemn poor people, and they tend to emphasise the harsher, disciplinary elements of policy that are associated with early provision for the poor. The later sections include a number of short, pithy sections on both practical issues and issues of principle. By comparison with the opening sections, the second half is relatively liberal, emphasising the need to be inclusive and the challenges of practical management. There is a later point when the text goes back to general principles, and the style changes again. Overall, the text gives the impression that it was written around a series of headings, possibly agreed in committee; that some arguments were consequently addressed in detail, while others were not; and that the arguments have been subsequently edited and expanded to put the case to review.

Despite the uneven presentation of the argument, aspects of this report foreshadow the standard elements of any report on policy. The task was to show both that the scheme was right, and that it worked. The report presents a series of small sections covering, if not quite systematically, the background, causes, methods, implementation and outcomes of policy - many of the staple elements of policy analysis (Spicker, 2006). The reference to policy is explicit; there are sections on the advantages (*commoda*, or "commodities") of the policy, its future development, challenges and overall evaluation.

"We trust that seeing now it has then allowed this five years and is according to natural equity, and also is approved by the common consent of the multitude, it shall not decay but .. shall stand sure and unshaken."

Every generation of academics and researchers in public policy likes to think it has invented these structures for itself; it is a little unnerving to see something recognisable as a contemporary policy analysis in a document published in the sixteenth century.

Society and politics in theory

Vives begins from a model of a "golden age"; people have come together for practical reasons, forming communities, developing a division of labour, and exchanging goods through the development of money; but social relationships are corrupted by oppression and

inequality. (Roeck identifies the decline from a golden age with the Catholic idea of the fall; the position, he argues, distinguishes Vives strongly from the deterministic views of the Protestant reformers: Roeck, 1999.) Fernandez-Santamaria makes the case that for Vives, society is bound by “caritas” or charitable feeling (Fernandez-Santamaria, 1998); but Vives takes a less abstract view. People are bound by their creation, their nature and the practical necessities of social life to life by exchange, reciprocity and mutual support. Vives sees people as mutually dependent, but bonded together through a combination of common identity, shared needs and interdependence. His expression for this is “*communio vitae*”, the communion of life. This seems to be fairly directly equivalent to the concept of solidarity in Catholic social teaching. Solidarity is

‘A firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is ... the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for each other’ (cited Coote, 1989).

The main difference is that the idea of solidarity depends in part, and places high value on, responsibilities to families and small communities; Vives’s priority is often a more general altruism, and he is suspicious of those who claim to put their family first.

The Ypres report has less to say about social organisation; its model of the city is more political than social. It is based strongly in the idea of a city (or state) as a political community. Mutual responsibility comes from common status and responsibility, “for then shall Christian charity witness that we are members of one body”. “Poor men”, the anonymous writers assert, “no doubt are members of the city as well as rich.” This is not, however, a universalist position:

“We prefer our citizens, whose persons and manners we knew before strangers with whom we have no acquaintance. For we are chiefly bound to regard them because they be members with us of one political body.”

The politics of both these works can be described as ‘corporatist’, in the literal sense of seeing a political society as a body. This was a common approach in medieval political thought (Black, 1984). Vives represents the ruler, governor or senate as the mind of the political body. The duty of the government is to ensure the health of the city.

“Just as the body cannot be fed or live only through in one of its parts, but as a whole, the magistrate must take care of everything in his city, and cannot neglect anything.” Governors are responsible for every that happens in their city, and particularly for those who are dependent on others. They cannot hold back on the basis that some private body is doing it:

“Nothing is so independent in a city that it should be beyond the knowledge of those who govern it.”

Vives’ proposals consequently include mechanisms for gathering information, structures of accountability and a marked expansion of responsibilities.

Government is seen as an instrument to make people’s lives better. Vives writes, in his preface, that “If we consider the origin of all cities, their governments have had the aim of making them places where benefits were given and received.” The Ypres report, similarly, is based on the view that government is there to improve prosperity, in “our commonwealth, which by God’s providence we have taken to govern and beautify.” “The chief office of Senate”, they write, is “not only to preserve the commodities of their commonwealth but also

to make it more righter and goodlier.” Protecting the poor and vulnerable is part of that. “It appertains no doubt to all rulers ... to care and provide for poor folks.”

Both reports are explicitly paternalistic. The Ypres report is forthright:

“it is an evident token of excellent godliness when the city like a common parent handles so her members.”

In a world where most people were heavily constrained by social codes, poor people should not be an exception.

“Why, I pray you, do these needy folks (that are men as well as we) alone of all other wander up and down without tutor or keeper?”

At the same time, there are sentiments in Vives, at least, which point in the direction of democracy. He argues that the authority of any ruler depends on the consent of others:

“What child, what old woman does not know that the greatest empires are established with the consent of their vassals, and that they would be nothing if nobody obeyed them?”

Nevertheless, Vives’ censors will gather reports on everyone, as fathers of the city. Poor people should have done what is good for them, regardless of what they want:

“Let us act as wise doctors do with patients who rave, and as wise fathers do with their bad sons, to work for the benefit and profit of those even when they protest and resist.”

The views of society and politics are the framework within which the proposals for social policy are set. Much of the justification for the work in Ypres is given in terms of social cohesion. The benefits to a community are experienced in terms of public order - “evil men do less harm, good men live more at quiet” - and social cohesion. For Vives, the position of everyone in society is precarious, and everyone, rich or poor, is inter-dependent. “All human life and health depend on the help of others.” Charity is a moral, religious duty, but it is also a practical necessity: without it, people (rich and poor) become corrupt and debased. “Almost all the vices of the poor”, he writes, “are our fault.” The Ypres report shares that view, and comes close to using the same words.

Vives, however, goes much further than the burgers of Ypres in questioning the social order. He is critical of inequality and oppression; there are times when he seems to suggest that property should be held in common.

“We make our property, from what generous nature has made common to all.”

He sees material goods as both precarious and on loan from God.

“Everyone should know that he has not received his body, his soul, his life or his money only for his own use and convenience. He should know that he is a trustee, a faithful distributor of every thing, and that he has received them from God for this purpose.”

Vives has been described as a Christian socialist (Watson, 1913, lxvi-vii; and Guy, 1972, p 145.) He hints that redistribution might be desirable; “it would be just to renew the initial distribution of money, which over the course of time, has been breached in all sorts of ways”. At the same time, he shies away from the idea that goods should be redistributed by government;

“There is a very great error here, that consists in taking from some to give to others. Indeed, what kind of beneficence can find its essence in injustice?”

The responsibility for charity rests with each and every individual, as a member of common humanity.

The approach and arguments of these books challenge many of our preconceptions about early welfare provision. Most historical accounts of the development of modern welfare begin with the English Poor Laws. The Poor Laws were the first national administration of welfare provision. They lasted, in one form or another, for 350 years - from 1598, ratified in 1601, through to 1948. They were to become a by-word for harsh, punitive treatment of the poor. These texts begin with a different perspective. There are elements of mediaeval thought, and sometimes but there are also passages which seem thoroughly modern. There is a point in Northern Europe where you can stand at the land's end, and three seas meet around you, with the waves coming in different directions. These documents are a point of a similar kind, where three different world views wash up against each other.

The first perspective is the world of medieval Christianity, a world where there was a natural order, where charity was a duty to God rather than to the recipient, where the sort of each person was ordained by God, and people merited different treatment according to the quality and condition of their birth. You may read in these texts that human misery stems from the Fall, that giving alms is a way of purging sin, and that God will reward us in heaven for our charity.

The second view comes from the modern world, the world of an emerging industrial order, of Gradgrind and *Hard Times*. On occasion, there is the judgmental, condemnatory view of poor people that came to dominate in the new industrial society. Man has to work to live; work gives people a purpose; some people who are begging are plainly lazy; the devil makes work for idle hands; there needs to be a distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor. Welfare has to be rationalised and controlled; caution has to be taken to deal with malingerers and frauds; paupers need to be controlled, like children; the begging has to stop.

The third view is the most surprising for those who come to these works for the first time - the perspectives which have led some writers to think of these schemes as a model for a welfare state (e.g. BIEN, n,d). The two key concepts in these texts are the idea of "communion of life", or solidarity, and the view that government exists for the benefit of the people. "Who is acting more inhumanely?", Vives writes:

"Someone who wants poor people to choke on their refuse, their dirt, vice, wantonness, immodesty, wickedness, ignorance, madness, misfortune and all their wretchedness? Or those who see the means and ways to pull them out of such a miserable state and lead them to a more polite, pure and wise life, making men out of those who, without it, would have stayed useless and lost?"

Much of the writing in these works is liberal, communitarian and inclusive. People should be subject to a full assessment of their needs, "to get the knowledge of their condition, their health, their homely and secret griefs, their manners and (as near as can be) their merits". and treated poor people at the public cost. Migrants should be helped, even if it is not possible to help everyone. Special efforts should be made to help people who are reluctant or too proud to claim. For Vives, people without work should be helped to employment, or to start a business; employment should be developed through a programme of public works. People with disabilities, mental illness and chronic sickness should be treated seriously, Vives

argued, and recognised for what they can do. In Ypres, meanwhile,

“Those that are sickly and weak folks are helped by physicians and surgeons, that when they be once restored to their old health they may be able to endure, labour, and to get their living: so such as are brasten (broken), such as have the stone, such as are diseased in their faces or otherwise grieved are made whole of the common cost and charge, and that great.”

Mark that phrase: Ypres had a health service, and treated poor people at the public expense.

Reforming welfare in practice

These schemes reflect a complex set of practical issues; they are moved by a commitment to action; they show a knowledge of the circumstances that they were dealing with, and a familiarity with the procedures needed for social administration. The central debate, which both texts engage with, is the tension between voluntarism and government organisation. Vives sees the responsibility for organising welfare as falling on government, but it does not relieve the religious and moral duty of each person to make provision for charity, and the mechanism he proposes for funding is for a mainly voluntary system of finance, with the only evident compulsion falling on existing funds and trusts. The Ypres scheme goes further, apparently on the grounds that insufficient finance has been raised through voluntary effort - but only apparently, because their scheme was adopted wholesale from another town, and did not expand incrementally in the way the report claims. They accept that there is a place for individual charity, but the distribution of charity and the position of recipients are strictly regulated. Despite Vives' appeal for a Fabian approach (literally - he cites the general Fabian as an example of an incremental approach to policy), neither report takes a cautious or gradualist approach to governance. They mark a fundamental shift in the direction of government, committing it to engagement in the provision of welfare.

The new procedures and ways of working had very little to work on by way of precedent: they are based on an eclectic mix of business practice, charitable administration and rules related to taxation. Services have to be properly organised, records have to be kept, and the use of funds has to be publicly accountable and subject to audit. Luther ordained, for example, that records had to be kept in three forms: a book, including all constitutional documents and property deeds; a ledger, and a yearly account book (Salter, 1926, 89-90), and required the guardians to make a public report annually. Vives advises accounting procedures to include both independent charitable foundations and the use of public monies, and makes provision both for regular inspection of the charities by the central authorities and for the return of accounts. The Ypres report provides for six-monthly accounts and an audit procedure based on tax accounting. Marshall's 1535 translation renders the procedures as follows:

“accounts shall be made once or twice openly before the rulers and head officers at times certain, of all the money as well gathered as bestowed upon the poor: that is to wit, one account to be made by the prefects every half year, another by the sub-prefects every month, openly before auditors lawfully appointed for the same purpose, in such manner as they use to account of common rents appertaining to a city or to a prince.”

Marshall's choice of the word “auditors” seems remarkable, but it may reflect a practical understanding of the way that taxes were accounted for. Overall, however, the system he is describing seems to be a mistranslation - the original Latin actually text says that accounts

should be done *coram praefectis*, in the presence of the prefects. Prefects report to the Senate, and administrators (*administros*, not sub-prefects) report to the prefects, who are delegated with the authority from the Senate for the purpose. The line of accountability which is being described in the Latin text seems then to be hierarchical, not one based on independent audit. Similarly, the word which Marshall renders as “rents” is *vectigalibus*, probably better rendered as “taxes”. But Marshall’s work was to be particularly influential in England (Elton, 1953), and the construction he put on the administrative procedures was no less important than the original source.

The influence of these texts

The origins of welfare reform are mainly attributable to social change and the growth of Protestantism, not to the influence of this kind of study. Lutheran and other Protestant reforms precede these reports, if only by a little time. It is plausible, Kingdon suggests, that “German models influenced the development of welfare reform in other countries. One cannot prove direct influence, however, partly because so many of these other countries remained Catholic and hence would deny or disguise influence that might be labelled Lutheran ... In particular the seminal reforms in Mons and Ypres ... resemble the Strasbourg reforms of 1523-24.” (Kingdon, 1971, p 67) The city of Mons established its scheme in January of 1525, and Ypres followed a few months later. Ypres is remembered, when Mons is not, because of the *Forma Subventionis Pauperum*.

There are no indications that there was any direct connection between the proposal at Bruges and the scheme at Ypres. The idea that Vives inspired the scheme in Ypres, which used to be widely supposed, is inconsistent with the chronology. (Mattheussen and Fantazzi, p xxiii; Fehler, 1999, p.14) There is nothing to show that the authors of the Ypres report were even aware of Vives’ work - the text cites the authority of John Major, a leading Scottish divine, but not that of Vives. If there is a link between the two, it rests in the political context. Both schemes risked the charge of heresy. Vives was certainly concerned about the possibility of being thought a heretic, and commented in a letter in 1527 that the *De Subventionem Pauperum* had been attacked as “heretical and Lutheran” by a cleric within the diocese of Tournai (Mattheussen, 1986, 93-4). The decision to submit the Ypres scheme for review at the Sorbonne, rather than to local ecclesiastical authority, provided them with explicit exculpation from the charge of Lutheran influence. Vives’s book provided a more sophisticated theological defence than the burgers of Ypres had been able to muster, and it is likely that the Faculty would have known the arguments that Vives had raised. Although Vives’ scheme was not introduced in Bruges, the place for which he wrote the text, it was Vives’ report, rather than the Ypres scheme, that was adopted by Emperor Charles V as the model for Spain, which ruled the Low Countries. The political resistance in the Catholic church ultimately led to the rejection of this approach at the Council of Trent (1545-63), but patterns of secular organisation had begun to develop in several places, and even if the specifics of the schemes were not maintained, the general principles were.

Both texts can be seen, then, as part of the same social movement, shifting the focus of charity from individual beneficence to collective, secular social organisation. “Vives’ treatise”, Fehler writes, “can be viewed in part as a confirmation of the reform changes already under way in the Low Countries. Nevertheless, the values and ideas represented by Vives and other

northern humanists promoted poor relief reform after 1526 as Vives' plan circulated widely through Europe." (Fehler, 1999, p 14) Vives' work was translated into Spanish, Italian, German, Dutch and French, but not into English - the first complete translation is in Mattheussen and Fantazzi's edition of 2002. The Ypres report, by contrast, appeared in English in 1535.

Although the documents, together or separately, often seem to promote the same point of view, it is difficult to be certain what the influence of that view really was in context. Both have been credited with some influence on the development of social welfare in England, which introduced legislation intended to curb beggary and regulate welfare in 1531 and 1536, and the subsequent growth of secular provision. The 1536 law - possibly, Elton suggests, drafted by Marshall - declared:

"his highness has perfect knowledge that some of them have fallen into poverty only of the visitation of God, through sickness and other casualties, and some through their own default, whereby they have come finally to that point where they could not labour for any part of their living, but of necessity are driven to live wholly of the charity of the people."

This law introduced both "overseers" - Marshall's word in the translation of the Ypres report - and "censors", an idea taken directly from Vives. (Elton, 1953, 60) For Elton, the Act "originated new principles and practice; it stood at the beginning of serious and effective legislation to deal with the great social problem of the day." (Elton, 1953, 67) It can reasonably be argued that these texts were to have, through their influence on ideas and approaches, an influence on the development of the Elizabethan Poor Law, and subsequently on welfare in the rest of the world.

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