

Discovering Social Entrepreneurship: A Qualitative Study on Stimulants and Obstacles for Social Entrepreneurs in the Hague

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Abstract : The city of The Hague is coping with several social issues: high unemployment rates, segregation and environmental pollution. The amount of social enterprises in The Hague that want to tackle these issues is increasing, but no clear image exists of the stimulants and obstacles social entrepreneurs encounter. In this qualitative study 20 starting and established social entrepreneurs, investors and stimulators of social entrepreneurship have been interviewed. The findings indicate that the majority of entrepreneurs situated in The Hague focuses on creating jobs (the so called social nurturers) and diminishing food waste. Moreover, the study found smaller groups of social connectors, (who focus on stimulating the social cohesion in the city) and social traders (who create a market for products from developing countries). For the social nurturers, working together with local government to find people with a distance to the labour market is a challenge. The entrepreneurs are missing a governance approach within the local government, wherein space is provided to develop suitable legislation and projects in cooperation with several stakeholders in order to diminish social problems. All entrepreneurs in the sample face(d) the challenge of having a clear purpose of their business in the beginning. Starting social entrepreneurs tend to be idealistic without having defined a business model. Without a defined business model it is difficult to find proper funding for their business. The more advanced enterprises cope with the challenge of measuring social impact. The larger they grow, the more they have to 'defend' themselves towards the local government and their customers, of mainly being social. Hence, the more experienced social nurturers still find it difficult to work together with the local government. They tend to settle their business in other municipalities, where they find more effective public-private partnerships. Al this said, the eco-system for social enterprises in The Hague is on the rise. To stimulate the amount and growth of social enterprises the cooperation between entrepreneurs and local government, the developing of social business models and measuring of impact needs more attention.

Keywords : obstacles, social enterprises, stimulants, the Hague

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