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Developing dialogue bottom-up: social enterprises and local government in the Netherlands

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Developing dialogue bottom-up: social enterprises and local government in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the specifics of the relationships between social entrepreneurs and local civil servants and politicians in The Netherlands. Policy frameworks for social enterprises (SE) are relatively underdeveloped here, as the central government took little initiative in policy development, and a legal definition for SE is lacking. This poses problems, but it also opens up possibilities to develop dialogue between local government and social entrepreneurs "bottom-up". Both parties' views of each other are explored, a practical tool to open dialogue is introduced and eight examples of collaboration are discussed.
Through the collected experiences at local and regional levels, policy makers at the national level now also increasingly recognize the importance of SEs in the Dutch economy, and realize that the lack of national policy and legal frameworks has proven limiting and increased vulnerability of the sector. For the coming years, there are signs that policy support for SEs will become more structured and national policy action is likely.

Keywords: social enterprise, Netherlands, local government, policy frameworks

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1. Introduction

While local authorities are seen as "pivotal actors in the development of a supportive social enterprise ecosystem" (European Commission 2015), little research has been done on the relationships between social entrepreneurs and local civil servants and politicians. This paper focuses on the specifics of these relationships in The Netherlands. Policy frameworks for social enterprises (SE) are relatively underdeveloped here, as the central government has taken little initiative in policy development so far, and a legal definition for SE is lacking. In a recent report, accountancy firm PwC concluded that "one of the most salient features of the social enterprise sector in the Netherlands is that it has been built from the bottom up" (PwC 2018: 27). The consequences of this bottom up development can be interpreted in different ways. The PwC researchers concluded that "almost all stakeholders we interviewed cited this as a success factor" (ibid). However, the lack of policy frameworks also poses problems, as social enterprises cite "government regulations" as their main obstacle for increasing impact. In any case, the bottom-up development of the sector opens up specific possibilities to develop dialogue between social entrepreneurs and *local* government.

This paper consists of five sections. In the next section, literature on the relation between social enterprises and local government is explored. Then, the policy context for social enterprises in the Netherlands is described. In the fourth and main section of this paper, the process of developing dialogue between social enterprises and local government is central.

First, the views on each other's positions are explored, then a framework for developing dialogue is introduced and examples of successful dialogue are introduced. This section ends with a description of very recent policy developments, now also at the national level. In the fifth and final section, conclusions are drawn and implications discussed.

2. Social enterprises and local government

Social enterprises and government share the ultimate goal of solving societal problems. This forms a possible basis for common understanding. However, in practice the relationship between the two is far from simple. On the side of the social enterprises, it contains elements of hybridity (Doherty *et al.* 2014), while at the government side it involves different governmental roles (from regulator to potential customer). As a consequence, both parties apply different organizational logics. This certainly applies in the Dutch context (Schulz *et al.* 2013).

A further complicating factor is the fact that the government's interpretation of its role in society can both create or restrict the room for social enterprises to come into existence in the first place, and subsequently their room for manoeuvring. This can be worked out and interpreted in different ways. One way is to emphasize that social enterprises frequently appear where governments fail to provide for social needs (Stephan *et al.* 2015). Another is that local governments do provide opportunities for social entrepreneurship in conjunction with social services or delivery of state health and welfare services (European Commission 2015).

How this works out in practice is very much dependent on the national (and local) policy context. In this paper, focus is on the specifics of this relationship in the Netherlands. Therefore, the main question is:
How can social enterprises and local governments in the Netherlands develop their dialogue towards a fruitful working relationship?

3. Social enterprise in the Netherlands and the policy context

While the Netherlands has a long tradition of forms of business with a social purpose, for example in types of Work Integration Social Enterprises and recycling shops, the term social enterprise is relatively new here. It was only in 2011 that a first report on the sector was written (Verloop *et al.* 2011) and in 2012 that a platform organisation on the national level called Social Enterprise NL was formed.

While it is clear that the social enterprise sector in the Netherlands has developed rapidly since then, reliable statistics are still missing. The best available estimate of the size of the sector is still from a 2016 McKinsey report (Keizer *et al.* 2016). They estimated the number of social enterprises in the Netherlands at 5,000-6,000, the number of jobs created at 65,000-80,000 and the total turnover at 3.5 billion euros, or 0.3% of the Dutch GDP (p. 5). The same report divides SEs in two types: community enterprises, focusing mostly on making impact at the local level; and society changers, who want to change the world.

The Netherlands boast a number of social enterprises which are also known internationally and fit the latter type. Tony's Chocolonely is an Amsterdam-based chocolate company with the mission to make the cocoa sector slave-free, which has grown out from a small start-up in 2005 to market leader in the chocolate sector in the Netherlands in 2018 (Abu Ghazaleh *et al.* 2018). Also Amsterdam-based is Fairphone, a company working to produce an ethical, modular smartphone, which has produced two types of phones so far.

Social Enterprise NL publishes the Social Enterprise Monitor nearly every year, consisting of a survey of its own membership and in recent years also the wider sector. The image appearing from the monitors is relatively consistent: the main impact area for social enterprises in the Netherlands is labour participation, followed by welfare- and environment-related missions (Social Enterprise NL 2015; 2016; 2018). Most SEs are small but growing, but experience difficulties in going from the start-up to the scale-up phase (De Bell *et al.* 2019).

To understand the policy context of social enterprise in the Netherlands, it is first necessary to briefly explain the political system.

The Netherlands form a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. Government is organised at three levels:

- The national level, with a two-chamber parliament. The main political decisions are taken in the 150-member House of Representatives (*Tweede Kamer*), elected every four years by proportional representation. Government is usually formed by a coalition of two to four parties, together holding a majority.
- The provincial level. The Netherlands are divided in twelve provinces (*provincies*), each with a directly elected provincial parliament. Coalition governments are formed here as well, in a similar manner as at the national level. Spatial planning is the main issue handled at the provincial level.
- The local level. The Netherlands consist of around 400 municipalities (*gemeenten*), each with a directly elected municipal council (*gemeenteraad*). Government is by a college of mayor (*burgemeester*) and aldermen (*wethouders*), which can usually count on the support of a majority of the council. The mayor is appointed by the minister of the Interior (on advice of the municipal council), while the aldermen are directly appointed by the municipal council. The national parties are also active at the local level, but in many municipalities local political parties also play a significant role. The municipalities' main responsibilities are in handling education, social affairs, welfare and care, local economy and local infrastructure; within the bounds set by the national government.

Legislation and main economic policies are set at the national level. However, there is also room for municipalities to make their own policies.

At first sight, the policy context for social enterprises in the Netherlands is straightforward when approached from a legal perspective. A legal definition is lacking and there is no specific policy towards social enterprises from the national level. In this respect, the Netherlands are lagging behind many other European countries (Hogenstijn 2018). However, taking a closer look, the image is more nuanced and interesting recent developments are visible. The national government first came into action in 2015, when it asked the SER, one of its most important advisory bodies, to write a report on the sector. After the report was published (SER 2015), it took over a year for the government to respond (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid 2016). While the response did not include the formulation of new policy, it did set into action a project in which an impact measurement tool called the Impact path (*Impactpad*) was developed (Avance *et al.* 2018). After parliamentary elections in 2017, the new national government wrote a single sentence relating to social entrepreneurship in its coalition agreement, stating that "appropriate rules will be drawn up and more scope will be created for businesses whose goals relate to civil society" (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy *et al.* 2017: 36). While this was seen as a hopeful sign, social entrepreneurs in the 2018 Social Enterprise Monitor 2018 stated that "regulations and policies from national government" were the single market circumstance that did *not* significantly improve in recent years (Social Enterprise NL 2018: 21).

In this relative absence of initiative at the national level, the other levels of government have taken the initiative. While some provinces, most notably Noord-Brabant, have recently started new policy initiatives, the most active layer of government regarding SE is the municipality level. In the next section SEs' and municipalities' mutual views are explored, and examples of developing dialogue and collaboration are introduced.

4. Developing dialogue and collaboration bottom-up

In this section, the dialogue and collaboration between social enterprises and local government taking place in the Netherlands is explored. First, the point of view of social enterprises is taken. Then, the local government's view takes prominence. Thirdly, results of an earlier research project into facilitating dialogue between the two parties is introduced;

using stereotypes. Eight examples of dialogue and collaboration are then discussed, before concluding this section with a brief overview of interesting recent policy developments at the national level.

4.1 Dutch social enterprises' view on local government

How do social enterprises in the Netherlands view their relationship with the local government? It is certainly not an easy relationship, as shown in recent Social Enterprise Monitors (Social Enterprise NL 2015; 2016; 2018). A question in every Monitor is what social enterprises see as the main obstacles for increasing their societal impact. Since 2015, government policy features prominently. In the 2015, "regulations and government policy" was the most-cited obstacle. In 2016, the categories were reformulated, and now "local government policy" scored second (after "finding customers"). In 2018 "collaboration with municipalities" was top of the obstacle list.

The 2018 Monitor also showed that respondents see that social enterprises become better-known and receive more recognition. Focusing specifically on the relations with local government, 71% of respondents say that the municipality is a relevant stakeholder and 42% of responding SEs trade with municipalities. Experiences are mixed, in particular for social enterprises working on different policy themes at the same time. These SEs have to deal with different policy makers at the municipality and say that they experience internal contradictions in their contacts with the municipality. Also, maintaining contact with the municipality takes a lot of time in their experience (Social Enterprise NL 2018: 19-20).

4.2 Dutch local government's view on social enterprises

A mixed image appears when looking at Dutch municipalities' views of social enterprises. While some municipalities have had strong SE support policies for a number of years, many others still have no policy whatsoever. The four biggest municipalities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) together form the G4 cooperation platform. They each have their own policy and have recently started to collaborate actively on the theme of social entrepreneurship. This is shown for example in their support of the Social Impact Days, an annual event showcasing local SE initiatives, first held in November 2018. In addition, the cooperation platform of the 40 cities and towns following the "big four" in size, called G40, is actively promoting SE support among its members since 2017 (see section 4.4. below). Still, when an overview was made of how SE support featured in the municipal coalition agreements after the municipal elections of early 2018, there was little evidence of supporting policies. Social Enterprise NL found in a quick overview that around one in three municipalities formulated explicit policy, often focused on "buy social" and stimulating the sector in general terms. Consultancy firm KplusV made an analysis of policy initiatives in 25 medium-sized municipalities and found little use of the term social enterprise, but more references to corporate social responsibility and initiatives to improve the position of people with vulnerable positions on the labour market (KplusV 2018).

Also in 2018, accountancy firm PwC released a report on the opportunities in collaboration between SEs and municipalities, based on a survey filled in by 102 municipalities, supplemented by interviews. Out of the 102 municipalities, 41% say they have a policy facilitating or supporting social entrepreneurship[1]. Those municipalities that have a policy, value the collaboration with SEs higher than others (PwC 2018: 10). The researchers see a lot of enthusiasm in the early stages of collaboration, but they also identify a number of mechanisms where expectations and evaluation greatly differ. Comparing the results of the municipality survey with those of the Social Enterprise monitor, major disagreements are found regarding the mechanisms recognition and appreciation, flexibility and compartmentalization (see table 1).

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[1] The survey was sent out to 375 municipalities (almost all) and thus had a response rate of 27%. This sample may not be representative. It is likely that those municipalities with a policy on SE were more likely to fill in the survey

Table 1. Views on collaboration mechanisms SEs and local government

Mechanism	Municipalities (completely) agree	SEs (completely) agree
The municipality recognizes and appreciates SEs in what they want to achieve	*84%*	*40%*
The municipality wants to think and act flexibly with regard to SE products and services	*64%*	*27%*
The municipality buys products and/or services with SEs	*59%*	*41%*
The municipality plays a role in supporting SEs financially (f.ex. loans, subsidies)	*41%*	*36%*
The municipality communicates the story of social enterprises well (for example via the media)	*36%*	*32%*
All departments of the municipality work well together, we do not suffer from compartmentalization	*27%*	*5%*
The municipality has knowledge and expertise to support SEs in their development	*23%*	*24%*

Source: PwC 2018: 27 (partly based on Social Enterprise NL 2018), own translation

In addition, it may be concluded that municipalities and SEs agree that municipalities lack knowledge and expertise to support SEs. This brings us to initiatives to bridge this so-called knowledge gap.

4.3 Facilitating dialogue: developing stereotypes

In recent years, different initiatives have been taken to try to improve the collaboration between SEs and municipalities. Here, I first report on a pilot project started with colleagues at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) in 2016.

With "regulations and government policy" rising to the top of the list of obstacles for increasing impact as identified by social enterprises in the Social Enterprise Monitor 2015 (Social Enterprise NL 2015: 6), AUAS decided to start a pilot research project into the relationship between social enterprises and local government[2].

This exploratory research took place in the form of a learning network of social enterprises in one sub-municipality of the Dutch capital of Amsterdam: Amsterdam New-west (approx. 140,000 inhabitants).

The research team first invited social entrepreneurs to discuss their experiences with local government. In intake interviews, it was discussed whether the social enterprises would feel comfortable with participation of one or more local government officials in the learning network. Reactions were mixed. Therefore, it was decided to run this learning network with social entrepreneurs only, and to involve local government towards the end of the project; discussing preliminary and final conclusions with them. From the side of the entrepreneurs, we found a lot of frustration and misunderstandings in the dialogue with local government, although there were also some positive experiences. To tackle misunderstandings, the research team decided to develop a set of five illustrated stereotypes of social entrepreneurs in relation to local government. While the term stereotypes is controversial, research has shown its usefulness in opening up dialogue in cases in which a stereotype is highly diagnostic (Crawford *et al.* 2011).

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[2] Results of this research project were reported in the article "Developing stereotypes to facilitate dialogue between social entrepreneurs and local government" (Hogenstijn *et al.* 2018), as well as in a Dutch-language report (Hogenstijn *et al.* 2016).

These stereotypes are named disappointed authority avoider, creative system changer, proactive problem handler, strategic policy follower and networking lobbyist. Short descriptions and illustrations of the stereotypes can be found in appendix 1.
Since they were developed, the stereotypes have been used multiple times in meetings with local authorities, other policy makers involved with social enterprises, and social enterprises themselves. In these situations, they proved to be a useful tool to open discussion: in particular to explicate the different organizational logics, clarify potential conflicts between governmental roles, and address mutual expectations.

4.4 Other examples of dialogue
In addition to the pilot research project mentioned above, there are a lot of other initiatives to facilitate dialogue and collaboration between SEs and local government. Here, we name eight examples of initiatives with different starting points and goals.

1. Social Impact Bonds
Starting point: collaboration between social enterprise, government and investor
Goal: financing possible solutions to societal problems

Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) are financing constructions in which government collaborates with a social entrepreneur and an investor. The parties make a contract on a project which is meant to tackle a societal problem, with specified goals regarding the societal impact that is to be realised (Hogenstijn 2018). The government pays out when the goal is reached. In the Netherlands, the first Social Impact Bond was realised in 2013 in Rotterdam, with the municipality of Rotterdam, investors Start Foundation and ABN Amro Social Impact Fund and social enterprise the Buzinezzclub as partners. Goals was to alleviate youth unemployment in Rotterdam. Since then, a small number of other SIBs followed, among others with the municipality of Utrecht. An article about Dutch experiences with social impact bonds was published in the *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship* (Smeets 2017). A 2019 evaluation by Start Foundation found that experiences with SIBs were mixed and that it is certainly not an easy solution, but that it still has a lot of potential (Dekker & Verhoeven 2019).

2. Buy Social
Starting point: platform organisation Social Enterprise NL
Goal: Facilitating buying from social enterprises

When social enterprises are asked how they would like to collaborate with government, they often state that they would like to see government as a buyer of their products and services (see Social Enterprise NL, 2018). Since 2016, platform organisation Social Enterprise NL has taken the initiative to facilitate and stimulate this, in the project *Buy Social*. First, a brochure with practical tips was published (Krull & Van der Minne 2016), and then a network was formed by Social Enterprise NL and the Social Impact Factory (see 3), called *Buy Social*. One specific way to stimulate "buying social" is through social return. A lot of governmental and semi-governmental organizations (including municipalities) work with a rule in their public procurement processes which requires parties to use a small percentage of the total sum for a social purpose. This is often applied by giving work to people with difficult labour market conditions, but sometimes a broader view on "social purpose" is taken (Hogenstijn 2018). Buy Social is one of the networks stimulating the use of social return in procurement, but the network also facilitates direct links between social enterprises and "regular" enterprises through a marketplace. In 2019, the network has grown to seven official partners, with the municipalities of Utrecht and Amsterdam among them. Around 200 companies offer over 300 products and services on the market (Buy Social 2019).

3. Social Impact Factory
Starting point: group of organisations in Utrecht

Goal: Providing a hub for social entrepreneurship in the city of Utrecht

The city of Utrecht is one of the places in the Netherlands where social entrepreneurship started developing relatively early, with different parties including the municipality and Utrecht University taking initiative. The Social Impact Factory (SIF) was started after the 2014 Social Enterprise Day in the form of a foundation, with the municipality among the organisations taking the initiative. The goal is to "make social entrepreneurship the new normal", with the strengthening of social entrepreneurship in a "hotspot" as important means (SIF Utrecht 2019). SIF is now in a prestigious location very near Utrecht central station, the main public transport hub in the Netherlands. The building is rented out by the municipality. While the subsidy relation with the municipality has not been without problems, the building houses a lot of social entrepreneurial start-ups and initiatives and truly functions as a local hotspot for social entrepreneurship.

4. Amsterdam Impact action program
Starting point: Municipality of Amsterdam
Goal: make Amsterdam thé place for social entrepreneurship

Along with Utrecht, Amsterdam was also one of the early adopters of social entrepreneurship (Hogenstijn 2018). On the initiative of the local council, in 2015 the municipality wrote an action program to promote social entrepreneurship (Oetelmans 2015). The ambitious program with 17 goals formulated as ultimate aim that Amsterdam should grow out to be thé place for social entrepreneurship within the Netherlands. The action program ran from 2015-2018 and along the way was rebranded in Amsterdam Impact. This continuing program forms among other things a platform for information on social entrepreneurship, by providing an ecosystem map. The municipality works together with different parties in the city to advance the program.

5. Roadmap for municipalities
Starting point: G32/G40 group of medium-sized municipalities
Goal: facilitate cooperation with social enterprises

In the Netherlands, there are different cooperation platforms and organisations for municipalities. The largest municipalities except for the big four are working together in an organisation which was called G32, but has now grown to G40. In 2017, the G32 decided that social entrepreneurship was a priority area and subsequently went on to publish a roadmap intended to help municipalities build a policy stimulating this. In 2018, the now G40 organisation published an updated version (Stedennetwerk G40 2018).
The G40 network now also offers an extended online collection of documents on social entrepreneurship, among other things showing good practices of nine municipalities (Stedennetwerk G40 2019).

6. Move2Social
Starting point: Consultancy firm and investment foundation
Goal: strengthen social entrepreneurship in the region

The project *Move2Social* is aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in and around social entrepreneurship. One of the key elements is a three-month program helping starting social enterprises refine their business plan and impact strategy and expand their network. The project has been developed by consultancy firm KplusV and the Rabobank Foundation. It is applied in different regions, with each region developing its own network of collaborating partner organisations. Municipalities are usually involved as partners, as well as universities or vocational education institutes, and in some cases provinces.

7. Impact North

Starting point: Alliance of companies with strong CSR focus
Goal: strengthen and boost entrepreneurship with impact in north of the Netherlands

In different regions in the Netherlands, regional alliances are formed in which social entrepreneurs collaborate with other actors in the ecosystem. One example is Impact North, an alliance in the north of the Netherlands (a region experiencing economic difficulties). Here, an alliance of entrepreneurs with a strong focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR) started a project to boost social entrepreneurship. Part of the program was to make an analysis of the opportunities for social entrepreneurship in the region (Wennekes 2018). A next step in the regional collaboration in the north is the formation of a network called Impact North (Impact Noord), in which a regional cooperation of municipalities is an official partner. This network unites regional actors and initiates activities, such as a specific Social Impact Day in the north.

8. Code Social Enterprises
Starting point: Social Enterprise NL and independent experts
Goal: creating recognizability and trust in social enterprises

The Netherlands is a country without a legal form for social enterprises. Still, there is a need for recognition of social enterprises. An initiative to work on this issue is the establishment of a Code Social Enterprises, with an accompanying Register. The initiative to develop this Code was taken by platform organisation Social Enterprise NL, in cooperation with a number of independent experts. A first draft version of the Code was finished in 2017 (Commissie Code Social Ondernemingen 2017). Setting up an organisation to work with the Code and establish the Register took some time, but by late 2018 the Code organisation was launched as an independent foundation, a Review Board was formed and the Register was opened. By mid-2019, the first few social enterprises have been through the review process and were allowed to enter the Register. One of the intentions is that the Code will be used in the collaboration between social enterprises and government. A first form of cooperation with municipalities is formed in the region of Twente, where a group of 14 municipalities (supported by company ROZ groep) is working on a mechanism to give social enterprises who are in the register a qualification for being included in social return in public procurement (Van der Meer 2019).

All of these examples show that in a situation where "top-down" structuring of the SE sector is lacking, fruitful forms of collaboration can still develop "bottom-up". However, some examples also show that this does not mean that the need for top-down structuring disappears. Interestingly, very recently this has led to new developments at the national level.

4.5 Recent developments: movement at the national level
In 2019, two major developments regarding SE in the Netherlands happened at the national level.
First, in February two reports were delivered to the national government:
1. A report by Utrecht University, about the desirability of a specific legal form for social enterprises (Bosma *et al.* 2019). This report sums up all the arguments for and against such a form, also considering alternatives. In addition, it introduces a sharpened definition of SE for the Dutch context. "A social enterprise is an enterprise that expresses in its articles of association that its aim is to create social and economic value by contributing to solving social issues; and to primarily invest the profit achieved through its entrepreneurial and innovative activities in the statutory objective" (Bosma *et al.* 2019: 18).
2. The OECD / EU report Boosting Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise Development in the Netherlands (OECD / EU 2019), providing a state-of-the-art of the

sector and policy recommendations for development. The seven main recommendations are:

- Clarifying the conceptual framework
- Formally recognising social enterprises
- Promoting social impact measurement and reporting
- Developing social entrepreneurial capacity and skills
- Improving access to markets for social entrepreneurship development
- Improving access to finance for social entrepreneurship development
- Ensuring sustainable institutional support for social entrepreneurship and social innovation.

The report sends a clear message about the problems resulting from a lack of clarity around SEs: "The lack of conceptual clarity and difficulties in identifying social enterprises makes it difficult for public and private stakeholders (policy makers, investors, buyers, etc.) to navigate through the social entrepreneurship field and to distinguish the diverse organisations composing it" (p. 29). And: "the lack of a formal recognition for social enterprises hinders their future development and visibility, thus not fully delivering on their potential to bridge commercial and social goals for the advancement of Dutch society" (p. 31). The main related policy recommendations are to adopt an official and operational definition of social enterprise; and create a registration system for social enterprises that conform to this operational definition.

Then, in May 2019, the national government announced in a letter to parliament that it "sees the importance and the possibilities of social enterprises, appreciates their social entrepreneurship and also wants to further stimulate this" (Keijzer 2019: 1, own translation). The government believes "that further exploration of the needs of social entrepreneurs and the possibilities for better recognition of social enterprises is necessary" (ibid, p. 6) and therefore starts research into this topic, with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy taking the initiative. In addition, government will "look into the possibilities of putting social commissioning in a stronger position" (p. 7).

While the announcement was welcomed by the sector and felt like a breakthrough, concrete actions are still to follow. The ministry promised in its letter that parliament would be informed about the state of affairs and next steps before the end of 2019.

5. Conclusions and implications

The Dutch context provides a wide array of examples of collaboration between SE and local governments, with interesting good practices. As policy at the national level has been lacking, this has developed "bottom-up". There is a myriad of examples of initiatives at the local and regional level, with varying degrees of success.

At the local level, there is increasing interest in exchanging experiences with what has been developed "bottom-up". Both parties recognize that there is a lack of knowledge, and that a structural dialogue between local politicians and civil servants on the one hand and SEs on the other hand is very necessary. In this situation, the stereotypes introduced in paragraph 4.3 are one example of a communication tool that can help open dialogue.

Some of the "bottom-up" initiatives are taking steps to document their practices, and collect links so others can learn from the experience and do not need to start from scratch.

At the same time, the local examples also show the need for some degree of national coordination. Through the collected experiences at local and regional levels, policy makers at the national level now also increasingly recognize the importance of SEs in the Dutch economy, and realize that the lack of national policy and legal frameworks has proven limiting and increased vulnerability of the sector.

The Dutch experience in developing relations "bottom-up" can provide valuable lessons to other countries. In this situation, the work of pioneers is of vital importance. These pioneers can be found among social entrepreneurs, but also among official in local government. At the

local level, it is then relatively easy to team up and work on a local problem. This can lead to quick results, but it requires flexibility on all sides. In addition, it bears the risk of "reinventing the wheel" as experiences are not shared in an organized way.

In the Dutch context, it has taken some time, but for the coming years, there are signs that policy support for SEs will become more structured and that national policy action is likely.

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Appendix 1. Stereotypes of social entrepreneurs with a particular view towards (local) government.

The five stereotypes on the following pages were published earlier in Hogenstijn *et al.* 2018. They are not intended to be mutually exclusive; an entrepreneur might feel related to different stereotypes at the same time. The illustrations were produced of the artist Yara Said, whose work can be found through https://nl-nl.facebook.com/Yara-Said-845028635568261/, and are reprinted with permission.

1.   The disappointed authority avoider

Social entrepreneurs and government are ideal partners to solve problems in our society. That used to be what this entrepreneur thought. But so far, every single one of his attempts to cooperate with the government only led to failure. In spite of this great disappointment, this entrepreneur continues with his mission. But he now chooses to avoid the authorities where possible.
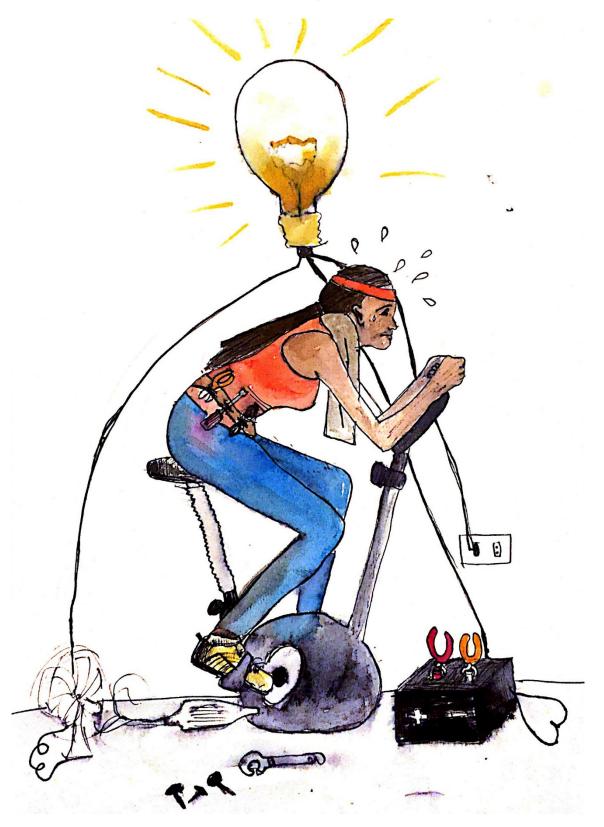
2.   The creative system changer

We have to radically change the system, because the way we act now is not futureproof. It is this entrepreneur's deep conviction that radical change is necessary, although he realizes it takes time. He takes initiatives to start the process of change and to keep it going. He is always eager to find creative ways to realize his mission.

3.   The proactive problem handler

Don't waste your time talking, get to work. This entrepreneur believes in leading by example. By doing things, change starts to be made and you can make a difference in society. This entrepreneur would find it great if government supported him in this process, but prefers to keep matters in his own hands. If there is more work for his company, then he can help more people and make more of a difference in society.

4.   The strategic policy follower
Maintaining a good working relationship with government is not easy, in this social entrepreneur's experience. Priorities in policies and subsidy regulations can quickly change. But a good relationship with government is crucial for this entrepreneur's business. Therefore he follows policy closely and tries to act strategically and proactively.

5.   The networking lobbyist
Working together makes everyone stronger; and a good network is essential to get things done. Those are the two principles on which this social entrepreneur acts. When talking to government officials, he pleads both the case of his own company and of the whole sector. Everywhere he comes, he makes new contacts. That does not always yield results immediately, but is mainly an investment in the future.

EMES network

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