Rice, Deborah (with Menno Soentken and Franca van Hooren). *A welfare state for whom? The impact of social investment reforms on income and activation in the Netherlands*. Paper presented at the ESPAnet 11th Annual Conference, Poznán, Poland, 5-7 September 2013.

There is an ongoing debate about the impact of social investment policies on the income and opportunities of vulnerable groups in society. This paper engages with this debate through a case study of the Netherlands. We apply a multi-method approach by looking at macro level policy changes, at income simulations of selected household types at risk of poverty, and at the actual activation strategies of local governments. We find that social and fiscal policy changes have clearly improved the income situation of low wage workers, especially those with young children. In accordance with these policy changes, the activity rates of vulnerable groups, such as lone parents or early school-leavers, have strongly increased. At the same time, however, it seems that there is a growing divergence in income between those who manage to find employment and those who remain work-poor, pointing to the importance of finding work in the Dutch welfare state. The Dutch welfare state also facilitates work-poor groups to (re)-enter the labour market by providing social investment activation trajectories at the municipal level. Recent budget cuts brings this social investment approach however in jeopardy.