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Introduction to the Special Issue: Sustainability and Entrepreneurship



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GASTHOOFDREDACTEURS



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EDITORIAAL

Beste lezer,

Bij het doorbladeren van dit derde nummer zal u direct zien dat het een speciaal themanummer betreft. Accountancy en Bedrijfskunde gaat altijd over cijfers maar daarom niet altijd over (economische) winst. De twee gasthoofdredacteurs Philippe Eiselein en Nikolay Dentchev gooien het over een andere boeg. Ze hebben dit nummer samengesteld rond duurzaamheid en ondernemerschap. Het idee kwam eerder aan bod tijdens een studiedag georganiseerd aan de VUB in mei 2016 en wordt hier verder uitgewerkt. Ik laat ze zelf de verschillende studies voorstellen die in dit nummer aan bod komen. We zijn er alle drie van overtuigd dat dit soort kruisbestuiving interessant is, zowel tussen accountancy en bedrijfskunde als tussen de academische wereld en de industrie als tussen lezer en schrijver-student.

Veel inspiratie gewenst,

Joël Branson

Sustainable business models do not focus primarily on profits, but rather on social or environmental issues. The rising number of enterprises with such a purpose not only shakes up our understanding of what businesses are supposed to do, but also reshapes our understanding of business logics. These new ways of business are intriguing to both business community and researchers, which led to the initiation of this special issue. Before we introduce the three articles that describe the business models of three successful Belgian social entrepreneurs striving for sustainability (Serve the City of Brussels, La Ferme Nos Piliifs and Tejo), we will discuss a broader initiative to gather together researchers from around the world for a discussion on the variety of sustainable business models.

The international workshop entitled “Embracing the Variety of Sustainable Business Models” took place on the 13th of May 2016 at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. This event was organised by the Solvay Business Schools (VUB) Chair of Social Entrepreneurship. On this occasion, the start of the Chair of Social Entrepreneurship was announced, with gratitude to the founding partners Wolters Kluwer, Close the Gap and Euroclear, by the chair holder Prof. Dr. Nikolay Dentchev. By organis-

ing such an event, the Chair supports social entrepreneurs in their ambition to develop entrepreneurial and innovative approaches for resolving the sustainability issues of our society. The Chair also wanted to support the development of research ideas in preparation for submission to the Special Volume¹ in the Journal of Cleaner Production. With more than 70 participants from 15 different countries², academics and leading practitioners came together to exchange positive experiences, interesting insights and valuable research on topics such as sustainable circular business models, social entrepreneurship, new approaches to sustainability, innovation, ecosystems and impacts on new business models.

The workshop started with four keynote speakers, namely Kris van der Velpen (professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Flanders Business School), Thierry Vandenbroek (founder of Poseco³), Inge Knapen (director at Close The Gap⁴) and Bernard Fornville (manager at the Social Innovation

- 1 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.10.130>
- 2 Australia, Belgium, Cuba, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.
- 3 <http://poseco.org/>
- 4 <http://close-the-gap.org/>

Factory⁵). Kris presented valuable insights in successful business models, explaining for example what is of importance for the health sector to keep them innovative. The second keynote speaker, Thierry Vandebroek, is the founder of Poseco (Positive Entrepreneurs). It defends and represents an economy that is in line with today's societal challenges, notably by promoting social entrepreneurship. Thierry mentioned social entrepreneurs (which is but one of the many "positive" entrepreneurs they know) as contributors to a changing world. The third keynote speaker, Inge Knapen, is a representative of one of the founding partners of the Chair, Close the Gap. This is actually a social enterprise. Close The Gap is a business-minded not-for-profit type of company which contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and is active in both the educational and IT sector. The fourth and last keynote speaker was Bernard Fornoville from the "Social Innovation Factory", a network and support organization for social innovation and entrepreneurship.

Three parallel sessions were organised, each one having three different topics, containing representatively four to five presentations. The three acting chairs were professor Lara Johannsdottir from the University of Iceland, professor Jan Jonker from the University of Nijmegen and professor Timo Nuyberg from the University of Aalto. The topics discussed were "Circular Business Models", "Social Entrepreneurship", "Theoretical Approaches to Sustainability", "Collaborative SBMs", "Innovation and SBMs", "Technology and SBMs", "Ecosystems in Support of SBMs", "Success Factors of Social Enterprises" and "The Impact of SBMs".

In every session, presenters were given the occasion to present in fifteen minutes their preliminary findings, current work or recently finished paper in a constructive and collegial way. Both senior and junior academics were either presenting or giving constructive discussion points for improvement. We had the opportunity to attend one of those sessions, more specifically the one on "social entrepreneurship", with professor Lara Johannsdottir as acting chair. Presentations were given by both junior and senior academics from different institutions. The types of papers varied from conceptual papers through case studies to empiric investigations. The attendees showed much interest in social entrepreneurship research and welcomed all presentations.

At the end of the day, the workshop provided participants with both the possibility to present their current findings and to receive constructive feedback and comments on how to further develop and improve their work. To sum up, some papers were encouraged to be presented on the special issue of

JCP, whilst other were discussed for further development. The workshop concluded with a nice cocktail, where all participants could have pleasant drinks and talks, discussing both work and evening plans. The (international) workshop on sustainable business models in Brussels provided practitioners as well as academics with the possibility to network and share insights, exchanging positive notes and comments. Discussions provided interesting feedback and comments, whilst social entrepreneurial business models were explained. The three articles presented in the remainder of the special issue are prepared by three groups of VUB Master students, who have investigated cases of remarkable business models of social entrepreneurs. These covered the cases of "Serve the City Brussels", "La Ferme Nos Pilifs" and "Tejo", discussing the business models, social impact, critical success factors and challenges of the social enterprise. These three groups of students were selected as the best out of 15 teams who prepared cases as an assignment for the course of Corporate Social Responsibility of professor Dentchev at VUB.

The first case presented in the special issue concerns a social enterprise called "La Ferme Nos Pilifs". The mission of La Ferme Nos Pilifs is to create employment opportunities for disabled people and includes social, economic and environmental goals. La Ferme Nos Pilifs focuses on disabled people and proves through their daily activities that those persons are able to produce equally well-grown products as non-disabled persons. Given the clear devotion to the targeted beneficiaries, La Ferme Nos Pilifs was selected as a social enterprise. Despite many difficulties at start-up, La Ferme Nos Pilifs has become a successful social enterprise with greater recognition for supporting disabled people, creating more job opportunities, protecting the environment, and producing healthy products.

The second case presented in the special issue concerns the social enterprise "Serve The City Brussels", which was chosen due to its clear social mission and its straightforward market approach to generate social value. As a volunteering organisation that allocates volunteers to specific social projects in the city, in order to help people in need, the organisation is considered to be an innovative social enterprise. The paper they presented examined the relevance and applicability of CSR theories and social entrepreneurship's theoretical frameworks. They concluded that although the company is a legitimate and successful social enterprise with a sustainable business model, improvements still can be made. In addition, social enterprises hold many lessons learned towards enterprises that are more classical.

The third case presented in the special issue concerns the social enterprise "Tejo", an organisation engaged in psychothera-

5 www.socialeinnovatiefabriek.be/

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peutic assistance to youngsters between ten and twenty years old. Tejo's mission is to "help young people in their growth to adulthood", but in a faster and easier way than classical alternatives. They work in several major Belgian cities (Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent amongst others) with professionals who want to help out youngsters on a voluntary basis. Because of the easier access to professional help (both in terms of time and costs), Tejo has had quite the social impact on many people. Several challenges for this social enterprise are discussed, such as the reliance on the voluntary nature of professionals and organisational growth.

Aside from these three articles, we have the pleasure of providing you with a book review of "Hoek af", as well as an interview report with its author Eric Kenis (both the review and the interview are written in Dutch). Eric wanted to reshape the view on Belgian entrepreneurship by gathering a variety of rich life lessons and experiences of several Belgian entrepreneurs and their businesses. He provides the reader with insightful and inspiring stories from the atypical Belgian woman or man and discusses what could be useful for further developing the Belgian entrepreneurial landscape.

In conclusion, we hope that this special issue offers insightful and refreshing new ideas on entrepreneurship and sustainability. We wish you a pleasant reading of this issue.

BIOGRAPHY

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Social Entrepreneurship Business Model and Challenges: an Explorative Case Study of La Ferme Nos Pilifs

ABSTRACT

In light of the increasing awareness of the potential benefits of social enterprises to the economy and to society at large, this paper aims at exploring the business model of “La Ferme Nos Pilifs”. We wish to understand its business model and underlying mechanisms that lead to success, as well as reveal the challenges and critical success factors that this social enterprise encounters. The mission of La Ferme Nos Pilifs is to create employment opportunities for disabled people. It integrates social, economic and environmental goals in order to achieve its mission. Their business activity is divided into different business segments including farming and gardening, production and distribution of bio products, with the integration of disabled people at the core of all these activities. Despite many difficulties encountered at the start-up stage, La Ferme Nos Pilifs has become a successful social enterprise with greater recognition for supporting disabled people, creating more job opportunities, protecting the environment, and producing healthy products. A systematic collection of secondary data and exploratory interviews within the company and stakeholders allowed us to analyse past and current developments in the business model of this social enterprise.

Gezien de mogelijke oplossingen die sociale ondernemingen bieden aan zowel de economie als aan de maatschappij, verkennen we in dit onderzoek het businessmodel, de uitdagingen en kritische succesfactoren van La Ferme Nos Pilifs. De missie van La Ferme Nos Pilifs is om mensen met een handicap aan het werk te kunnen zetten. De boerderij is een voorbeeld van een maatschappelijke onderneming die economische, ecologische en sociale doelstellingen in hun bedrijf integreert. Hun doelstellingen worden omgezet in verschillende business-segmenten waaronder de landbouw en tuinbouw, productie en distributie van biologische producten, waarbij personen met een handicap geïntegreerd worden in al deze activiteiten. Ondanks de vele moeilijkheden vanaf het begin is La Ferme Nos Pilifs uitgegroeid tot een succesvolle sociale onderneming met meer erkenning voor hun ondersteuning aan mensen met een handicap, het creëren van meer werkgelegenheid, de bescherming van het milieu en het produceren van gezonde producten. We verzamelen systematisch secundaire gegevens en leiden verkennende gesprekken binnen het bedrijf en belanghebbenden over de ontwikkelingen in het verleden alsook de huidige ontwikkeling van het businessmodel van deze sociale onderneming.

Key words: Business model, social enterprise, social impact, critical success factors, sustainability

1. Introduction

Some seem to look at disabled people with both fear and pity, as individuals incapable of either participating in or contributing to society. However, this view not only disregards the obstacles that disabled people face in their daily life, it also marginalises and stigmatis-

es a group into undercapability. Nowadays, different initiatives, projects and policies are trying to mitigate these difficulties, preventing discrimination and empowering handicapped people to be part of society on equal terms with the others. One such initiative is “La Ferme Nos Pilifs”, a sheltered workplace for people with disabilities.

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This specific type of enterprise provides meaningful, fulfilling and rewarding work to people with disabilities. It reveals how handicapped people can contribute work of an equal quality as opposed to people without a disability. This type of enterprise can be found under the umbrella of social enterprises, i.e. enterprises that pursue a specific social mission, whilst respecting the economic needs of an enterprise. At the core of this enterprise stands the social mission, which is to give an equal working opportunity to everyone. Aside from this, La Ferme Nos Pilifs focuses on the environment by producing and delivering organic products. Combining social, environmental and economic goals, the farm is a good example of a sustainable business.

La Ferme Nos Pilifs could be further specified as a work integration social enterprise (WISE), a term well known throughout the Belgian social entrepreneurship field. The aim of such type of social enterprise is to integrate vulnerable groups such as long-term unemployed and disabled people into the labour market. 3,170 social enterprises were reported in Belgium in 2013, while the total number of WISE was reported to be between 1,500 and 2,000 (European Commission, 2014).

In Flanders, WISE is presented in several types such as: work integration enterprises with the aim of creating permanent jobs for long-term unemployed individuals with low levels of qualification, social workshops that integrate people who have been economically inactive for more than five years, shelter workshops that offer permanent jobs for disabled people, and finally work care centers that target persons who suffer from multiple disadvantages (e.g. low education coupled with drug addiction). In Wallonia, groups of WISE include (1) work experience enterprises (enterprises de formation par le travail, ETA) that provide work opportunities for underprivileged groups of people, (2) work integration enterprises that assist less privileged persons in utilising job opportunities, and (3) adapted work enterprises previously referred to as shelter workshops which assist people who were unable to find a job in a regular company (European Commission, 2014).

According to Devlieger (2005), people with functional limitations represent 12 % to 16 % of the working population. Currently 20,000 people in this group are employed, which represents only 10 % of the total number. These workers are divided into two groups: those who work in sheltered workshops (approximately 15,000 workers), and the remaining workers who are included in the regular employment market (Devlieger, 2005). Given the rising number of social entrepreneurial activities, as well as their (social) impact on society, academic research can benefit from the further development and a better

understanding of the business models of social businesses and the underlying mechanisms driving them to success. Indeed, social entrepreneurs are able to work where others do or can not, whilst handling often very complex problems.

“The farm is an example of a social enterprise that integrates economic, environmental and social goals in its business.”

Therefore, we explore the business model of this successful social enterprise and examine in what way and to what extent it can create (social) value for our society. The research questions in this study lead us into determining the social business model of the enterprise and exploring its social impact, challenges and critical success factors (CSFs). We contribute to the literature by exploring a Belgian successful work integration social enterprise (WISE)'s business model and unravelling possible mechanisms that lead it to success.

2. Literature review

Social entrepreneurship (SE) aims to create social and economic wealth by involving innovative approaches to address specific problems, situated in sectors such as education, employment, IT, health, and finance (Mair & Noboa, 2006). The definition of social entrepreneurship, given the complexity at a terminological, business model and sectoral situation is still under debate amongst scholars, as the meanings vary to different people (Dees, 1998). For illustrative purposes, we shortly present three different definitions from past scholars.

Alvord et al. (2004) refer to SE as the effective tool to mitigate social problems and catalyze social transformation. Mair and Marti (2006, p. 3) define this phenomenon as “a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs”. According to Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern (2006, p. 2), social entrepreneurship is “innovative, social value creating activity that can occur within or across the nonprofit, business, or government sectors”.

Although no consensus has been achieved, we derive from the literature that the social mission is the common feature of social entrepreneurship (Seelos & Mair, 2005; Mair & Marti, 2006; Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011). This primary objective of social entrepreneurship distinguishes itself from traditional entrepreneurship, in which economic value creation is the main purpose of the enterprise operations. The contrast between two types of entrepreneurship does not mean that economic outcomes should be neglected in social entrepreneurship. Instead, organisations need to balance both sets of priorities

in order to create social wealth and ensure sustainability and financial self-sufficiency (Seelos & Mair, 2005).

Social entrepreneurship aims at fulfilling human needs that are left unsatisfied by current economic and social institutions (Seelos & Mair, 2005) while respecting financial survivability, which leads to complex business models. To fully appreciate these complex business models, it is important to understand their main key success factors as well as their challenges. For any enterprise, key success factors are the crucial resources, competence and qualification to create competitive advantages and achieve success in the future (Wronka, 2013). Similar to commercial ventures, success factors of social enterprises are also attributed critically to leadership, strategy, human resources and financial viability (Nasruddin, Misaridin & Aulia, 2014). However, social enterprises need to carefully consider these factors in the context of their operations.

As documented in the research of Wronka (2013), there are ten factors contributing to the success of the social ventures, namely: strong leadership, motivation and commitment, an enabling legal and regulatory environment, attractiveness and clarification of the innovative concept, management expertise, key personal qualities for front line service delivery, effective collaboration with the public sector, social capital, local community involvement, and keeping and distributing accurate financial records. In terms of challenges, social entrepreneurs have to cope with a considerable number of issues related to their operations as well as the external environment. As pointed out in the research of Dees (1998), one of the biggest challenges for social entrepreneurs is to manage the mission-related impacts. Moreover, social entrepreneurs also need to attract enough customers and partners to generate sufficient profit and create more economic values in order to survive in the competitive market. Beside those main challenges, there are several problems that social entrepreneurs need to consider seriously for innovation and growth including legitimacy, professional management, financing and networking.

3. Methodology

For this case study, we conducted qualitative research, based on five in-depth interviews with both internal and external stakeholders of La Ferme Nos Pilifs. The interviewees include management, employees, customers and suppliers. This allowed us to gather different perceptions of several stakeholder groups, which would lead to more consistent and objective

data, in order to generate a broad view and consequently minimize the possibility for biased results. We opted for semi-structured interviews because this allowed us to ask more open questions and to explore the different aspects into more detail with the interviewee. We also systematically gathered secondary data, based on reports, events, news articles and information from various websites, to further triangulate the findings of the interviews. This allowed us to gather an in-depth understanding of the social enterprise's business model.

4. Case study

4.1. Background

La Ferme Nos Pilifs is registered with the Commission of the French Community (Cocof) and is located in Neder-Over-Heembeek (the North of Brussels). It was established to address the lack of access to employment for people with intellectual disabilities. Today, it offers 170 jobs of which 140 are reserved for the handicapped. By adapting the work to the employees' abilities, the enterprise can reduce their barriers to work, so that they can all thrive in the tasks they accomplish. The name "Nos Pilifs" was created by mixing the letters in the name of the founder Nelly Filipson.

“Creating hundreds of jobs for people with disabilities, La Ferme Nos Pilifs actively contributes to Belgian society.”

Historically, the centre was founded in 1971 with the idea of offering a place for children with mental disabilities. To support the centre, the city of Brussels provided them with a house and land. Over time, at the request of the parents, the management realised that these already mature children need a place

to work after graduation. Benoît Ceysens, director of the centre, saw the struggles of disabled people to find a job. With the thought of creating suitable job opportunities and employing disabled people, the farm Nos Pilifs was built and launched in 1984 (L'entreprise & L'homme, 2014).

Back then, there were only 10 employees. At first, they grew vegetables and poultry and produced processed goods. However, Mr. Ceysens acknowledged that these activities were not enough to maintain the farm, so he looked for another way to expand the farm in different branches step by step. Despite the early difficulties of financing, production management, productivity of disabled staffs and the farm's profitability, the farm has grown over time, in financial terms as well as in the number of disabled workers employed (Trends, 2011). Mr. Ceysens attributed this growth to the belief and trust in the abilities of every worker, the ambition to help those workers develop their

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skills and the attempt to integrate disabled people into society (L'entreprise & L'homme, 2014).

Due to its sustainable character, the initiative "Nos Pilifs" won the Grand Prize for Future Generations in 2011. The award was created in 2007 by the Foundation of Future Generations. It is given on a yearly basis to enterprises whose activities incorporate the principles of economic development and social welfare while respecting the environment (Foundation For Future Generations, 2011; La Capitale, 2011).

Starting from a small initiative, with the efforts and support of different stakeholders, the farm has made a big difference to society and its positive impact continues to grow (Het Nieuwsblad, 2011). The farm has also been recognised for being creative and innovative in carrying out its business and social projects (Le Vif / L'Express, 2016) and for bringing agriculture to the heart of the city (Le Vif / L'Express, 2012).

4.2. Business Model of Nos Pilifs

This social enterprise started as a school for children with mental disabilities and then was developed into a farm with some plantation and gardening. The farm's business has been expanded over time. There are currently six different complementary activity segments. These are the means that help the company to achieve not only its social but also its economic and environmental objectives, in order to turn the farm into a fully sustainable business.

These activities are the educational team (maintaining the park and caring for animals, managing children and school visits), the garden centre (offering garden designing services and a wide range of flowering and fruit trees, gardening tools and plant care products), the garden design and maintenance team (maintaining and developing gardens), the tavern (offering drinks, snacks, and a pleasant atmosphere during your visit to the farm), the grocery/bakery (selling BIO fruits, vegetables and "Made In Pilifs" products), and finally the manual handling team (in charge of the manual handling works and fruit and vegetable picking). Here, it is remarkable to note that the complementary objectives are translated into the several activities La Ferme Nos Pilifs organises, which in their turn not only influence resources, but revenue as well.

Some other social activities of the enterprise include trainings and workshops in vegetable gardening (Les Jardins de Pomone, 2016) and tomato festivals where visitors can taste many varieties of vegetables and learn some tips on plantation and seed harvesting techniques (Les Amis de la Terre, 2015; BrusselsLife,

2015; Le Vif Weekend, 2014). Moreover, dishes prepared from the farm's products were presented in a cooking show (RTBF, 2015). They also participated in Anderlecht's 190th Fair to introduce their organic products to the inhabitants of Brussels (Het Nieuwsblad, 2015) and in other planting activities to beautify the neighbourhood (Het Laatste Nieuws, 2003).

Aside from this, the farm also worked closely together with various partners. Successful collaborations include the partnership with Solvay and City of Brussels for the maintenance of their parks, with Uber for the distribution of products from the farm and with other companies for waste sorting in an environmentally friendly way. These projects, either in the short or the long term, help create more job opportunities and confirm that the enterprise is committed to initiatives that are beneficial to both society and the environment.

4.3. Social Impact

La Ferme Nos Pilifs has contributed to Belgian society by addressing a social issue. Currently, the company provides 170 jobs, 140 of which are designated to disabled people. The strategy of the enterprise is to do business in a socially responsible and environmentally friendly way. Thanks to its economic activities, it has generated enough funding for social activities and its operation.

The managers of the farm also try to adapt the workload to each employee's capability. Sometimes, the job can be shared among 2 to 4 workers in order to reduce the pressure and make them feel comfortable while working in the farm. The management believes that it would be a good opportunity for their personnel to engage in social contact with different customers and visitors by working in various business operations, such as the bakery, shop and restaurant.

As a result, the employees become more active and self-confident. Moreover, the public can clearly see the contributions of the handicapped to society and even support them more. Thus, the farm does not only provide employment to the disabled, but it also provides an increase in self-esteem and social status. Additionally, in our discussion with two workers of the farm, they expressed that they feel glad and valued for being provided with the opportunity to work here. Moreover, the social contact and the open working space are positively perceived by the employees. For these reasons, Nos Pilifs does not only have a good image in the mind of its employees, but it is also considered by its customers as a successful social enterprise due to the social value it contributes to the society.

As a supplier, *Simone a Soif* is attracted by Nos Pilifs' idea of social entrepreneurship and sustainable business. *Simone a Soif* is a producer of 100 percent natural drinks made from local bio fruits and vegetables. They wanted to combine the two businesses of organic products in order to create more jobs for the farm. As an example, the managers of *Simone a Soif* decided to change their production process to manual handling which could be done by the farm's employees, even though they have the possibility to use automatic labelling machines which are much cheaper.

However, Nos Pilifs Farm is not just a work integration project for disabled people. They also try to do everything properly in taking into account environmental care. The farm is recognised in various fields of activities for its efforts in the environmental mission and professionalism. For their work Nos Pilifs got the 2 stars ecodynamic label. The label "Ecodynamic Enterprise" (IBGE) is an official recognition in Brussels for good environmental management practices implemented in companies. It rewards the environmental dynamism and progress, in particular waste management, rational use of energy and management of labor mobility. The Nos Pilifs team puts a lot of effort into implementing all sustainable practices in their business (La Ferme Nos Pilifs).

Nos Pilifs is also a member of Ecobuild Cluster. This project is implemented by the Brussels Capital Region to promote sustainable construction and renovation, particularly in response to climate change. According to this social enterprise, it is part of a perspective of sustainable development, promoting the creation, growth and the sustainability of its business.

4.4. Challenges

According to Mr. Piquet, the Human Resources Manager of Nos Pilifs, like many other start-ups, the enterprise has faced many challenges in terms of space, financial resources and recognition. At the beginning, the workers had no salaries because of the lack of financing. Gradually, they attracted some donations which helped them to maintain and develop their activities. As a result, since 1985, the farm is a recognised company and today, all employees get their remuneration.

Nos Pilifs receives 40 percent subsidy from the government, whilst generating the rest on its own. Given the lower productivity of the disabled staff members, they had to re-arrange some positions that gradually lost their function and to create

new ones. The aging of the personnel is another challenge. It requires an adequate response of the management team to adapt another more appropriate role and responsibilities for these employees.

Another challenge was the selection of partners and clients. For instance, they were approached by a weapon producer and by different political parties but Nos Pilifs refused them because they did not share the same social values. It also rejected several offers from some enterprises that wanted to work in the farm just a few days, only to gain a good image.

As highlighted by their supplier *Simone a Soif*, instability of the partnerships is an additional challenge. This can possibly result from the fact that at a certain stage of co-operation, the supplier expects that their production will expand. Consequently, this requires bigger distribution capability, which Nos Pilifs cannot provide. Apart from the distribution, Nos Pilifs also supports *Simone a Soif* with the manual labelling process, which will be challenged by automatisisation technology, forming an obstacle for the farm.

4.5. Key Success Factors

Mr. Piquet mentioned several factors that contribute to the success of the farm. First, they receive considerable support from the government, which accounts for 40 percent of their income. The enterprise also does not have to pay taxes because it is a non-profit organisation (ABSL – association sans but lucratif).

Likewise, the fact that the management still retains its first 10 employees reminds them of the initial idea of their project and motivates them to go in the right direction. As a result, they continue to develop and create more jobs for disabled people. For the last 20 years, they have created more than 120 new jobs. Furthermore, the farm is always targeting sustainable development. They produce bio products that are environmentally friendly and healthy. When people buy something from the farm, they are not only satisfied with the quality, but they also feel engaged in the initiative of supporting disabled people. From the interviews with three customers, we found out that the main reason for purchasing products from the farm is the wide range of organic fruits and vegetables certified with BIO label. Moreover, people can find all kinds of green tools and products for their own gardens. Additionally, this place is ideal for families with children who want to walk and enjoy nature.

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From the perspective of Mr. Menten, communication manager of Simone a Soif, Nos Pilifs belongs to a strong social network in Brussels. This connects the enterprise with different communities from whom they gain support, which can be considered beneficial to any potential partners of the farm. Additionally, he noted that the farm's approach of matching the right job for disabled people is an essential part of their business model. The partnership between Nos Pilifs and Simone a Soif is built mainly on "compromise", meaning that the supplier accepts mistakes made by employees of the farm, which would not be the case in other commercial companies.

5. Conclusion

The mission of La Ferme Nos Pilifs is to create employment opportunities for disabled people. The farm is an example of a social enterprise that integrates economic, environmental and social goals in its business. Their objectives are transformed into different business segments including farming and gardening, production and distribution of bio products, with the integration of disabled people at the core of all these activities. Despite many difficulties from the very beginning, Nos Pilifs has become a successful social enterprise with greater recognition for supporting disabled people, creating more job opportunities, protecting the environment, and producing healthy products. Their social idea for more humanity and its proven impact on society has drawn greater credibility and support from their employees, customers, clients and partners. Nos Pilifs has inspired many organisations to replicate the same model in different places. However, the farm itself prefers to keep the same size and scope of the enterprise and to focus on increasing efficiency, improving job and product quality and the working environment. Even though there are many challenges ahead, the enterprise is strongly committed to its initial objective. Their adaptive business model, governmental support, strong social network and dedicated partners and employees are the key success factors for sustainable growth of La Ferme Nos Pilifs.

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Social Entrepreneurship Business Model and Challenges: an Explorative Case Study of Serve The City Brussels

ABSTRACT

In light of the increasing awareness of the potential benefits of social enterprises to the economy and society at large, this paper aims at exploring the business model of Serve the City Brussels. We wish to understand its business model and underlying mechanisms that lead to success, as well as reveal the challenges and critical success factors social entrepreneurs encounter. Furthermore, this paper examines the relevance and applicability of CSR theories and theoretical frameworks by conducting a case study in a qualitative research. A systematic collection of secondary data and exploratory interviews with the company and its main stakeholders allow us to critically analyse current developments in social entrepreneurship and gaps in CSR literature. Although the company is a legitimate and successful social enterprise with a sustainable business model, improvements can be made by increasing the scope of CSR in its business model and developing other critical success factors to take on challenges and improve the efficiency and viability of the company in the long run.

Gegeven de bijdragen van sociale ondernemingen aan zowel de economie als aan de maatschappij, verkennen we in dit onderzoek het businessmodel, de uitdagingen en kritische succesfactoren van Serve the City Brussels. Wij willen haar businessmodel en de onderliggende mechanismen die leiden tot succes begrijpen, evenals de uitdagingen en de kritische succesfactoren van sociale ondernemers blootleggen. Bovendien onderzoekt de paper de relevantie en toepasbaarheid van MVO-theorieën en theoretische kaders door het uitvoeren van een case study in een kwalitatief onderzoek. Een systematische verzameling van secundaire gegevens en verkennende gesprekken met de onderneming en haar belangrijkste stakeholders laten ons toe om de huidige ontwikkelingen in het sociaal ondernemerschap en lacunes in CSR-literatuur kritisch te analyseren. Hoewel het bedrijf een legitieme en succesvolle sociale onderneming met een duurzaam businessmodel is, kunnen verbeteringen worden gemaakt door het verhogen van de omvang van MVO in haar businessmodel en het ontwikkelen van andere factoren kritische succesfactoren om haar uitdagingen aan te gaan en in het verbeteren van de efficiëntie en de levensvatbaarheid van de onderneming de lange termijn.

Key words: corporate social responsibility, business model, stakeholder engagement, social impact, critical success factors, sustainability

1. Introduction

This paper gives an overview of recent developments in the business model of Serve the City (STC) Brussels and discusses how corporate social responsibility is integrated into their business model. This paper aims at portraying the value-creating network of a social enterprise. Moreover, the purpose is to determine in what way, and to what extent, a specif-

ic social enterprise can create social value for its environment.

STC has a clear social mission and a straightforward market approach to generate social value. As a volunteering organisation that allocates volunteers to specific social projects in the city, in order to help people in need, the organisation is considered to be an innovative social enterprise. In general, the Brussels

community perceives STC as a good initiative and a good organisation. Because its projects are diverse and it serves many different groups, we can see that a lot of people and organisations within the community are touched by what STC is doing. Therefore, they see STC as an organisation that goes the extra mile to help people in need (www.bruzz.be/nl/nieuws/serve-city-samen-de-stad-dienen). This can also be seen in the recent work of photographer Dani Oshi, who tried to express what STC does in our community by creating a black and white series of photographs about the people working for STC, the people they help and the variety of projects they organise (www.danio-sorio.com).

Moreover, the corporate world talks highly of STC. One initiative that got a lot of attention in the media was the cake sale of Toyota Motor Europe's teams, cakes that they baked themselves. Over a two-month period between October and November the people of Toyota Motor Europe's teams raised 26.132 euros with cake sales, book sales, parties, quiz nights, lotteries, photo sessions and many different other fundraising activities. They also donated three Toyota PROACE vans with food, which allowed STC to feed the homeless in and around Brussels during the harsh winter period. At the end, they donated one of the vans in order to help STC maximise its efforts (<http://blog.toyota.eu/>).

Aside from that, STC proves to be present after a crisis that touches all people of the community. During the aftermath of the attacks in Brussels on 22/03/2016, STC cancelled its scheduled events as a reaction to the lockdown, but it expanded its serving projects in order to help those directly affected by the attacks (www.mtv.com; Belz. M. (2016)). International institutions, such as the European Commission, also try to integrate STC's work and values in their organised events. For example, the 'Strictly comp dancing' fundraiser, which supports underprivileged kids in Brussels, was organised by the DG Competition in collaboration with STC (www.solidariteproposal.eu).

The emphasis of this case study especially lies on determining the social business model of the enterprise, the social impact, the challenges it faces and the critical success factors (CSFs). Another aspect analysed is the stakeholder management strategy of STC. This allows us to examine more closely the stakeholder involvement and engagement of the enterprise, as we discuss how STC integrates the different needs and interests of the stakeholders into their business. For this, we gather different points of view of the direct stakeholder groups by conducting interviews. Eventually, this research will indicate more

closely to what extent STC can be considered a successful social enterprise by analysing how the enterprise focuses on economic and social sustainability and, more specifically, in what way social, economic and environmental issues are integrated into their business.

2. Literature review

Dahlsrud (2006) suggests that CSR can be divided into five main dimensions; environmental, social, economic, stakeholder and voluntariness. Social entrepreneurship, given the attention to a social mission whilst respecting economic and environmental goals, considerably overlaps with the first three dimensions. The stakeholders' and voluntariness' dimensions are equally important to social entrepreneurship, as it has been discussed in the literature that on the one hand, without close collaboration with different stakeholders, social entrepreneurs would not be able to achieve impact, and on the other hand, it is the compassionate nature of social entrepreneurs to do good that makes them volunteers of goodness.

In order to clarify the different and controversial theories and approaches of CSR, Garriga and Melé (2004) have classified the main CSR theories into four groups: instrumental theories, political theories, integrative theories and ethical theories. Within this research, we have defined CSR as it is described in the integrative theory, in which the organisation focuses on the satisfaction of social demands. The theory recognises the fact that there is an implicit link between business and society and that the organisation has more or less an indirect obligation towards its society.

“Volunteering for the needy at local social enterprises adds direct value to society.”

An important aspect of CSR is the stakeholders' participation. Stakeholders are groups and individuals who can affect, or are affected by, the strategic outcomes of a firm (Freeman, 1984). Clarkson (1995) divides stakeholders into two main groups: primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are usually the stakeholders whose participation is necessary to ensure the survival of the organisation, whereas secondary stakeholders are influenced or affected by the organisation. It is important to recognise all stakeholders involved in the activities of an organisation. Not only the recognition of stakeholders is necessary; the same applies to involving them into the daily business and activities of the organisation. Stakeholder management includes gaining trust from stakeholders, communicating the current actions of the organisation, involving stakeholders in strategic decision-making processes, etc. By doing so, the organisation gains extra benefits for its business.

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Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) divide stakeholders into eight different groups based upon three aspects; power, urgency and legitimacy. The research of Vogel (2005) presents some evidence that socially responsible investments can create an additional value for some firms in specific circumstances.

Despite the fact that implementation of CSR can give the organisation a competitive advantage, it can also contain several risks (Dentchev and Heugens, 2007). The research describes two groups of risks that a CSR strategy can contain: organisational CSR risks (diluting managerial attention, non-productive spending, stretching the organisational coalition, bad strategy implementation) and relational CSR risks (legitimacy destruction, issue ownership, poor risk communication). They argue that the implementation of CSR itself can also contain some risks; if not implemented in a correct and careful way, it can influence the organisation and diminish the organisation's competitive advantage. To avoid such risks the organisation needs to align its CSR strategy with the general strategy of the core business. This means that they need to carefully screen the CSR investments in terms of its stakeholder benefits, discounted cash flows, the organisation's interests and their coherence with the external environment. They need to consider all of the stakeholders' interests, prioritise their strategic options, create an implementation plan and communicate with the stakeholders on a rational and emotional level.

3. Methodology

This qualitative research gathered several interviews in order to create an in-depth understanding of the behaviour of STC as a social enterprise. Additional information through a systematic collection of secondary data provided for the necessary triangulation. We looked for information about STC and its social value-creating network in secondary data, such as their own website, events, other companies and news articles.

Given the necessity of specific information about the CSR strategy of STC, we have conducted interviews that allowed us to gather different perceptions of the several stakeholder groups. An important issue herewith was the selection of the interviewees in order to generate a broad view and consequently minimise the possibility for biased results. We opted for semi-structured interviews because this allowed us to ask more open questions and to explore the different aspects into more detail with the interviewee.

In the end we conducted five semi-structured interviews with four different stakeholder groups: management, employees, clients and partners (Appendix 1). First, we gathered the point

of view of STC members, such as the top management (the CEO and founder) and employees (CSR project coordinator). We also interviewed three partners; MW, which is responsible for the website development and graphic design of STC, BelgiBeer, which organises beer tasting events, and "People to People International" (PTPI), which organises programmes to enhance social connections in communities around the world. However, the last organisation can be considered to be both STC's client and partner, since STC has a business model in which it can offer services to its partners. The targeted stakeholders were interviewed based on different questionnaires in order to suit the interests of the stakeholder groups they belong to.

Finally, we analysed the whole dataset in a conceptual framework by comparing the different theoretical frameworks with the secondary data and information collected through the interviews. By intensively discussing the input from the interviews and comparing the views of the different stakeholders, we were able to apply some relevant CSR theories on STC as social enterprise and draw a general conclusion about its CSR approach. This enabled us to discuss the social business model, social impact, challenges and critical success factors of STC in detail.

4. Case Study

4.1 Background

STC is a Brussels non-profit organisation that provides services to people in need. More specifically, it is a global movement of volunteers, which offer help and support to people in need. By collaborating with local social-profit organisations, STC connects the multiple volunteers to the several local social projects that need attention. In fact, when comparing it to the profit sector, STC can be seen as the non-profit counterpart of a recruitment agency that connects people to jobs.

Within the non-profit organisation movement, we see that STC is a social enterprise. Their main objective is to achieve as much social impact as possible in an entrepreneurial and innovative way, in order to reduce social issues to a minimum. Another characteristic of a social enterprise is that its organisation is built on a well-designed underlying operational model that gives them the financial viability needed in order to realise their social mission in the long term (Weber Kröger & Demirtas, 2015).

According to the organisation, STC was founded by a Brussels Christian Faith Community called the Well in 2005. Initially, the Well organised one week of social projects every year where it

connected to people in need and tried to get people involved with local issues. Gradually, due to its success, STC was continued as a separate organisation. Throughout the years, it has become a multinational social enterprise, active in 100 cities in Europe, Africa, Latin America and the USA. In Belgium itself, STC provides services to the cities of Brussels, Sint-Truiden and Leuven. In Brussels, STC is focusing on strengthening the relations between the different neighbourhoods. Currently it is focusing on the local needs of five neighbourhoods in Brussels: De Marollen, Schaarbeek, Sint Kathelijne, Elsene and Etterbeek. It is planning to expand its services to many other neighbourhoods in the coming years.

STC has a very clear vision: connecting the needs with the resources. The fundamental idea on which STC bases its core activities is bringing together people who are willing to help with the people who need help, by linking the volunteers with the several serving opportunities. Therefore, the social aspect is truly the cornerstone of its business and plays a central role in the strategy of the organisation. Its long-term goal is to eliminate the metaphorical line that divides a city between the haves and the have-nots. STC's business motto incorporates its vision on crossing that line in the city:

"We know them by their needs. What if we knew them by name? Cross the line. Serve the City." (www.servethecity.be/brussels/)

STC's business is twofold: serving projects together with the local social-profit organisations and CSR projects with profit organisations. Concerning its serving projects, STC focuses on six primary groups: homeless people, asylum seekers, the elderly, disabled people, children in need and victims of abuse. Overall, there are three different types of social projects.

First, the weekly volunteering opportunities allow the volunteers to help at the different local social associations, such as refugee centres, asylum seekers' residences, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, orphanages, etc. There the volunteers engage in simple activities with the people in need. This can be cooking and serving a meal to the homeless, playing football with refugees or asylum seekers, teaching underprivileged children, cleaning up a specific part of the neighbourhood, and so on.

Secondly, STC organises different types of events on a monthly basis. These activities include interactive workshops, project leader trainings and focus days. The monthly focus day is an important activity of STC, because this day intends to explore more about the different needs of the neighbourhoods and in-

forming people about the local issues by involving them in very specific projects (www.servethecity.be/brussels/).

“STC hopes that bonding people from different backgrounds will help closing the social gap, eventually transforming neighbourhoods by integrating socially marginalised groups.”

Finally, STC also has an annual 'Big Volunteer Week', which is a week of special serving projects alongside the local social associations. During this week, hundreds of volunteers from all around the world join STC Brussels to help. Furthermore, this is supposed to be a week that brings people closer together and promotes the core activities of STC. Usually it is combined with street festivities in which volunteers, friends and neighbours come together to watch local musicians and street

performers. Besides the many social projects, STC also organises team building events for its volunteers in order to create strong relationships, such as running the 20 km of Brussels, pub quizzes, etc.

Another side of STC's business involves the organisation of corporate volunteering events. Through these, STC aims at helping companies in the private sector to improve their CSR strategy. These corporate volunteering events give the opportunity to be involved with local or global social projects and to get closer to the community. Furthermore, STC gives advice about their CSR strategy through consultations, team building activities, workshops, lectures and leadership development training.

By assisting corporations this way, STC is able to facilitate its own volunteering projects with the resources and donations of the private sector. Therefore, these corporate volunteering events are seen as a strategy in which the corporations can help STC to get closer to its goals by providing human and financial resources, while STC helps them to connect more to the community and involves them in local and global volunteering events (www.servethecity.be/brussels/).

5. Results

5.1. Social Impact

We classify STC as a social constructionist (Zahra et al. 2009). Social constructionists are described as organisations with a main focus of addressing a social issue. STC has a very clear social mission, linking volunteers to people who need help. On the one hand, they hope that by doing so, they can guarantee help for those who would otherwise have difficulties getting help. On the other hand, they hope that by creating connections between people from different backgrounds, the social gap will gradually close, and this will eventually transform

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neighbourhoods by integrating socially marginalised groups of people into society. Hence, we can say that STC focuses on filling gaps to underserved clients, being the people in need who fall through the gaps of the social safety net.

The social issues addressed by STC are unfortunately an acute problem for societies because the scope of local politics and social security is limited. This means that STC is an enterprise that exists to address an ongoing social need. Moreover, STC is internationally active but centrally localised in Brussels. However, its core activities are always organised inside the scope of the city in which they operate, since they accommodate their activities to the local needs of the communities they serve. In addition, STC faces the limits of a social constructionist (Zahra et al, 2009), being highly dependent on human and capital resources in order to achieve their mission. On one hand, it needs willing volunteers and local non-profit organisations to collaborate and participate, while on the other hand, it needs corporations to collaborate with and donate their time and money to the social initiatives.

Furthermore, the interview with the CSR project coordinator illustrated that these sponsors, since they feel involved with the social mission of the company, want to stay up to date on the specific social project to which their money goes (R2). Finally, because STC undertakes many social initiatives, the organisation needs to be well institutionalised and run by professional volunteers and employees in order to guarantee going concern. This limits STC in its business approach as it fully depends on the skills and knowledge of volunteers.

In addition, it is important to determine how STC incorporates CSR into its business. As discussed before, the social value creation of STC can be easily determined because it has a very clear social mission. Therefore, all the projects it engages in with the different non-profit associations create a certain social value for the community. This is two-sided: it does not only help the people in need, but also fulfils the needs of the volunteers who want to help, resulting in an overall contribution to society (R1). Moreover, the CEO specifically said: "Everything we do falls in the CSR category" (R1). Therefore, we can say that STC tries to align everything it does with its mission.

5.2. Critical success factors (CSF)

STC is an innovative social enterprise that has been successful at developing some specific CSFs that directly affect the effectiveness, efficiency and viability of its social projects. Firstly, the CEO of the organisation can be considered a very influential

and strong leader. Overall, the interviews indicated that the CEO and founder of the organisation is well respected and shows strong leadership. During the collection of secondary data, we also came across several news articles and interviews with the CEO in which he represented the social image of the company flawlessly.

Secondly, the many partnerships represent the cornerstone of the value-creating network of the enterprise. STC succeeds at establishing sustainable relationships with local social associations and many corporations. More specifically, it works closely with Godiva, UPS, Hanover and the European Commission (R2). The interview with STC explained the importance of transparent communication and feedback with the several partners. External communication consists mostly of emails and face-to-face meetings with the client in an informal setting. STC has meetings with the specific partners in order to identify their specific needs and interests. According to the needs of the partner, it decides on an adapted approach, and organises a specific serving day that suits the interests and capabilities of the team members. That way they try to customise the different social projects to the partner in question, in order to maximise the benefits for both the corporation and the people they serve (R2). When the project ends, a debrief takes place in order to enhance the cooperation and consequently improve ongoing relationships. Both the employee and the CEO have confirmed that no major conflicts have ever occurred (R1 and R2). In addition, the partners and clients claim that there have never been any misunderstandings thanks to transparent communication (R3, R4 and R5). Moreover, STC succeeds in negotiating with the local public sector institutions. This is highly important since STC is dependent on the different political structures in each commune. The CEO of STC declared that there are no issues with the cooperation with government institutions as they support the initiative of STC to enforce integration of different cultures in the neighbourhoods, and he confirmed that the organisation is in direct contact with the local authorities (R1).

Another CSF is the clear and innovative concept on which STC's core business is based. STC's business is based on the principle of helping people in need by letting people who want to serve help. In fact, STC serves as a matchmaker between the needs of a city and its resources (R1). By providing volunteers with the opportunity to help people in need at local social enterprises, STC found a simple and innovative way to add direct social value to society. This way STC tries to allocate resources and people efficiently, thus improving the network of volunteering opportunities and serving projects in cities. The view of STC is the following: "Many people doing small things together can make a big difference" (R2).

Finally, we clearly see that local community engagement is a crucial CSF for STC. Given that STC focuses on the local needs of the different communes in Brussels, its success depends on the engagement of the local stakeholders and beneficiaries. Thanks to sustainable relationships with volunteers and local associations in the neighbourhoods, it has a strong local community network that keeps the business going. The CEO himself explained that STC always strives to strengthen relationships between neighbours in the different communities (R1). Consequently, STC keeps investing in these relationships and by organising its yearly Big Volunteering Week, which is its biggest profiling event and represents a city-wide initiation, it gets all volunteers, employees and other people in the communities together to create bonds in an informal situation. This allows STC to engage with the different stakeholders on another level.

To summarise, the strong leadership elements, as well as the partnerships and local engagements are essential to the success of a social enterprise, which is to be found in both stakeholder management theory, as well as in the social entrepreneurship's literature on success factors (Wronka, 2013).

5.3. Challenges

One of the biggest challenges for STC is finding financial resources. In order to finance the supplies, materials and transportation costs of the several social projects, it is mostly dependent on donations and partnerships with companies willing to invest. The income generated through the several CSR projects with partners is reinvested in a specific project, which is the development of pop-up learning labs in poor areas (R2). However, for all other social projects and events, it depends on donations made by individuals, governments and corporations, and fundraising events organised in collaboration with other companies (R3). This puts a big constraint on the scope of its social initiatives, and forces STC to think about other ways to finance its activities.

Moreover, scalability also proves to be a challenge for STC. Being a small organisation, with six people in the executive team and around thirty staff members, the organisation is not always well prepared to handle a growing amount of work. The business model of STC is not built in a way that offers potential for economic growth. The company considers itself a grassroots organisation, i.e. a collectivist organisation whose activists seek to bring change at the local level. Therefore, it is not actively looking at ways to grow in the short run (R1). Furthermore, the organisation is limited in capacity due to the limitations in their overall resources, such as human capital and property.

Another challenge relates to the stakeholder management. Given that STC's business is highly dependent on stakeholder engagement, it is very important for STC to proactively deal with conflicting interests and needs of the different stakeholders. Even though it has a sustainable network with close partnerships and high community engagement, efficient stakeholder management remains a continuous challenge. The CEO acknowledged the difficulty of considering so many interests. Therefore, he said that STC focuses on transparent communication with the different stakeholders and closely examines whether partnerships are mutually beneficial; it only engages when they share similar objectives in order to avoid issues (R1). This became clear in the interview with the stakeholders, who all share the same vision regarding social engagement (R3, R4 and R5). Also internally, STC invests tremendously in stakeholder engagement. By involving the staff in all activities with clear communication and weekly meetings, STC succeeds in engaging its employees. Moreover, employees claim that they feel appreciated; they are given freedom in their responsibilities and STC takes decisions collectively (R1 and R2).

Measuring impact is extremely challenging for a social enterprise and STC is apparently no exception to that. Contrary to a for-profit organisation, the impact of a social enterprise cannot be measured by its profits. Although the social value that STC creates for the communities in Brussels is easy to observe, it is not easy to measure. In fact, social enterprises need a triple bottom line to measure the economic benefits of the company and the impact on social and environmental areas, but planning this triple bottom line is a true challenge (Wronka, 2013). STC itself focuses on its social impact by using following key performance indicator: number of volunteers multiplied by time invested per volunteer (R1).

STC continuously deals with social and cultural barriers, due to the international context of the company. Here we found a mismatch between STC's point of view and the one of the stakeholders. Although STC claims that it does not encounter difficulties with cultural or social barriers, the stakeholders clearly state that they do notice a cultural barrier in the relationship (R3, R4). According to them, the business culture of STC is highly influenced by American ideals and the Christian religion, since the founder is an American pastor. They determine that this culture clash can sometimes pose a problem in the relationship (R3, R4). These barriers could maybe generate reluctance towards cooperating with STC and consequently limit its business scope.

In general, social enterprises have to cope with the challenges concerning legitimacy and mission drift in order to be perceived as a credible social enterprise that fulfils its social

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mission (Wronka, 2013). However, STC does not encounter any difficulties in this area. We notice that STC is a legitimate organisation, since its partners and clients (R3, R4 and R5) perceive it as a true social value-creating organisation. Moreover, the stakeholders are well aware of the core business and mission of STC. Also internally, employees share the vision of STC and work together to achieve the same goal (R2). Furthermore, since STC has a credible social mission incorporated into all activities, STC is not confronted with the problem of mission drift. The CEO himself emphasised STC's strong commitment to integrate the core values of their mission into their activities: "Humility, compassion, respect, courage, love and hope; these are our core values. If these values are not present in our own team, then we have no credibility of leading something outside" (R1).

6. Conclusion

We conclude that STC is a successful social enterprise for many different reasons. STC, as a social constructionist, has a clear social mission and contributes directly to its environment by addressing ongoing social needs. In addition, this case study shows that the social business model of STC incorporates all five crucial principles that make a sustainable business model.

First, the core business of STC is based on a basic business logic that consists of connecting existing needs with existing resources. Second, STC has a sustainable value-creating network consisting of motivated volunteers, local associations, several corporations and local authorities. Third, cooperative organising is the core of its business. By closely cooperating in every social project from beginning to end with local non-profit associations, corporations and partnerships with other social enterprises for specific projects, STC is able to efficiently undertake social projects and address the social needs effectively. Fourth, STC encloses an effective strategic choice process, which enables STC to make sustainable strategic decisions. By choosing strategically, using a systematic decision-making process, which projects to take on and whom to collaborate with, STC can guarantee to stay focused on its social mission and generate social impact efficiently. Last but not least, STC has a multiple value creation proposition. With a clear focus on social impact, STC focuses on financial, environmental and social issues according to the needs of the different stakeholders. Serving not only the needs of corporations by organising workshops and teambuilding events, but also the needs of the focus groups through partnerships, intense networking and fundraising events, STC succeeds in finding financial resources

to fulfil its economic needs and address the social needs that are part of its mission, although with minor attention to environmental issues.

Nevertheless, we determined the limitations of STC's CSR management and the challenges that threaten its going concern. Since STC's core business revolves around addressing social needs of specific focus groups, environmental issues are overlooked. The scope of SCR activities is therefore limited to social benefits, which is a point of criticism. Therefore, we conclude that CSR is indeed integrated into the business model, but due to the limitations in STC's CSR scope, the impact of their CSR activities is also restricted in some ways. If STC were to include environmental issues into its business, it would have a more balanced CSR management. This issue also arises when talking about STC's lack of triple bottom planning. It is recommended that STC finds new ways to take economic, social and environmental benefits into consideration as a way of determining its CSR impact.

In general, we consider STC to have a strong stakeholder management strategy. Thanks to transparent communications and informal relationships with the different stakeholder groups, STC succeeds in developing strong relations. However, due to the high dependence of its business on stakeholder engagement and partnerships, this remains a continuous challenge. We recommend that STC should continuously work on these relationships in order to guarantee improvements and stability in the long term. Besides, an important remark to be made, STC only focuses on their primary stakeholder groups and not on the secondary ones. In the future, STC could expand its scope by taking into consideration the interests of indirect stakeholders. Lastly, we can conclude that although CSR has a strong social value proposition and solid value-creating network, it is obliged to invest continuously in order to improve its business and adjust to the constant changing environment. Therefore, STC should immediately deal with its main challenges by investing in the further development of its competencies and resources in order to strengthen its CSFs and increase future success.

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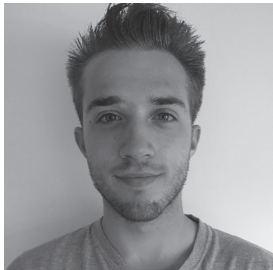
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Appendix 1. Interview Respondents

Name	Type of Stakeholder	Contact Person	Contacts	Responsible Person	Status	Code
STC	Firm/CEO	Carlton Deal	brussels@servethecity.be	Sofie, Elise	Interview on 13th of April at 13h	R1
STC	Employee	Julianne	brussels@servethecity.be	Sofie, Elise	Interview on 13th of April at 12h	R2
BELGIBEER	Partner/Client	Dario Ceccarelli	info@belgibeer.com	Anna, Klinta	Interview on 12 th of April at 9h30h	R3
People to People International	Partner/Client	Richard Chalks Corriette		Anna, Klinta	Interview on 18 th of April at 17h30	R4
MW	Partners	Jeremie Malengreaux	hello@inc.mw , +32 2 318 02 88	Jurri	Interview on 13th of April at 14h	R5

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Social Entrepreneurship Business Model and Challenges: an Explorative Case Study of Tejo

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at exploring the business model of Tejo. We wish to understand its business model and underlying mechanisms that lead to success, as well as reveal the challenges and critical success factors social entrepreneurs encounter. Social entrepreneurship is considered within the mental healthcare sector in this paper. We analysed 'Tejo', an organisation that is engaged in the psychotherapeutic assistance to youngsters between ten and twenty years old, working with professionals who on a voluntary basis want to help out youngsters. We explore the business model, social impact, key success factors and challenges through five semi-structured in-depth interviews with both internal and external stakeholders.

We verkennen in dit onderzoek het businessmodel, de uitdagingen en kritische succesfactoren van Tejo. Wij willen haar businessmodel en de onderliggende mechanismen die leiden tot succes begrijpen, evenals de uitdagingen en de kritische succesfactoren van sociale ondernemers blootleggen. We beschouwen een sociale onderneming in de geestelijke gezondheidszorg. We verkennen 'Tejo', een organisatie die zich bezighoudt met de psychotherapeutische hulp aan jongeren tussen de tien en twintig jaar oud. Deze werkt samen met professionals die op vrijwillige basis jongeren willen helpen. We onderzoeken het businessmodel, sociale impact, de belangrijkste succesfactoren en uitdagingen door middel van vijf semigestructureerde diepte-interviews met zowel interne als externe stakeholders.

Key words: business model, health care, social impact, critical success factors, sustainability, social entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Tejo stands for 'therapeuten voor jongeren' ('therapists for youngsters') and is the first initiative of a non-profit organisation called 'Jeugdtherapeuten zonder grenzen vzw' ('Youth therapists without frontiers'). In 2009, founder Ingrid De Jonghe noticed an increase in the amount of youngsters in special child welfare in Flanders. This amount had been rising since 2000, due to major changes in society. Therefore, the enormous lack of first-line counselling for young people with mental problems causes long waiting lists for second and third-line aid. As a result, a lot of them do not get the help they need. Mrs. Strijpens, clinical psychologist at the Centre for General Wellbeing

in Brussels, (personal interview 5, May 3rd 2016) agrees with these findings but also adds that the increase in demand for psychological assistance is partly caused by the profession, which gained interest the last few years. Tejo provides approachable, first-line therapeutic aid for these youngsters which prevents the problems from aggravating. Professional therapists who work as volunteers in the organisation can assist you instantly during a number of short conversations, free of charge. These conversations are anonymous and free of obligation. The approach that is used during the conversations is aimed at helping the young person in regaining his/her feeling for competence in order to get their problems under control.

The organisation's mission statement demonstrates a clear devotion to a social problem, which is a differentiating characteristic for social enterprises ('Helping young people in their growth to adulthood'). Tejo is a flexible but simple organisation with little administrative burden which has proven to be very effective. They have expanded their network to Mechelen, Ghent, Kortrijk, Bruges, Lier, Ronse and Kempen-Turnhout (Tejo, 2016). Mrs. Baetens, professor in Psychology at VUB, (personal interview 4, April 11th 2016) stated that expansion to Brussels would certainly create more value. There is even a proposal to expand abroad. It is important to mention that these different branches are legally and financially independent organisations.

2. Methodology

We conducted a qualitative research for this case study, based on five in-depth interviews with both internal and external

stakeholders of Tejo. This allowed us to gather different perceptions of several stakeholder groups, which would lead to more consistent and objective data, in order to generate a broad view and consequently minimise the possibility for biased results. We opted for semi-structured interviews because this allowed us to ask more open questions and to explore the different aspects into more detail with the interviewee. We had the pleasure to speak to the founder of Tejo in Antwerp, Mrs. Ingrid De Jonghe, together with the communication manager, Mrs. Lieve Van Boxem, and the financial manager, Mr. Marc Van Eeckhoudt. To have an external view on the organisation we also interviewed Prof. Dr. Imke Baetens, who is a psychology professor at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and Mrs. Catherine Strijpens, a clinical psychologist at the Centrum Algemeen Welzijnswerk (CAW) in Brussels. CAW operates in a different way compared to Tejo, although one of their target groups is the same.

Table 1: Interview Respondents

Tejo	Naam	Functie
Personal Interview 1	Ingrid De Jonghe	Founder of Tejo
Personal Interview 2	Lieve Van Boxem	Communication Manager Tejo
Personal Interview 3	Marc van Eeckhoudt	Board member and head of Finance Tejo
Personal Interview 4	Professor Dr. Imke Baetens	Psychology Professor Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Personal Interview 5	Catherine Strijpens	Clinical Psychologist at Centre for General Wellbeing Brussels

We also systematically gathered secondary data, based on reports, events, news articles and information from various websites, to further triangulate the findings of the interviews. This allowed us to gather an in-depth understanding of the social enterprise's business model. In the following sections, we elaborate on Tejo's business model, the value it creates for the youngsters as well as society as a whole and points of success and improvement.

3. Business model

Tejo offers professional guidance to youngsters, suffering from a variety of problems such as relationship problems, depression, negative self-image, behavioural problems, processing of trauma, stress, etc. In contrast to regular therapeutic centres,

Tejo provides youngsters with immediate guidance without an appointment. As mentioned, they offer psychological guidance to youngsters between ten and twenty years old, but most of them (65 %) are between 13 and 17 years old. These youngsters are boys (35 %) as well as girls (65 %), from all kinds of educational levels and mostly born in Belgium (80 %). Although most of them are Belgian, Tejo contributors face the challenges of a multicultural society on a daily basis.

Tejo almost exclusively works with volunteers: professional therapists, lawyers, translators who are willing to add a few (two to six) hours to their workweek to contribute to society. They do not bear any major administrative burden within Tejo, allowing them to focus on doing their job. This focus on the job setting combined with a positive atmosphere are the reasons why volunteers often find their work at Tejo much more

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rewarding. Working with volunteers also has its downside: the organisation has a staff turnover of 30 %. Board member and head of finance Marc Van Eeckhoudt (personal interview 3, April 4th, 2016) acknowledges that, in the organisation's current situation, it should focus more on finding new volunteers instead of finding more youngsters.

Since the service given by Tejo is free, Tejo is almost entirely dependent on subsidies from the city of Antwerp and funds such as the *Koning Boudewijnstichting* for its financial continuity. Given their essential support to those who are in need of wellbeing and psychological guidance, Tejo doesn't fear their subsidies might be taken away. Other forms of revenues include donations, fundraisers (such as the *Rode Neuzen Dag*) and giving lectures. The money they gather is used for rent, electricity and internet bills, office supplies and two receptionists. As mentioned before, all the other contributors work for free.

It is important to understand that the business model we mentioned before applies only to Tejo Antwerp. When a new branch of Tejo decides to open in another city, the whole operation is unique to the new Tejo. The office in Antwerp does not meddle in the affairs of newly opened Tejo branches. However, a monthly joint meeting is organised with core members of all Tejo branches to exchange information about the evolution of the firms.

4. Social impact

Ingrid De Jonghe, founder and CEO of Tejo, discovered a relevant problem in modern day society. The waitlists for mental health services were way too high. Studies also report that there was an unmet need for mental help for children (Kataoka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002). Children who were trying to use the service could not even enter because of these waitlists. This eventually led to cases where certain children in a depressed phase could not get the help they needed. It is clear that Tejo in itself exists for the sole purpose of helping children and guiding them through a tense phase in their lives. When discussing certain cases in the interview, we understood the effect of Tejo on some lives. For illustrative purposes, we explain this through two anecdotes, such as in one case a child who was successfully helped from bullying traumas. Later this child came back to Tejo and asked them for guidance on how to help her classmate, who was now being bullied herself. In another case, a girl came to Tejo as a last resort, as she was prepared to end her life if Tejo had not been there.

Next to their consultancies, affecting the lives of numerous children with problems, Tejo also launched a comic book, focused on the theme of bullying, throughout different schools in Flanders. They got into contact with children, letting them know about Tejo as well as the effect bullying has on other children. By distributing the comics in schools for free, they try to influence the atmosphere in classrooms and handle bullying problems before they even arise. The "CAW" (personal interview 5, May 3d, 2016) has another approach for influencing classrooms. They prefer to go to the schools and start open discussions with the children. Nevertheless, the interviewee found the comic a very interesting approach because this way the children were addressed more personally. The use of more innovative ways to try and impact society was certainly appreciated by the CAW.

As previously mentioned Tejo exists to provide free and easily accessible mental help to children. So in the first place it exists to cure children/youngsters from previous traumas. However, this is not the only reason for the existence of Tejo. While interviewing the financial manager (personal interview 3, April 4th, 2016) of Tejo, we asked for the general purpose of the organisation. The answer he gave was a very peculiar one. To him the main purpose of Tejo is to not have to exist anymore in the future. What he was trying to say is that normally a company like Tejo shouldn't even exist in the first place. To him it is the duty of the government to provide mental assistance to all children. Basically, a society where no Tejo is needed is a society where the government can handle the demand by itself. It shows that Tejo certainly has an impact on the government as, in some way, they are helping them in their duty.

Another aspect that Tejo wants to influence is the reduction of the amount of paperwork psychiatrists need to process. The financial manager told us that when psychiatrists work for a government institute, 70 % of their time is spent towards conducting paperwork and the remaining 30 % towards providing psychological help. Our Dutch neighbours reported to conducting bureaucracy almost 7/8 of the time (Bogels, 2008). Decreasing the amount of paperwork is also one of the main purposes for Tejo and therefore another impact on the government.

Another interesting aspect that Tejo provides is a good learning and working environment to psychiatrists. One volunteer reported in the magazine *Metrotime* (2016) that she loved working for the organisation and that after 4 years she is still learning things every day. Tejo makes her feel appreciated and supported. Ingrid De Jonghe also noted during her interview that it is not difficult to motivate the volunteers. Working for

“Tejo CFO: “Our main purpose is to not exist anymore in the future.””

Tejo gives the volunteers energy as in the end they do what they like to do, which is providing help to children.

Finally, four main impacts can be derived. One evidently being the impact on the children's lives themselves. Secondly they try to prevent problems from arising by influencing school atmosphere in the first place. The third is an impact on government policies with the purpose of changing the workings of mental health services in general. Providing a good working and learning environment to psychiatrists can be seen as the final impact.

5. Critical success factors

Entrepreneurship involves entrepreneurs that have a certain vision, equipped with leadership skills and power to operationalise the vision, willing to build something, which will grow and endure in the long run. This involves finding suitable partners and engaging the support of helpers, sometimes voluntary. Thompson, Alvy and Lees (2000) stated that entrepreneurship comprises an idea and the ensuing action, which brings desirable outcomes.

As stated in Thompson, Alvy and Lees (2000), social entrepreneurship needs some combination of people with visionary ideas, people with leadership skills and a commitment to make things happen, and people committed to helping others. In the same work we find proof that people from deprived backgrounds or people that are close to a specific matter are more likely to get involved in social entrepreneurship. This is ideal for the success of social entrepreneurs, because they are most likely more willing to help the community.

In our interviews conducted we found several key success factors that are stated above. The most important aspect of the key success factors is the vision. Tejo searches the easiest and most innovative way to offer assistance to youngsters. They want to attract attention from the right authorities to be able to form a correct assistance towards youngsters. Tejo also wants to participate in the social movements that appeal to solidarity in society, in order to have equal growth possibilities for all youngsters to become an adult. This work can only be achieved with the help of professionals or people that are close to this specific matter.

In several interviews it was said that Tejo employs professional therapists on a voluntary basis. These therapists benefit

from a gain in experience while they're working at Tejo. They are also continuously guided in their work. The workers at Tejo have the opportunity to participate, as much as they desire, in various kinds of training sessions. With the aspects above, Tejo wants to maintain a certain level of professionalism of the therapists working, on voluntary basis, for Tejo.

Tejo is also a free service and they guarantee total anonymity. Hereby they try to reach all types of youngsters in who are experiencing difficulties. They differentiate themselves from the "CLB", which is an authority active in the secondary education system. Ingrid De Jonghe (personal interview 1, April 4th, 2016) told us that Tejo is becoming a movement, in the sense that they want to shake up the youngsters to show more solidarity and kindness towards each other. This is also stated in their vision: they want to give everyone equal chances to grow properly.

In the theoretical section it is stated that entrepreneurship also means having growth potential. In all our interviews our respondents made clear that Tejo wants to grow and open more offices in Flanders, Brussels and possibly Europe. Professor Imke Baetens (personal interview, April 11th, 2016) supports the project and thinks it will be a good case to have a Tejo in Brussels. The last few years she noticed an increase in the number of youngsters who needed help, and she thinks that Tejo is a big step forward in offering the youngsters the help they need. The fact that they work with volunteers is smart because she believes that the motivation is bigger and that they work harder but it is an emotionally demanding job. Later on she is willing to join the organisation as a volunteer herself. Most of the time the volunteers work at the organisation in their free time. We thus could conclude from this that they want to share their experience and professionalism to help the cause that Tejo is defending, which also is a key aspect in social entrepreneurship.

“Catering for the growing needs of society, Tejo makes important contributions to the lives of youngsters.”

6. Challenges

Every organisation, profitable or non-profitable, has to deal with challenges that are specific to the company. These challenges can change over time due to several reasons. These reasons can include economic, cultural, political, environmental changes. Mrs. Ingrid De Jonghe (personal interview 1, April 4th, 2016) explained that with the existing CGG's (centra geestelijke gezondheidszorg), there is a problem to give fast help to children due to the long waiting lists.

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The first challenge is situated in the collaboration between the Tejo offices. All the offices are independent organisations with their own chairman and structure, working towards the same purpose. A good cooperation is needed to learn from each other's experiences and to help children the best way possible. Once a month they have a meeting and sit together to discuss the problems and new opportunities that arise. With the upcoming technologies and social media, new possibilities to cooperate are emerging and lead to faster and more efficient action.

Mrs. Lieve Van Boxem (personal interview 2, April 4th, 2016), communication officer at Tejo Antwerp, told us that the use of social media is helping them in several ways: they enable better coordination between the different offices, easier and cheaper ways of advertising and better communication methods with the youngsters. In the beginning, Mrs. De Jonghe gave lectures in primary schools and high schools to get into contact with their target audience. Nowadays websites, group chats, flyers and even the organisation's Facebook page are making it easier to reach youngsters with mental health issues.

Another challenge for Tejo is to find enough people to work with. As time passes, for some existing members it may be difficult to keep up with Tejo. Examples are childbirth, moving to other places and unforeseen circumstances. Not only the quantity of volunteers is a concern; also the right people are needed. Appropriate education and the proper skills are necessary together with strong motivation. Most of the volunteers are employed full-time in a professional career, and are available to work for Tejo two to six hours per week. This approach is different from that of the CAW (personal interview, May 3th, 2016). The CAW provides help to people but with a different approach. Both children and adults are welcome to talk about their problems. Another difference between Tejo and CAW is that CAW employees get paid. CAW not only provides psychological assistance but also other services such as housing and legal help.

Aside from coordination, growth and raising voluntary staff, financing the services poses a major challenge. Tejo needs to find ways and possibilities to gather enough earnings to ensure its existence. At the start, Mrs. De Jonghe gave lectures in primary and high schools for free, but now she asks a little fee to speak in front of the classes. A second important part is the cooperation with partners who provide donations and make advertising for Tejo. Other funding to Tejo comes from different companies and people. The city of Antwerp also provides a subsidy for the rent of the Antwerp office. Each year

“We want to be a movement. We want to be everywhere.”

Tejo organises a running event where people can “run for Tejo”. The last few years this event has been booming and Tejo is becoming more and more popular. The final reason why Tejo needs revenue is the potential for international development. Mr. Mark Van Eeckhoudt (personal interview 3, April 4th, 2016) told us that there are ideas to begin an office in München, Germany. This big step abroad has not been confirmed yet. Mr. Van Eeckhoudt has also tried to raise money through sponsorship, but this was against the will of the other psychiatrists.

Overall, Mrs. De Jonghe indicates the need for a strong motivation over time to continue expanding Tejo. Other challenges mentioned are reaching the right people and influencing them, continuing to write articles in newspapers, integrating into other places, searching for volunteers and making a second comic book. The ultimate purpose of all of these challenges is to make a better world, being more social, helping each other and making sure that every child that needs psychological help, can be supported in a good manner.

7. Conclusion

The non-profit organisation Tejo provides professional aid to youngsters between ten and twenty with mental health difficulties. Launched in 2009 in response to the long waiting lists in mental health care, this organisation can rely on professional volunteers to provide fast and free access to those in need. Since its inception, it has known increasing success, having a social impact on a large number of young people. Not only does the organisation help individuals with therapeutic conversations, but Tejo also gets the attention of teachers and school students by means of their comic book, distributed freely. Although the professional nature of their service creates their strength, finding enough professional psychiatrists who want to work on a voluntary basis is a challenge. Aside from this, as the services are free of charge, financing whole operations is quite intensive, as they rely mostly on subsidies, company sponsoring and donations. Tejo has more ambitions for growth and wants to further develop itself in order to achieve more in the future.

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Boekbespreking: “Hoek Af - 21 Buitengewone Ondernemers en Start-Ups” van Eric Kenis

AUTEURS



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Inleiding

Belgen staan eerder bekend omwille van hun culinaire voorkeuren en bouwontwikkelingen, en niet zozeer wanneer het op ondernemerschap aankomt. Inderdaad, België scoort als een van de slechtste in de Europese Unie over de afgelopen jaren als het er bijvoorbeeld op aankomt om een onderneming op te starten. We staan er tevens om bekend om redelijk risico-avers te zijn, een eigenschap die niet goed samengaat met het ondernemen. En toegegeven, wanneer je aan een ondernemer-rolmodel denkt, ga je al snel kijken naar Steve Jobs of Bill Gates. Moet het echt een Belgische ondernemer zijn? Dan krijgen we de uitzonderingen zoals Marc Coucke of Gert Verhulst steevast voor ons bord gepresenteerd. Met andere woorden, Belgen zijn slechts in uitzonderlijke gevallen ondernemers. Het is dan ook nog uitzonderlijker indien ze succesvol blijken te zijn.

Eric Kenis doorbreekt enigszins dit stereotype aan de hand van 21 buitengewone Belgische ondernemers die hij, naar eigen zeggen met genoegen, heeft mogen opvolgen in de afgelopen acht jaren. Eric is eerst directeur geweest van BLCC, een organisatie die al 25 jaar lang taalopleidingen aanbiedt. Daarnaast is hij zelf ondernemer geweest in de taaltechnologie-sector in Gent. Hij is tevens directeur geweest van het dienstenluik in Voka-West-Vlaanderen, en hij heeft ook meegewerkt aan de geboorte van Bryo, een netwerk van jonge ondernemers die hun ideeën willen uitwerken. Eric heeft doorheen zijn carrière altijd al een passie voor het ondernemerschap gehad, hetgeen hem dan ook niet verwonderlijk tot het schrijven van dit boek heeft geleid. Hiernaast is hij ook rond *entrepreneurial learning* aan de

Antwerp Management School actief door verschillende projecten uit te werken.

Eric beschrijft in zijn boek “Hoek Af” verschillende ondernemers, actief in verschillende sectoren (klassiekeren sectoren zoals de IT- en hightechsector komen aan bod, maar ook ecologische en sociale ondernemers komen aan bod). Doorheen zijn boek “een hoek af” (want inderdaad, dat zijn niet de typische Belgen zoals hierboven beschreven), merk ik enig enthousiasme en sympathie voor deze ondernemers. En terecht! Elke ondernemer in dit boek heeft, op zijn of haar eigen manier, bergen weten te verzetten. Maar het is geen “rozengeur en maneschijn”-boek. Zowel succesverhalen alsook minder aangename momenten worden naar boven gehaald, net als levenslessen en ervaringen van deze unieke ondernemers. Dit allemaal samen zorgt voor een ware bron van inspiratie voor eenieder die interesse heeft in het ondernemerschap in België.

“Het ondernemerschap *tout court*. Ik zou bijna zeggen een soort van idealisme, maar centraal is het passie of overtuiging.”

Het ondernemerschap - een passie

Eric verwijst met de term “een hoek af” naar deze ondernemers omwille van hun serieuze (doch gezonde) dosis aan ambitie, durf en wilskracht en beslissingen die “normale” personen niet direct zouden nemen. Om het in de woorden van Steve Jobs te zeggen, “mensen die goed gek zijn, zijn zij die denken dat ze de wereld kunnen veranderen en het ook doen.” Elke besproken ondernemer in dit boek heeft oog voor innovatie, gaande van een nieuw product, proces, idee of visie dat als doel heeft de organisatie zelf of de samenleving te verbeteren. Elk op hun beurt leggen de onderne-

mers ook uit vanwaar die drang naar het ondernemen kwam. Dit leidt tot het klassieke debat van *'born versus made'*, *'nature versus nurture'*. In het boek komt het aangeboren aspect naar voren, want vaak blijkt het in de persoon te zitten, nog voor dat er iets van *'cultivatie'* aan bod kwam. Eric minimaliseert echter het belang van vorming niet. Dat blijkt ook uit de verschillende ondernemers' ervaring met incubators en *mentors*. Uiteindelijk delen ze allemaal hetzelfde wat voor de nodige *drive* zorgt, en dat is passie. En passie, dat heb je in je, of niet.

Ondernemers, gebeten door een passie, komen vaak obstakels tegen tijdens hun ondernemende avontuur. Het is dankzij die passie dat ze de nodige koppigheid weten te vertonen en kunnen doorbijten doorheen de moeilijkere periodes. Moeilijke periodes voor ondernemers kunnen bijvoorbeeld momenten zijn waar de onderneming het financieel moeilijk heeft, er een overname plaatsneemt of waarbij de oprichters onderlinge spanningen opbouwen. Ter illustratie van het eerste geval: Dennis Vangeneugden, oprichter van Medianeut, "deed langer over de onderhandelingen met business angels dan de samenwerking heeft geduurd". Maarten Vandenbrouck, oprichter van Ticto, werd reeds overgenomen na 3,5 jaar. In het derde geval is Maxime Carpentier de enige overblijvende oprichter van ZeroCopy nadat er redelijk wat spanningen waren tussen de oprichters onderling. Doorheen het boek valt weliswaar op dat succesvolle ondernemers *matching and complementary partners* nodig hebben.

Het Belgisch ecosysteem

Zoals eerder vermeld vinden ondernemers, naast hun eigen passie, gelukkig soelaas bij enkele incubators, centra waar ondernemers samen worden gezet en hun ervaringen en kennis weten te delen. Het zijn ideale plaatsen waar ondernemers kunnen groeien en netwerken. Een dergelijke incubator was bijvoorbeeld iMinds. Wouter Uten en Tom Martens van Ugen-Tec hebben alleszins "geen enkel kanaal onbenut om sneller slimmer te worden als ondernemer" en via deze incubator kunnen groeien als ondernemer.

Alhoewel dergelijke centra zeer nuttig zijn voor het ondernemerschap, lijkt het boek niet zozeer overtuigd te zijn van het Belgisch landschap als het aankomt op *risk taking*. Zo halen verschillende ondernemers aan dat de Belgische markt heel vaak risico-avers is, met als gevolg de zogenaamde "*brain drain*". Hiermee verwijzen de ondernemers naar het fenomeen waarbij capabele Belgische ondernemers naar andere oorden zoals het befaamde Silicon Valley vertrekken. Vaak gebeurt dit omwille van financiële redenen. Daar hebben ze namelijk meer kans om investeerders aan te trekken die minder risico-avers zijn. Ter illustratie: Davy Kestens, oprichter van Sparkcentral, vertrok met het bedrijf naar San Francisco, zonder enige moei-

te. Omdat "het niet meer was dan ikzelf en mijn laptop". Karel Bruneel en Ben Schrauwen, oprichters van Circuits.io, zijn ook zo in 2014 met een enkel ticket op het vliegtuig naar San Francisco gestapt. In de Amerikaanse start-upwereld leerden zij dat je gewoon moet durven mailen naar mensen, want hij "kreeg altijd meteen ja".

Entrepreneurial lessons

Het aantal levenslessen en ervaringen van ondernemers zijn talrijk aanwezig in het boek. En het is juist dat soort lessen dat het boek zo interessant maakt. Ik verwijs jullie graag naar het boek zelf maar ik kan jullie al zeker enkele puntjes meegeven:

Complementary teams work! Het ondernemen is heel vaak niet overgelaten aan een *one man show*. Iedereen heeft zijn sterkere en zwakkere kanten. Het is van cruciaal belang dat je, liefst van in het begin, met de juiste mensen aan tafel zit en samen het bedrijf sterker eruit laat komen.

Culture above all else! Een cultuur ligt aan de basis van het bedrijf. Ligt de cultuur niet goed, of er is wrevel, kan dit nefast zijn op de lange termijn. Verschillende ondernemers verkiezen cultuur boven ervaring, omdat het team belangrijker is dan de individuele bekwaamheden. Beter aldus een plan B met een team A dan omgekeerd.

Sharing is caring! Quasi alle ondernemers in dit boek hebben het over de nood van in contact te komen met anderen (ondernemers). Ideeën uitwisselen, kritiek geven, advies verlenen ... het is van kapitaal belang voor de ondernemer. En hoe meer, hoe beter. Wees open en niet beschaamd om het over je zwakke kanten te hebben.

"Hoek af" van Eric Kenis is een fantastisch boek, vol inspiratie van authentieke Belgische ondernemers. Een aanrader dus voor iedereen met belangstelling voor ondernemerschap in ons land. Maar hoe kunnen we dit boek voorstellen, zonder in gesprek te gaan met de auteur zelf? In wat volgt stellen we ons interview met Eric Kenis voor, en zijn ideeën rond ondernemerschap.

Philippe: In het boek vermeldt u de uitspraak "*sharing is the new normal*" van Jurgen Ingels, een van de vele ondernemers die u heeft opgevolgd. Is het in diezelfde ideologie dat u dit boek geschreven heeft? Of ligt de motivatie elders?

Eric: Het idee of liever gezegd stokpaardje van Jurgen Ingels is een stand-aloneverhaal. Toen ik het boek schreef had ik niet bewust een rode draad gelegd. Wat ik wel weet is dat we ons

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sterker moeten gaan focussen in het Westen op de zaken waar we goed in zijn, en dit door verschillende partijen samen te brengen. Dat is de rode draad die Jurgen mee wou geven. Maar ik snap uw vraag niet echt precies, wat bedoelt u eigenlijk?

Philippe: Wat wenst u te bereiken met dit boek (door deze verhalen te delen)? En hoe bent u op het idee gekomen om dit boek te schrijven?

Eric: *Sharen* in die zin dan ja, natuurlijk (lacht)! Het eerste opzet was een veelheid van verhalen te brengen rond het Belgisch ondernemerschap. Het overstijgen van dezelfde twee of drie succesverhalen die de wereld veroveren in de media. Het is doorheen de verschillende jaren dat ik het genoeg heb gehad om te kunnen samenwerken met verschillende ondernemers en op verschillende cases. Hierdoor zag ik dat er eigenlijk niet “de ondernemer” bestaat, maar eerder een veelvoud aan types van ondernemers. Het is dan ook dat beeld van het ondernemerschap dat ik wens te veranderen.

Philippe: Kunt u zo een stereotype even aanhalen?

Eric: De meeste ondernemers zijn zeker niet altijd podiummeesters. Er zijn zowel extroverte als introverte ondernemers. Alfa's en bèta's, *sales minded* ondernemers en ondernemers die zich niet focussen op *sales* ... Eenieder van de bevolking kan een ondernemer zijn, zolang er een hoek af is. Hiermee verwijst ik naar een passie of obsessie waardoor die man of vrouw zijn of haar eigen weg wenst te bewandelen en keuzes maakt die normale mensen niet zouden maken. En dat is ondernemerschap *tout court*. Ik zou bijna zeggen een soort van idealisme, maar centraal is het passie of overtuiging.

In sommige gevallen, zoals die van de sociale ondernemer, draait het dan niet per se rond winst, maar eerder rond een sociaal doel. Ook hier is die passie of overtuiging van toepassing, alleen op een minder voor de hand liggend doel. Wil je zo snel mogelijk rijk worden, dan moet je niet een nieuw bedrijf opstarten. Meestal doen de meeste ondernemers dit omdat ze uitdagingen of problemen anders aanschouwen dan de meesten (ze hebben namelijk een hoek af, snap je) en die wensen aan te gaan. Met heel veel geduld en voor een poosje aan een onderbemiddeld loon, gaan zij op een eigenzinnige manier te werk.

Philippe: U doorbreekt dus het stereotiepe beeld van de Belgische ondernemer?

Eric: Meer dan het naar voor brengen van een verscheidenheid aan verhalen was niet de bedoeling in het begin. Ook was het

zeker niet de bedoeling om enkel razende succesverhalen aan te brengen. Het gaat niet allemaal over roze wolken. Ondernemen is eerder een rollercoaster van vallen en opstaan, waarbij sommige ondernemers minder tegenslagen kennen dan anderen. Nu, in alle eerlijkheid heb ik wel wat kritiek gekregen op het boek, namelijk dat het vrij eenzijdig is als het aankomt op *scalability* en variëteit in het ondernemerschapslandschap. Een deel voelt zich een beetje onderbelicht. Maar het is nu eenmaal zo dat IT'ers relatief makkelijker met *low-cost* snel naar de klanten kunnen gaan, hetgeen de start-upperiode vergemakkelijkt.

Philippe: Passie staat dus centraal bij de ondernemer, maar is een ondernemer dan *born and formed*, of dan toch eerder geboren (*born*) of gemaakt (*made*) volgens u?

Eric: Ik ben niet zo een voorstander van het te sterk te benadrukken van de *nature* component, want opeens zouden vandaag de dag veel meer ondernemers geboren worden. Het is namelijk zo dat ik in het ondernemerslandschap veel meer ondernemers zie dan vroeger. En ik denk dat dit eigenlijk wel een generatiefenomeen is. De nieuwe generatie, de *digital natives*, heeft dat IT in de genen. Die zijn meer geneigd om hun eigen onafhankelijk pad te kiezen, en vaak al vanaf dat ze schoolgaand zijn, maar ook als ze gaan werken of eigen bedrijf oprichten. Ze zullen op eigen houtje te werk gaan, wat typerend is voor ondernemers.

Philippe: Is dat dan de reden waarom u aandacht schonk aan de oorsprong van de ondernemers' start in het boek?

Eric: Ik heb altijd extra aandacht geschonken aan die vroege fase van de ondernemers, omdat dat een beetje het interview (alook het boek) anekdotisch verlicht (lacht). Maar inderdaad, het toont wel aan dat het ondernemen al van in het begin zit, die drang naar onafhankelijkheid en eigenzinnigheid. En in dit geval zou het een generatiefenomeen zijn, waardoor ik het “*nature*” wens te nuanceren.

Wat voor mij tevens van belang was in de interviews was de passie en persoonlijkheden van de ondernemers naar voren te schuiven.

Philippe: In het boek vermeldt u verschillende keren incubatoren. In welke mate zijn die van belang?

Eric: Het zijn aantrekkingspolen voor ondernemers, om verschillende redenen. Enerzijds kunnen ze daar vergelijken en wedijveren met elkaar, en kunnen ze bewijzen dat ze hun plaats verdienen. En dat is een zeer goed fenomeen. Het heeft

te maken, mijns inziens, met besmettelijkheid. Dergelijke centra steken aan en dienen als het ware als een trigger om te ondernemen. Anderzijds voorzien dergelijke centra de nodige coaching, fysieke locaties en eventueel vergoedingen, maar ook het nodige elan door alle *brains* samen te zetten, wat het gevoel "ik sta er alleen voor" van de ondernemer doorbreekt.

Een derde reden waarom het een aantrekkingspool is, is omwille van de opportuniteiten die het met zich meebrengt, aanzien alle mogelijke en zelfs toekomstige partners samen op eenzelfde locatie zijn.

Philippe: Hebben we er (nog) meer nodig?

Eric: Geen idee of er steeds meer nodig zijn. Ik zie wel dat er nieuwe blijven ontstaan, ook op verschillende vlakken. Er zijn zelfs nu incubatoren die spin-offs verzamelen, zoals in het Antwerpse Darwin. Het fenomeen van incubatoren kan zeker nog uitbreiden en groeien.

Wat mij betreft, vind ik het ook wel interessant, dat gewone ondernemingen die al een tijdje bezig zijn, wel graag een werkplek ter beschikking wensen zoals start-ups dat doen. Op die manier komen ze misschien inspirerende momenten tegen of kan er kennis doorgegeven worden of andere vormen van samenwerking uit de bus komen.

Philippe: Hebben we nood aan meer *entrepreneurial minded people*?

Eric: Ik ben zeer overtuigd van het belang en de nood hiervan. De nieuwigheden en voortrekkers komen uit het ondernemerschap, en hun initiatieven zijn van belang voor de samenleving. Meestal zijn ze de *avant-garde*, en doen ze dingen die niet noodzakelijk mogelijk zijn in grote ondernemingen, waar er procedures zijn en waar er mogelijk andere kortetermijnbeleggen heersen.

Philippe: Wat kunnen we doen om dergelijke mentaliteit te stimuleren?

Eric: Belgen zijn nog steeds geen hoogvliegers op het vlak van ondernemerschap. Kijk naar de statistieken van vroeger en zelfs op de dag van vandaag. We scoren daar heel slecht op, wat jammer is. Maar wat wel werkt in mijn ervaring, zijn rolmodellen en succesverhalen. En dat is ook wat ik probeer te doen met dit boek.

Op een ander vlak is de manier waarop het onderwijs omgaat met het ondernemerschap evenzeer van belang. De dag van vandaag zijn er maar weinig hogescholen of universiteiten die zich niet hiermee bezig houden, wat het ondernemerschap ten goede komt.

De beste manier om het ondernemerschap tot iets te laten komen, is door jonge mensen effectief een bedrijf te laten opstarten, zonder te veel schoolregels op te zetten (geen geld verdienen of een leerkracht als *board member* te hebben). Laat dus scholen ondernemingen bouwen op een indirecte manier.

Philippe: Wie zijn uw ondernemende rolmodellen geweest doorheen de jaren?

Eric: (lacht) Het is een beetje een omgekeerde wereld, want meestal stel ik die vraag aan jonge mensen. In mijn geval, zijn dat diezelfde jonge mensen die bedrijven lanceren en bergen weten te verzetten. Elke ondernemer in dit boek heeft zoveel energie en passie om hun doel te behalen, in soms zeer moeilijke omstandigheden, het is gewoon bewonderenswaardig wat ze doen.

Maar ook onbekende kmo's, met ondernemers aan boord, zoals in Gent Leslie Kontenier, zijn mijn rolmodellen. Ze leidt 10 mensen in haar bedrijf, heeft het ongelooflijk druk, maar is tegelijk overal op de podia te vinden

om andere ondernemers te helpen. Om nog iemand op te noemen, Inge Geeren heeft een technologiebedrijf en steekt toch zoveel tijd en energie in anderen om realisme aan te brengen. Die combinatie van 24/7 te werken aan het bedrijf samen met een podiumaanspreking voor het ondernemerschap ... dat is gewoonweg fantastisch.

Philippe: Is het diegene die blijft aanhouden, de doorzetter, die uiteindelijk dan ook altijd slaagt als ondernemer?

Eric: Zeker zo, zonder twijfel dat diegene die niet opgeeft, slaagt. Er zijn zeker genoeg ondernemingen te vinden die crisismomenten hebben gehad, of minder glorieuze momenten hebben gekend (of zeer gevaarlijke wateren hebben gekend). Het gras is nergens zo groen als aan de rand van de vulkaan. Risico's zijn eigen aan het ondernemen, en elk pad is een hobbelig pad. Af en toe kom je die tegen, en het doorzetten zorgt er ook vaak voor dat je uiteindelijk succes bereikt. En ik kom terug op passie, als de *driving force* die hen begeleidt doorheen dat hobbelige pad.

“Het gras is nergens zo groen als aan de rand van de vulkaan.”

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En de dag van vandaag hebben ondernemers eigenlijk minder te verliezen dan vroeger. Het vereist niet veel kosten om een bedrijf te lanceren, en welke ervaring je er ook uit haalt (positief of negatief), je bent steeds een winnaar. Vandaag is het geen blamage om op je CV te zetten dat je een onderneming hebt moeten stopzetten.

Philippe: In het boek wordt ook naar de “brain drain” van Belgische ondernemers naar Silicon Valley verwezen. Hoe kunnen we dit tegenhouden?

Eric: Ecosystemen helpen. In België sta je echt op de kaart waar men wilt zijn, zoals het geval is voor de biotechnologische sector. In hun geval is er weinig reden om te vertrekken, aangezien er mankracht, kapitaal, knowhow en markt is. Maar voor andere sectoren wordt er gekeken waar er markt en klanten zijn. Een tweede aspect, is dat van “*the world is their oyster*”. Zolang op de een of andere manier er een link aan België blijft, vraag ik me af wat ik erop tegen zou hebben. Een derde reden is een kwestie van beschikbaarheid van kapitaal. Als de middelen voor verdere fasen niet beschikbaar blijken te zijn in België, dan kiest men voor Amerikaanse partners.

Philippe: Wat is uw advies aan jonge aspirant-ondernemers?

Eric: Niets origineels hoor, maar deze zou ik alvast willen meegeven:

- Praat in een vroege fase met heel veel mensen.
- Wees niet bang om jouw idee te delen.
- Laat je ook niet ontmoedigen.
- Praten is belangrijk, maar even belangrijk als luisteren. Een idee wordt beter met een kritisch geluid.
- *Be lean*. Hiermee bedoel ik om snel naar buiten komen en dingen uit te proberen.
- *Be agile*. Ik bedoel hiermee dat je je zo snel mogelijk moet aanpassen. Marktvoorspellingen zijn moeilijk de dag van vandaag, concurrentie inschatten is nog moeilijker.

Philippe: Kunt u ook even nog wat kwijt rond uw project aan de Antwerp Management School?

Eric: Ik zet trajecten uit rond *entrepreneurial learning*, voor ondernemers die al bezig zijn. Er zijn 3 issues die vaak terugkeren, namelijk het omgaan met cijfers, een organisatie uitbouwen (een product en/of een bedrijf bouwen is iets dat zeer sterk evolueert; het vereist andere skills bij het uitbouwen dan wanneer je het bedrijf lanceert) en *personal development and readiness*. Met dit laatste bedoel ik dat niet iedereen goed is in alles,

en je je dus beter focust op je sterke kanten. Maar het bedrijf moet wel sterker zijn dan jezelf, en dat is mogelijk door de juiste partners te hebben.

Ik wil Eric graag hartelijk bedanken voor zijn ontvankelijkheid en tijd en de interessante discussie rond zijn boek en het Belgisch ondernemerschap in het algemeen. Ik wens hem verder nog veel succes bij zijn lopende en komende projecten. Ik sta alvast te popelen om het volgende boek te lezen. Voor verdere informatie of bestellingen kunt u zich wenden tot zijn website: www.hoek-af.be/hoek-af/

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