It's all about being social, but what does that mean?

A qualitative research about understanding the socialness of enterprises in the Netherlands

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Preface

Since the beginning of my bachelor program, I have been interested in societal issues. While studying this from different angles in the past six years, the question that kept on coming back is what would be the best way to solve them. Over time, it has become more and more clear to me that social entrepreneurship is, in my opinion, one of the most promising answers to this question. As visualized in the picture on the front page of this thesis, often, individuals in society hold very valuable and innovative ideas, in this case to tackle societal issues. When these ideas are developed into financially sustainable solutions, social entrepreneurship is born. The success of such initiatives is currently becoming more and more visible in society – who does not know Tony's Chocolonely or Fairphone? – by social enterprises showing to have real impact. This development in which societal aims are combined with driving business has become my major field of interest, not only in my studies, but also beyond.

This interest was also the main driver behind this thesis. By conducting research on the meaning of 'socialness' in 'social entrepreneurship', I hope to contribute to the growth and improvement of this field. Looking back on the past few months of conducting this research, it has been a challenging, but also very interesting and rewarding process. However, I could not have done this without the help of others. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to some people in particular.

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Harry Hummels, for his enthusiasm and confidence in my ability to complete this thesis. His enormous amount of knowledge on this topic and devotion to the field of social entrepreneurship have helped and motivated me to see – and seize – opportunities, resulting in this thesis. Secondly, I would like to express my appreciation for Albert Meijer, who stepped in as the second reader of my thesis. I want to thank him for providing a critical and useful view on my research, which has been very helpful along the way.

Also, I would like to thank my peers and fellow students Maxime, Mirthe, and Lukas, for providing many helpful insights that were both critical and practical. Our regular meetings have been of great help for both the content and process of this thesis. I also want to express my gratitude to my family and friends, for listening to my (sometimes very long) stories, for giving practical advice, and for turning long days in the library into days that I really enjoyed. And above all, for their unconditional support.

Lastly, but most important, I would like to thank all the research participants. Their enthusiasm about the topic of this research showed me even more that this question is of major relevance in their everyday work. Their inspiring stories motivated me to do the best I could to contribute to this field. In my opinion, their unconditional energy and devotion combined with the opportunities they create, show that the field of social entrepreneurship is of major importance to our society, and that we should realize that these initiatives create the first steps towards changing the world.

Abstract

Purpose

Social entrepreneurship – in this research defined as the practices of social enterprises and larger enterprises that undertake social initiatives – is becoming more important in society. However, there is still a lack of clear definition of social entrepreneurship, and specifically, of the 'social' dimension of this concept (in this research referred to as socialness). Therefore, the aim of this research was to create a better understanding of what socialness entails, leading to the research question *"How can the socialness of enterprises in the Netherlands be understood?".*

Two components

To investigate this, two components were taken into account. Firstly, the content of socialness: what it actually entails. Secondly, the fact that different people attach different meanings to socialness, as it is a complex and heterogeneous concept. Therefore, this research presented insight in different perspectives on the concept and how these different perspectives can be explained. As a basis for this, sense-making theory was used, leading to the expectation that the type of organization people work in can explain differences between the way they define socialness.

Research design

To put the perceptions of people central to the research, a qualitative and constructivist approach was adopted, allowing for an in-depth investigation of differing perceptions of the same phenomenon. The first method was a literature review using principles from systematic reviewing. Hereafter, empirical data was collected through document analyses and interviews with eighteen research participants from different types of organizations: social enterprises, bigger enterprises undertaking social initiatives, support organizations stimulating the social entrepreneurship field, and academic research organizations that conduct research in this field.

Findings

This research resulted in findings on what socialness could mean, and on the differences between people concerning this meaning of socialness. These findings were in line with each other and together resulted in a typology that distinguishes between two types of socialness.

The first type of socialness is in the core about solving a social problem that is related to (a specific group of) people. These social problems related to people, such as poverty and bad health, can be brought back to the individual level of people in society. Therefore, in order to be social, two additional aspects should be taken into account by enterprises working on this type of socialness: ensuring that people's basic needs are fulfilled and basic capabilities are developed (and if that is the case, helping people beyond that) and involving these people in enterprises' decisions, mainly in what their needs are and when these are successfully fulfilled. The second type of socialness is in its core about solving social problems related to the planet (the environment, nature, animals, etc.). These social problems cannot always be directly related to people's individual needs, and are therefore mostly visible on a societal instead of an individual level. No additional aspects were found to be specifically and exclusively important for this type of socialness.

For both types of socialness, four additional aspects are important for enterprises to take into account. These are creating change for the long term instead of the short term, integration of the societal mission in the core of the enterprise, doing no harm, transparency about the enterprise's effects.

Relevance

This typology can function as a basis for people to develop their understanding of socialness. The relevance of this research lies in showing that the type of socialness an enterprise in its core aims to achieve – solving a social problem related to people or to the planet – has implications for what 'being social' entails, as not all aspects are important for both types of socialness. This typology adds a new perspective to the field, that can be used as a basis to structure the field of social entrepreneurship, both in the scientific and the societal debate.

Content

1. Introduction

The idea of 'doing good' has gained more and more attention in the past few decades. Citizens, as well as organizations, face an increasing amount of social or societal initiatives. Also in organizational strategies of private companies, whether big or small, awareness around the societal impact of products and services is increasing (Keijzer, 2019). In line with this development, there is an increasing attention for the concept of 'social entrepreneurship', which can nowadays even be seen as a fashionable trend (Dey, as cited in Dacin & Tracey, 2011, p. 1203). When referring to this concept, people often think about the small startups that aim to change the world through local solutions to social problems. However, Hummels (2018, p. 11) defines social entrepreneurship in a broader sense, also including social developments present within larger companies. Austin et al. (as cited in Austin, 2006, p. 29) conceptualize the latter as corporate social entrepreneurship: "the process of extending the firm's domain of competence and corresponding opportunity (…) aimed at the simultaneous creation of economic and social value". An example of this is the initiative of Philips to improve health care facilities in Africa, by building 'community life centers' that enable basic access to healthcare for all people (Philips, 2018). In this research, this broader definition of social entrepreneurship from Hummels (2018) is used, hence referring to both social enterprises and social developments within larger private enterprises.

1.1 The rise of social entrepreneurship

Examples of business companies driven by a social mission can be found from the nineteenth century. However, the term 'social entrepreneurship' came up only in the late 1990s, emerging from business practice and then being translated in the academic debate (Johnson, as cited in Perrini & Vurro, 2006, p. 59). Different scholars have stated that the concept first emerged in the US. There, two main macro-level developments stimulated the emergence of social entrepreneurship. First, because of a decreasing national economic growth in the 1980s, privatizations and decentralizations led to an increasing number of social needs being unsatisfied. This caused a growing demand for private parties to provide social services instead (Perinni & Vurro, 2006, p. 60). Partially linked to this, the number and size of public grants for nonprofits was also diminishing, stimulating nonprofit organizations to search for other ways to stay financially sustainable. This led to large numbers of nonprofits shifting away from their former philanthropic dependency, exploring commercial sources of revenue (Perinni & Vurro, 2006, p. 60). These two developments led to the emergence of social entrepreneurial initiatives in the US, that were founded to provide an answer to these new needs.

In the Netherlands, there is a traditional belief in the private initiative (Karré, as cited in OECD, 2019, p. 17). This is visible in the long Dutch history of socially responsible acting private parties. For example, since the beginning of the 20th century, the Protestant and Catholic communities strived for sovereignty, leading to them developing their own private parties providing social services within their communities. Also, within the business sector, Corporate Social Responsibility has been popular for a long time (European Commission, 2014, pp. 1-2). However, the social enterprises in their specific form as we know them now, have only been arising from the market since the 2000s. Unlike the US, their emergence in the Netherlands has not been directly linked to clear macro-level developments that caused a necessity of social entrepreneurship. The expectation is that their emergence was inspired by similar developments in the Anglo-Saxon countries (European Commission, 2014, p. 2). Since 2012,

the field of social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands has become more structured, amongst others because of the foundation of the platform Social Enterprise NL. Since 2015 until now, the field is in the development phase, with a growing number of social enterprises being created (PwC, 2018, p. 17).

1.2 A lacking definition

The tendency described above points towards a positive development, in which more and more private parties care about contributing to the common societal good. However, the current state of affairs involves one shortcoming. A recent report from the OECD (2019) about social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands concluded that there is a lack of clear definition of social entrepreneurship on a national level. This conclusion of the OECD sounds paradoxical, as the amount of definitions written down in reports and research articles has increased immensely in the past few years. However, despite the growing attention for the topic, Hummels (2018, p. 34) states that scholars and research institutes have structurally overlooked one important aspect: the 'social' part in social entrepreneurship. What 'being social' means is often treated as so obvious that no further explanation is required (Hummels, 2018, p. 34). Therefore, both in research and in practice, a definition of the 'social' – in this research also referred to as socialness – remains poorly addressed (Chen, as cited in Hervieux & Voltan, 2018, p. 280). Below, this lacking definition is illustrated.

First, within the research field, the EMES research network – an international network of research centers and researchers on the third sector and social entrepreneurship – developed a definition for social entrepreneurship that is now adopted by the international research community (Argyrou, 2018, p. 38). The framework consists of three sets of criteria: economic and entrepreneurial dimensions, societal dimensions, and participatory governance dimensions. To gain an understanding of socialness, the societal dimensions should be used, which include the following: the enterprise has an explicit aim to benefit a community or a specific group of people, the initiative is launched by a group of citizens or civil society organizations, and there is a limited profit distribution (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013, p. 46). However, these indicators do not provide a complete understanding of what socialness entails, as for example not all enterprises aimed at benefiting a group of people by offering them a product or service will be seen as 'social'. Furthermore, next to the EMES definition, also other scholars have attempted to define social entrepreneurship. However, these definitions often focus on the entrepreneurial aspects, and less on the social aspects (Cho, 2006, p. 35; Young, 2006, pp. 59-61). Also, one topic that is often used to assess socialness is how the social objectives relate to the financial objectives of the enterprise (see e.g. Peredo & McLean, 2005, pp. 59-64). However, a real understanding of <u>what</u> we then actually call 'social objectives' and what not is lacking.

Second, next to the research field, the different attempts to define social entrepreneurship in the working field also fall short on this specific topic of socialness. The definition used by the European Union, for example, only specifies the criterion that "the social or societal objective of the common good is the reason for the commercial activity" (European Commission, n.d.). Another example is the Dutch 'Social Entrepreneurship Code' (Commissie Code Sociale Ondernemingen, 2017). This code includes five principles that enterprises have to adhere to, after which they can be registered as an official social enterprise. These principles include for example the requirement that the social mission is the enterprise's priority. However, this requirement still does not specifically define when a 'social mission' is actually social. Moreover, the Code names several relevant impact areas a social enterprise can focus on. However, the fact that an enterprise focuses on a certain impact area, such as participation in the labor market, does not automatically ensure that the way the organization aims to

achieve this is social. For example, when the people that are ought to be helped are not consulted to talk about their specific needs, they might not be helped with the things that are most important to them, but that are based on the expectations of the organization (Kissane & Gingerich, 2004). Hence, also the Code is lacking a detailed understanding of what socialness specifically entails.

This lacking definition of socialness can be seen as both a conceptual and a practical deficiency in the field of social entrepreneurship. Because both the amount and the variety of organizations deploying social entrepreneurship currently increases, understanding their real character becomes more difficult. As argued by Hervieux and Voltan (2018, p. 280), when organizations only state that they "create social value" or "prioritize a social mission", they provide insufficient information for understanding the claims they make related to the social problem they focus on. For example, one could argue that all corporations and businesses are social, in the sense that they contribute to society by creating job opportunities and fulfilling needs of consumers (Mair & Marti, 2006, p. 38). However, is that enough to call them 'social'? Moreover, the fact that being social nowadays does have implications in practice, makes this lack of definition even more problematic: "without greater understanding and acknowledgement of the framing processes that exist in social entrepreneurship, there is a risk that resources are allocated based on those that fit the desired mould rather than on their potential for social impact" (Hervieux & Voltan, 2018, p. 280). Without a better understanding, there is a risk that organizations are called 'social' without a solid explanation on why their behavior is actually social.

1.3 A heterogeneous concept

As shown in the paragraph above, developing a specific definition of socialness has so far been experienced as difficult. This difficulty can be explained by the inherently heterogeneous nature of the concept of socialness: "social entrepreneurship is a political phenomenon by nature, as the act of defining the domain of the social requires exclusionary and political choices about which concerns can claim to be in society's true interest" (Cho, 2006, p. 36). In his article, Cho (2006) uses the ideas of Habermas and Marx to explain this. Habermas, who has written extensively on the concept of the public sphere, believed that consensus over what society wants is achievable. According to him, the exercise of dialogical reason in the public sphere can help us identifying society's interests. The social interests that exist in society, are then mutually compatible, so that consensus over values can be achieved (Cho, 2006, p. 39). If that is the case, everyone will agree on a definition for socialness, social problems, social needs, et cetera. However, not all theorists believe in this possibility. Marx, for example, argued that individuals in society have competing and conflicting identities and interests, making defining a social agenda difficult (Cho, 2006, p. 39). Berlin took this one step further, and stated that even similarly situated people may have fundamentally different worldviews (Cho, 2006, p. 41), also concluding that reaching consensus over social needs might be difficult.

Next to the diverging perspectives of different people in society, as was illustrated by Marx and Berlin, another issue is place and time. Firstly, what is good from a global perspective may not be desirable or feasible from a national or regional perspective. Secondly, priorities and values can differ between generations: current activities are valued differently when our society only includes existing generations, than when it includes future, unborn generations (Cho, 2006, p. 43). Consequently, conceptions of social entrepreneurship are deeply rooted in the current social, economic, political and cultural contexts (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013, p. 50).

Hence, these issues demonstrate that society is a heterogeneous pool of conflicting social objectives, making what counts as social a normative judgement (Cho, 2006, pp. 45-46). "To speak of 'the' social good may be to engage in an act of discursive marginalization" (Cho, 2006, p. 42). This means that it is important to keep in mind that the concept of socialness has a political and normative character, and that it is context, time, and culturally dependent. This makes developing one specific definition that is agreed upon by everyone difficult, and maybe even impossible. Therefore, the aim of this research is not to develop one new scientific 'regime' that privileges one specific definition over others (Young, 2006, p. 58). What this research does aim for, is creating a better understanding of the concept, by giving insight in different perspectives on the concept and explaining where these perspectives come from. This can lead to a number of possible elements of socialness, that can be used in practice to form different meanings of socialness. Hence, not one strict definition, but a better understanding, is the final result aimed for in this study.

1.4 Research aim and questions

This explorative study aims to contribute to the research field by working towards a better understanding of 'socialness' of enterprises in the Netherlands. The focus here is on enterprises in general, and not specifically on social enterprises, because this research argues that all different types of enterprises can demonstrate social entrepreneurship, not necessarily all being called social enterprises. This research aim leads to the following research question:

'How can the socialness of enterprises in the Netherlands be understood?'

To answer this research question, the research process consists of four main steps, which lead to several sub questions.

1.4.1 Developing meanings

As explained above, the concept of socialness is one that is inherently heterogeneous, which raises the expectation that different people attach different meanings to the concept. Therefore, this research aims to understand how individual people in the field give meaning to socialness. To build a basis for this, the first step of this research is finding a theoretical perspective that can help to understand how people give meaning to phenomena or concepts. Therefore, the first sub question is as follows.
Sub question 1: which theoretical perspective can explain how people give meanings to phenomena or concepts?

1.4.2 Aspects of socialness

In the second step, the research starts diving into the content of the socialness concept by conducting a literature review. Based on a broad body of literature, several possible aspects of socialness are described. Because important contributions to the research field of social entrepreneurship are made by scholars from other countries than the Netherlands, it is important to include an international body of literature for this step. In this way, an overview of what socialness could entail from a theoretical and international perspective is created.
Sub question 2: How can socialness be understood based on the literature?

1.4.3 Definitions in practice

In the third step, interviews and document analyses are used to see which meanings of socialness are used in practice. Based on the insights from the literature review, the empirical data are used to see whether the findings from the literature are also visible in practice. Using insights from practice, the meaning of socialness that was derived from the literature is further illustrated, refined and nuanced, by adding practical examples and critical notes to this meaning. This provides the opportunity to better understand the aspects of socialness that were derived from the literature in the previous step.

This empirical part of the research is focused on the Netherlands. This means that this research can show how the meanings stemming from international literature are used in practice in a country such as the Netherlands. The reason for this national focus is that the concept of socialness is context, time, and culturally dependent, as described above, which means that the definitions used in the Netherlands will possibly vary from definitions used in other countries. Therefore, focusing on one national context is necessary to be able to draw conclusions.

Sub question 3: how do people that have to do with social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands understand socialness in practice?

1.4.4 Explaining differences between people

As mentioned in the first step, the expectation is that different people attach different meanings to socialness. This would imply that the findings in the third research step are not all the same, but show variety. Therefore, the fourth step focuses on <u>why</u> people define socialness the way they do: for example, is this related to the organization they work in, the sector the work in, their study or working background? Looking at explanations for the meanings that people attach to socialness makes it possible to understand differences between their perspectives. In this way, the different meanings of socialness are put in perspective, which adds to the broader understanding of what socialness entails.

Sub question 4: How can the differences between the meanings of socialness used in practice be explained?

1.5 Relevance

1.5.1 Theoretical contribution

As mentioned above, although social entrepreneurship is clearly present in the research field, the current literature lacks a clear definition of the concept. The following quote of Santos (2012, p. 336) illustrates this lack of definition.

"The field of social entrepreneurship has thus become a large tent (Martin and Osberg, 2007) where distinct activities find a home under a broad umbrella of 'activities and processes to enhance social wealth' (Zahra et al. 2009) or 'entrepreneurship with a social purpose' (Austin et al., 2006). As a consequence, the concept of social entrepreneurship is poorly defined and its boundaries with other fields of study remain fuzzy (Dacin and Dacin 2011; Mair and Marti 2006)"

In line with this, Swedberg (2006, p. 21) argues that the current literature on social entrepreneurship is richer on inspiring examples and anecdotes than it is on theoretical insights and analytical power.

Because of these reasons, the need for a more clear definition of social entrepreneurship has been addressed by many scholars in the field (Argyrou, 2018, pp. 3-4; Perrini & Vurro, 2006; Seelos & Mair, 2004; Stryjan, 2006, p. 35), as scholars believe that "establishing concrete definitions will help overcome the vagueness of the concept of social entrepreneurship, which places obstacles on research in the area" (Certo & Miller, 2008, p. 269). Related to this, as explained before, a more specific understanding of what 'social' means is also still lacking. This leaves the research field without a stable core (Nicholls & Cho, 2006, p. 105). Therefore, different scholars have addressed the necessity of working towards a better understanding of socialness (Kroeger & Weber, 2015, p. 48; Nicholls & Cho, 2006, p. 105; Parkinson & Howorth, 2008, p. 287). As a response to these demands addressed in the research field, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature. By means of a literature review using the principles of systematic reviewing, this study provides an overview of the international literature working towards an understanding of what socialness entails, which can serve as a basis for future studies on this topic. Moreover, the empirical insights derived from the empirical data collection in the Netherlands can also provide an understanding of how socialness is understood in one country, also contributing to the literature from a national point of view.

1.5.2 Empirical contribution

Next to this theoretical contribution, this study also has a large empirical relevance. Firstly, in the current society, social entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as significantly contributing to society by complementing the provision of public goods and services (Spear et al., 2014; Mason et al., as cited in Argyrou, 2018, pp. 137-138). Moreover, organizations demonstrating social entrepreneurship are often seen as fulfilling an important socio-economic role, as alternative, socially innovative, socially contributing and socially responsible economic actors (Mason et al., as cited in Argyrou, 2018, pp. 137-138). This increasing relevance of social entrepreneurship makes it also more important for society to really understand what it entails, and what it is that demarcates social entrepreneurship from 'traditional' entrepreneurship. By enhancing the knowledge about what socialness of enterprises in the Netherlands entails, this research aims to contribute to this understanding and demarcation of the concept. This can contribute to the common understanding in society about what business organizations can contribute to solving society's challenges.

Secondly, by creating more specific knowledge on what 'being social' entails, this study aims to help enterprises in creating a better understanding about whether, and why, their actions and initiatives are actually social in the sense that they contribute to society in a valuable way. This better understanding might help them to develop their actions and initiatives further.

Thirdly, gaining a better understanding of the concept is also important for organizations from outside the social entrepreneurship field, such as the government. The government currently faces various challenges concerning her aims to stimulate social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands (SER, 2015), that can be related to the fact that there is no clear understanding of what social entrepreneurship entails. For example, stimulating social entrepreneurship via government procurement is difficult when there is no clear demarcation of when an enterprise can actually be called social. By contributing to the knowledge on this topic, this study thus also aims to help these other organizations, such as the government, in solving the challenges related to stimulating social entrepreneurship.

1.6 Reading guide

The remainder of this thesis is divided into six chapters and is structured as follows. In chapter two, the theoretical framework of this research is presented, answering sub question 1: *which theoretical perspective can explain how people give meaning to phenomena or concepts?* Because the aim of this research is understanding the meanings that people attach to socialness, insights from sense-making theory are used to develop a basis of knowledge about how people give meaning to concepts. Hereafter, chapter 3 describes the research design of this study, explaining the research approach, the theoretical and empirical part of data collection, data analysis, and quality criteria. The fourth chapter consists of a literature review. This literature zooms into eight aspects of socialness that stem from the international body of literature on this topic, with the aim to answer sub question 2: *how can socialness be understood based on the literature?* In chapter 5, the results of the empirical part of the study are presented, analyzed, and related to the theory. The aim of this chapter is answering sub question 3 and 4, presenting how the research participants define socialness in practice and how differences between them can be explained. This analysis is followed by a conclusion in chapter 6, in which an answer to the central research question is formulated. Hereafter, to finalize the research, the discussion in chapter 7 presents the implications of the research, a critical reflection on limitations, and suggestions for future research. Lastly, three appendices are added: the protocol for informed consent used in the interviews, the coding tree used for analysis, and finally a Dutch summary to present the research to the research participants, focusing on findings that are most relevant for practice.

2. Theoretical framework

The concept of socialness is one that is highly complex. Various scholars have argued that socialness has a 'heterogeneous nature', and people's perceptions of what it means can differ across cultures, time, and personal perceptions (Cho, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2013; Nicholls & Cho, 2006; Santos, 2012; Young, 2006). This means that developing one specific and clear definition of socialness that everyone will agree on is highly difficult, and maybe even impossible. Therefore, this research will dive into the meanings that different people attach to the concept of socialness. To achieve that, the first step is gaining knowledge about how people, in general, give meaning to concepts. Hence, that is the aim of this theoretical framework, whereby an answer is provided to sub question 1: *which theoretical perspective can explain how people give meaning to phenomena or concepts?*

2.1 Sense-making

To understand how people give meaning to phenomena and concepts, theory on sense-making provides an explanation. Sense-making theory was developed by Karl E. Weick in the 1970s and is often applied in organizational settings. This theory describes sense-making as a process of assigning meaning to experiences (Kramer, 2017, p. 1). A few principles play an important role in what this looks like in practice. Firstly, the process in which people develop meanings is not an internal process; external factors also influence one's sense-making. This is referred to as 'noticing and bracketing', which means that people pick up certain signals from their environment when they are developing a new meaning for a situation or a phenomenon (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 411). This noticing and bracketing is guided by individual persons' perceptions, and is also influenced by external factors; not only by obvious, large events, but in particular by subtle, small, and momentary things (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 410). Secondly, related to the fact that sense-making is not an internal process, it is also not an individual process. Sense-making is built during interdependent interaction (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 413). Thirdly, interpretation is the core phenomenon in sense-making processes, rather than using objective evaluation (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). This means that it is people's interpretations that decide which meaning is attached to a phenomenon: whether people perceive a meaning as plausible is more important than whether they perceive the meaning as most accurate (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 415). Fourth and lastly, an important principle of sense-making is that it is a cyclical process. When a meaning is developed, this new meaning forms the basis for new action (Kramer, 2017, p. 4). These new actions, in turn, create new experiences, and new experiences often demand for additional sense-making (Kramer, 2017, p. 5).

2.2 Sense-making and organizations

As became visible in the previous paragraph, sense-making is not an individual process. Rather, sense-making develops in social settings, influenced by different people and interactions (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 413). From all these different influences that determine how people give meaning to something, the literature often refers to one topic in particular: organizations. This is the case because sense-making and organizations constitute each other. This is described by Van Dijk (1989), using the work of Weick to explain this relationship. On the one hand, organizations emerge through sense-making: social realities, such as organizations, are constructed through processes of human interaction. Thus, such processes are necessary to construct organizations (Van Dijk, 1989, p. 20). On

the other hand, this social reality, the organization, is also a place where new sense-making takes place. Therefore, the organization becomes a context for interactions, where new realities are produced, changed, and constructed (Van Dijk, 1989, p. 20). In line with this, Weick argues that "organizations have a major hand in creating the realities which they then view as 'facts' to which they must accommodate" (Weick, 1979, p. 13). Thus, this interdependence between sense-making and organizations implies that the way people give meaning to phenomena is largely dependent on their organizational context. This perspective has also been studied in other fields, such as the field of political science: here, a well-known model which is referred to as Miles' law states that "where you stand depends on where you sit" (Allison, 1969, p. 711). This theory also argues that one's perspective is dependent on the organization one's in, and the position one holds in that organization (Miles, 1978, p. 402). According to this theory, this position is important because this influences the person's perspectives and responsibilities, hence resulting in different opinions on issues (Miles, 1978, p. 402). Furthermore, the organization is important because theory states that people cannot totally rise above institutional perspectives from the organization to which they owe primary loyalty (Miles, 1978, p. 402). People's perspectives will always be, consciously or unconsciously, affected by the organization they work in.

2.3 Resume: answering sub question 1

Based on the theory above, this chapter finalizes with providing an answer to sub question 1: *which theoretical perspective can explain how people give meaning to phenomena or concepts?* This chapter has shown that sense-making is a well-known and often used theoretical perspective used to explain how people give meaning to things they encounter in life. In interactive, interdependent, interpretative processes, people together construct meanings of phenomena and concepts. One specific aspect that is found to be of major importance within this sense-making perspective is the organization that a person works in, as this functions as a context which affects the person's processes of sense-making. This theoretical perspective on how people attach meanings to phenomena will be used in the rest of this study.

3. Research design

In this chapter, the research design of this study is described. Firstly, the research approach is outlined, zooming into the qualitative and constructivist character of the research. The second paragraph is about data collection. As the data collection consists of a theoretical part and an empirical part, the relation between theoretical and empirical insights is explained, followed by a more elaborate description of the sample selection and methods used. This is followed by the process of data analysis in the third paragraph. The fourth and last paragraph reflects on important quality criteria and their role in this research.

3.1 Research approach

As described in the previous chapters, this research studied the meanings different people give to socialness, using a sense-making perspective. Studying this demanded for a research approach in which the perceptions of research participants are central. To achieve this, this research used a qualitative and constructivist approach.

Firstly, qualitative research "offers the opportunity to 'unpack' issues, to see what they are about or what lies inside, and to explore how they are understood by those connected to them" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 27). Qualitative research thus allows the researcher to dive into the perspectives of research participants. Moreover, it makes qualitative research suitable for studying complex issues (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, pp. 32-33), which is the case in this research, as socialness is heterogeneous and complicated to grasp. Hence, a qualitative research approach is in line with the research aim of gaining a better understanding of socialness (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 32).

Secondly, within the qualitative research field, this research adopted a constructivist perspective. Constructivism assumes that truth and meaning do not exist in an external world, but that they are created by the subject's interactions with the world (Gray, 2006, p. 20) – reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 13). This implies that all people can construct different meanings of the same phenomenon, and that "multiple, contradictory but equally valid accounts of the world can exist" (Gray, 2006, p. 20). Constructivism is closely related to the interpretative stance within research, which means that the research aims to understand a social world through the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). Interpretative research interprets phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 4).

3.2 Data collection

An important aspect of qualitative research is to include multiple sources of data in the research, as this creates a more solid and accurate basis for drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, this research uses three different methods of data collection: a literature review, document analyses, and interviews. Hence, the data collection process of this research consists of both a theoretical (literature review) and an empirical (interviews and document analyses) part. Therefore, this paragraph starts with explaining the relation between theoretical and empirical insights in this research. Hereafter, the types of data collection are further described, highlighting the sample selection and methods used.

3.2.1 Relation between theoretical and empirical insights

As stated above, the data collection in this research consisted of a theoretical part (the literature review), and an empirical part (the document analyses and interviews). To understand how this research has come to drawing a conclusion, it is important to know how these two parts, and the insights they delivered, relate to each other. In this research, the insights derived from the literature review were used as a framework that was leading in structuring, interpreting and making sense of the empirical data (Creswell, 2014). Because individual people were expected to attach different meanings to socialness, it was important to be able to structure the variety of opinions in a certain way, to be able to draw conclusions despite the individual character of the empirical data. Therefore, the literature review worked towards a structured overview of different aspects that could together form the meaning of socialness. These aspects were discussed with the research participants in the interviews and were analyzed through the document analyses. Thereby, the empirical data were used to see whether the different aspects are also visible in practice, why or why not, and if so, what this looks like in practice. In this way, the empirical data illustrated, but also brought nuance to the findings from the literature review, by adding both confirming examples and critical notes. In these illustrations, different perspectives from the research participants were discussed, leaving room for the different meanings people attach to socialness.

By using this relation between the literature and the empirical insights, the literature had a leading role, and the empirical insights were used to bring more body and richness to the findings, to better grasp how socialness can be understood in practice as well.

3.2.2 Theoretical data collection: literature review

The first method of this research was a literature review. In some explorative reading about social entrepreneurship and socialness, it became clear that the usually presented 'general' definitions of these concepts often remain relatively vague or broad. Therefore, a literature review was conducted to find more specific and concrete aspects that could together form a meaning of socialness. To achieve this, the literature review consisted of three phases. The first phase focused on developing an overview of the literature and deriving possible aspects of socialness from the literature. Then, the second phase consisted of searching additional articles about each of these aspects, to further explain what the aspect entails and why it is relevant. In the third phase, all these aspects were analyzed, aiming to come to a structure that shows how these aspects together can form a way to understand socialness. For the first phase of this literature review, deriving aspects of socialness from the literature, the principles of systematic reviewing were used. This process is explained below.

Step 1: identifying relevant literature from the reference list of Hummels (2018)

As a first searching strategy, the discussion paper of Hummels (2018) was used. The main reason for this was that a part of this discussion paper specifically focuses on the topic of socialness, arguing that this concept is not defined clear enough in the research field. Therefore, the paper refers to relevant sources that illustrate this statement, making it relevant to use for this research about socialness. Moreover, the paper includes the majority of the most important and influential authors and articles from the social entrepreneurship research field, which are also relevant to include. To identify relevant literature from this discussion paper, the scientific references in relevant chapters from the paper (i.e. two introductory chapters, the chapter about socialness, and two concluding chapters) were listed,

resulting in an n of 34 references. Hereafter, the titles and abstracts of the 34 references were screened based on pre-set selection criteria (see table 1). This resulted in an n of 18 references.

Topic	Discussing 'socialness' in different contexts, e.g. social entrepreneurship, social value, etc.
Titles/abstracts	Containing suitable keywords, like 'social entrepreneurship' 'social problem' 'social change' etc.
Language	Written in English, representing the international character of the literature review
Availability	Articles and book chapters whose full texts were available to the researcher

Table 1 – selection criteria

Step 2: identifying literature through database searching

To include other relevant articles and book chapters, the second strategy was database searching using Google Scholar. As a starting point, suitable key concepts were identified, based on some explorative conversations and explorative literature searches. This resulted in a list of concepts that could possibly provide information about the meaning of socialness: social entrepreneurship, social problems, social value creation, social innovation, social change/transformation, social movements, and ethics/morality in entrepreneurship. As Google Scholar produces large numbers of results, it was not feasible to screen them all. Therefore, the choice was made to screen the first three pages of results on Google Scholar for each of the key concepts. Screening the titles and abstracts of these articles and book chapters on Google Scholar, using the selection criteria, resulted in an n of 35 references.

Step 3: removing duplicates

The two search strategies together resulted in an n of 53 references. After removing the duplicates, an n of 43 was the result.

Step 4: thorough reading

The fourth step was a thorough reading of all 43 articles and book chapters to assess their relevance for this research. An article or a book was marked relevant when it entailed statements about what could be possible specific aspects of socialness. An example of this is an article that refers to social value as the fulfillment of basic needs of people, hence entailing a statement about 'focus on basic needs' as an aspect of socialness. This selection resulted in an n of 27 articles that were relevant for this purpose.

Step 5: deriving aspects of socialness

For these 27 articles or book chapters, relevant insights that could point towards an aspect of socialness were written down. Hereafter, these notes were analyzed, looking for aspects of socialness that were mentioned in more than two references. This resulted in eight main aspects of socialness, as shown in table 2.

Aspect of socialness	Mentioned in x articles
Solving a social problem	15
Helping a vulnerable subject	5
Focusing on basic needs and capabilities	4
Creating long-term change	5
Involving beneficiaries	8
Integration of the societal mission	6
Doing no harm	3
Transparency about effects	3

Table 2 – aspects of socialness derived from the literature

After taking these steps based on a process of systematic reviewing, the second phase of the literature review contained searching additional literature for each of the aspects, to further explain what they entail and why they are relevant. Hereafter, the third phase consisted of categorizing the aspects and looking for relations between them to develop a relevant (theoretical) conclusion about the meaning of socialness.

3.2.3 Empirical data collection: document analyses and interviews

After having developed an overview of the different aspects of socialness that are mentioned in the international body of literature, the same question was empirically studied in the Netherlands. The aim here was to see whether the meaning of socialness as derived from the literature is also visible in practice, to further illustrate and nuance this meaning. This empirical part of the research consisted of two methods: document analyses and interviews. However, before starting with these methods, the process of sampling was an important step. Therefore, the sample selection is explained below, followed by a description of the document analysis and interviews.

Sample

This research used purposive sampling as a sampling method, which is common in qualitative research. This means that the research participants were selected based on their expertise and knowledge instead of randomization (Bryman, 2012, p. 416). Furthermore, "units are deliberately selected to reflect the particular features or groups within the sampled population" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78). In this research, it was expected that different people that have to do with social entrepreneurship have different perspectives on the theme of socialness. Working towards an understanding of the concept thus demands for an inclusion of various perspectives. As explained in the theoretical framework, the organization that someone works in is often found to be an important influencing factor on that person's perspective. Hence, this was also expected to influence the person's perception of socialness. Therefore, the sample of this research was composed in a way that it included people from different types of organizations related to social entrepreneurship. This method of sampling can be referred to as stratified purposive sampling, because groups that display variation are selected within one phenomenon (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 79; Suri, 2011, p. 70). Five types of organizations were distinguished that are relevant in the field of social entrepreneurship:
1. Social enterprises;
2. Enterprises that are not explicitly referred to as 'social' but in which elements of social entrepreneurship are visible;

3. Support organizations that are stimulating the social entrepreneurship climate in the Netherlands, such as umbrella organizations that represent networks of social enterprises, and NGOs or consultancy companies that work on advising, facilitating or improving social entrepreneurial initiatives;
4. Academic research organizations that are experienced in research on social entrepreneurship
5. Government organizations that work on the conditions for social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands.

Within these categories, the organizations and research participants that were approached, were selected based on their expertise in social entrepreneurship. There was no previous knowledge on their specific perspective on socialness, which allowed for an open investigation of their viewing points on this theme. Table 3 shows the final composition of the sample, consisting of eighteen research participants, all working in a different organization.

Type of organization	Research participants	Additional information
Social enterprises	R1, R2, R3, R13, R16, R18	At first, a social enterprise was selected from each of the impact areas (labor participation, well-being, environment, and international development), to have a good overview of the sector. However, after having conducted these interviews, it became clear that the difference in perspectives was not due to the different impact areas, but was strongly dependent on whether an enterprise focuses on an issue concerning people (a specific group of beneficiaries) or an issue concerning sustainability (environment/nature). Therefore, to get a deeper understanding of these two main socialness perspectives, extra research participants were selected, resulting in the current sample of social enterprises focusing on people (R1, R2, R3) and social enterprises focusing on sustainability (R13, R16, R18).
Enterprises that show elements of social entrepreneurship	R9, R12, R15, R17	Four bigger enterprises that are not called social enterprises, but that are known for their socially entrepreneurial activities or initiatives, all operating in a different industry – food & agribusiness (R9), foodservice (R12), energy supply (R15), clothing production (R17) – to get an overview of different perspectives.
Support organizations	R4, R5, R7, R8, R14	Four network/platform organizations that represent networks of social entrepreneurial initiatives (R4, R7, R8, R14), and one consultancy organization (R5) that advises in topics related to impact. All of these organizations work on stimulating social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands by advising, facilitating or improving social entrepreneurial initiatives, and knowledge sharing.
Academic research organizations	R6, R10	Two academic researchers that have solid experience in research in the field of social entrepreneurship, both studying this from a different academic discipline.
Informant (government organization)	R11	Due to the fact that the national government hasn't formulated a policy and vision on the theme of social entrepreneurship yet, it was not possible to include the government's perspective in this research. However, one interview was conducted with someone from the government on personal title. This means that the data derived from this interview cannot be attributed to the government, and the research participant is referred to as an informant.

Table 3 – overview of research participants

Document analysis

For all of the selected research participants, several documents related to their organization's view on social entrepreneurship were collected, to search for insights about socialness. This could include mission and vision statements, annual reports, advisory reports on social entrepreneurship and webpages where relevant information on this theme was presented. The majority of the documents was collected before the interviews, however, some of the research participants mentioned additional documents, of which relevant ones were also used for the document analysis later on. In table 4, an overview of the documents used for the document analysis is displayed, in which all documents are linked to the research participants they are related to. However, it is important to keep in mind that the documents are related to the organizations in general, and are not necessarily written by these research participants. In order to keep the respondents and their organizations anonymized, the documents are only referred to by these document names and they are not included in the reference list of this research. However, this is not the case for R11D1 and R11D2, which are two reports related to the government in general and are not related to the research participant. Hence, there is no necessity to keep these documents anonymized, and references to these documents are added to the reference list of this thesis.

Research participant	Number of documents	Name of the documents
R1	1	R1D1
R2	1	R2D1
R3	2	R3D1, R3D2
R4	3	R4D1, R4D2, R4D3
R5	1	R5D1
R6	(not available)	
R7	(not available)	
R8	1	R8D1
R9	1	R9D1
R10	(not available)	
R11	2	R11D1 (ChristenUnie, 2018), R11D2 (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2015)
R12	1	D12D1
R13	(not available)	
R14	3	R14D1, R14D2, R14D3
R15	1	R15D1
R16	(not available)	
R17	1	R17D1
R18	(not available)	

Table 4 – overview of documents used for document analysis

The document analyses served two purposes. Firstly, document analyses functioned as a preparation for the interviews. "To collect interview data useful for research purposes, it is necessary for the researchers to develop as much expertise in relevant topic areas as possible so they can ask informed questions" (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 239). By having collected information about the organizations, this knowledge could be used to get deeper insights from the interviews. Secondly, document analysis "enables the researcher to obtain language and words of participants" (Creswell, 2003), hence providing data on the meaning of socialness as understood by these organizations.

Interviews

The last method of this research was conducting in-depth interviews with the research participants, which is one of the main methods of data collection in qualitative research (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 138; Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 238). Each interview started with an explanation of the protocol of data collection and processing, such as for example recording the interview and privacy issues. The protocol, which resulted in a verbal agreement with the research participants, is displayed in Appendix I. The interviews were semi-structured, which means that a list of questions or topics serves as a guideline for the researcher, but the structure and content of the interview are open to flexibility (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). In this research, the interviews mainly focused on the research participants' understanding of socialness, their personal perceptions and experiences. How do they give meaning to socialness as a person, and in their organization? And how did they come to this definition/conceptualization? In the interviews, it was important that the perspective of the research participants was leading. Therefore, the interviews started in an open manner, by asking the research participants about their perspectives on socialness. Hereafter, the aspects of socialness that had been derived from the literature were introduced to the research participants, asking them whether they think these aspects are relevant, why or why not, and (if relevant), how the implementation of these aspects looks like in practice.

3.3 Data analysis

After the empirical data had been collected, the data were processed and analyzed. The three main steps in this process are described below.

3.3.1 Transcribing

The interviews that were conducted in this research were recorded, and transcribed afterwards. This method of data processing enables a thorough examination of what the research participants say. Moreover, in this way not only the content of what the research participants say, but also the way they say it is included, which enriches the data (Bryman, 2012, p. 482). The research transcripts were anonymized, only referring to a number that was assigned to the research participant. The data will be stored for the maximum period of a year, after which they will be deleted.

3.3.2 Coding

Having analyzed the documents and transcribed the interviews, the next step was coding the documents and interview transcripts. For the coding process, the program NVivo was used. This process entailed reviewing the data and giving labels to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance or "that appear to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied" (Bryman, 2012, p. 568). In the coding process, the three steps developed by Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 569) were taken. The first step was open coding, which reveals general concepts that come across in the documents and interviews. The step that followed was axial coding. Hereby, the codes developed in the first step were linked to contexts, consequences, patterns of interaction and causes. This step created new connections between components of the data. The third and last step was selective coding: selecting the core category or categories, relating it to other categories, and filling in categories that need further refinement. This step created the opportunity to

start interpreting the data in relation to the literature and the sub questions 3 and 4 (Boeije, 2014, p. 136). The final version of the coding tree that was developed in this process of coding is displayed in Appendix II.

3.3.3 Analyzing

As mentioned above, after the coding process, the final step was actual interpretation of the empirical data and writing the analysis. Firstly, the data were analyzed in the light of the insights from the literature review, by analyzing how the research participants define socialness and how this relates to the aspects derived from the literature. The aim here was to answer sub question 3. Secondly, the data were analyzed to look for general differences between the research participants concerning the meanings they attach to socialness. Hereafter, the data were analyzed to find patterns that could be used to explain these differences – based on the theoretical framework, specifically looking whether the type of organization could be this explaining factor. Taken together, an answer could be formulated to sub question 4.

In all steps in this analysis phase, the aim was to write the analysis in a way that reflects the complexity, detail and context of the data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 4), by paying attention to individual perspectives from the research participants and showing which perspective belongs to whom. Taken together, the these insights from all sub questions were used to answer the central research question – how can the socialness of enterprises in the Netherlands be understood? – which is presented in the conclusion.

3.4 Quality criteria

The chosen research approach and methods have consequences for the quality of this study. Therefore, it is important to reflect on relevant quality criteria. Building on a long history of quality criteria, validity and reliability are often named as the most important and well-known ones. Validity refers to the accuracy of the data, whether the methods measure what the study aims to measure (Creswell, 2003). This is here discussed in terms of internal validity, which refers to the findings from the research being in correspondence with the truth. This is important to take into account specifically in qualitative research, because the subjective nature of qualitative research puts the researcher's interpretations at the center. Therefore, it must be ensured that these interpretations are valid. Secondly, reliability refers to whether the results are consistent and stable (Creswell, 2003): if the research would be replicated, would the findings be the same or similar (Merriam, 1995, p. 55)? To enhance both validity and reliability in this research, three main strategies were used.

Firstly, triangulation is a well-known strategy for improving validity and reliability (Golafshani, 2003, p. 603; Merriam, 1995, p. 54). Triangulation is present in a research when conclusions are drawn based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants (Creswell, 2003; Tracy, 2010). This study aimed to triangulate in two ways: by using different data sources – literature, documents, and interviews – and by including different perspectives from various groups of research participants – working in different types of organizations – in the research.

Secondly, several meetings with academic supervisors and peers were organized to enhance validity and reliability (Long & Johnson, 2000, p. 34). Both types of meetings were scheduled on a regular basis,

being able to present and discuss emerging findings and thereby including an external perspective on important decisions and interpretations that were to be made. Next to these regular meetings, the analysis phase of this research included a peer review specifically focused on interpreting the data from the interviews. In this meeting, a fellow student reviewed the coding of an interview, and in this way critically assessed the interpretations made by the researcher. This practice reduced the possibility of a large influence of researcher bias, and thereby enhanced the validity and reliability of the research.

Third and lastly, central to this research was transparency concerning the process and choices made, concerning for example the research design, methodologies and analysis (Noble & Smith, 2015, p. 3). Providing such transparency is important in research processes, as it enhances the reproducibility, which is a core principle of scientific progress (Muma, 1993).

4. Literature review

This chapter entails the first phase of data collection: developing an overview of literature relevant for this research. Hence, this chapter aims to answer sub question 2: *how can socialness be understood based on the literature?* The chapter starts with displaying some general definitions of socialness, showing that the research field so far has not succeeded in writing a clear definition. Hereafter, the literature review zooms into two aspects that lie at the core of socialness, and that can be used to make a distinction between two types of socialness. However, this typology does not suffice to explain what socialness entails. Rather, the literature brings up several more aspects that should be taken into account to be social. Therefore, after describing the core and the typology, six other aspects are presented that also form a part of the socialness concept. Lastly, this chapter finalizes with taking together the insights from the literature and thereby answering sub question 2.

4.1 General definitions of socialness in social entrepreneurship

The word 'social' has several different meanings and is used in our language on a daily basis. When looking at the meaning of the word social as it is meant in this study – e.g. not referring to meeting other people – the definition provided by the Oxford Dictionary is "relating to society or its organization" (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). However, this definition remains quite abstract. In the scientific literature, the definitions used for socialness often remain relatively general as well. Based on the articles and book chapters used for this literature review, the table below displays several attempts to define the 'social' part of social entrepreneurship that show the level of abstractness in the literature.

Article	Definition of socialness
Back & Eddleston, 2018, p. 591	"A social purpose promotes the betterment of humankind and society (Nga and Shamuganathan, 2010)"
Back & Eddleston, 2018, p. 591	"Primary intention is to help others (Pless, 2012)"
Back & Eddleston, 2018, p. 591	"Other-regarding over self-interest (Jones et al., 2007)"
Mair & Marti, 2006, p. 37	"Catalyze social change and/or address social needs"
Peredo & McLean, 2005, p. 56	"Dealing with complex social needs (Johnson, 2000)"
Peredo & McLean, 2005, p. 59	"Aims to increase 'social value', i.e. to contribute to the welfare or wellbeing in a given human community"
Perrini & Vurro, 2006, p. 64	"The enhancement of global or local social conditions"

Table 5 – General definitions of socialness in the literature

The definitions presented in the table above show that such general sentences do not suffice to grasp what socialness means, also undermining the richness of the concept. Therefore, this literature review establishes an overview of several aspects of socialness, which allows for more concrete insights and a more extensive description of the concept.

4.2 The core of socialness

This paragraph describes two main aspects that can be stated to form the core of what 'being social' entails. After describing what these two topics are and why they are a part of socialness, they are related to each other and together form a basis for a distinction between two types of socialness.

4.2.1 Solving social problems

In descriptions of why social entrepreneurship is called social, a central explanation provided in the literature is because it is about solving social problems (Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004, pp. 260-261; Bacq & Eddleston, 2018, p. 590; Galera & Borzaga, 2009, p. 212; Hervieux & Voltan, 2018, p. 280; Kroeger & Weber, 2015, p. 43; Mair & Marti, 2006; Nicholls & Cho, 2006, p. 109; Perrini & Vurro, 2006, p. 63; Santos, 2012, p. 350; Seelos & Mair, 2004, p. 4; Stryjan, 2006, p. 196). Socialness is fundamentally about "finding novel solutions to complex social problems" (Dey and Steyaert, as cited in Hervieux & Voltan, 2018, p. 279), that are thereby addressed (Mair & Marti, 2006, p. 38) and alleviated (Alvord et al., as cited in Mair & Marti, 2006, p. 37). According to Argyrou (2018, p. 3), these societal challenges can be either social or environmental in their nature.

Because the literature perceives 'solving a social problem' to be a central aim of socialness, the question arises what a social problem exactly is. The basis of the well-known Social Problems Theory is that "social problems are fundamentally products of a process of collective definition instead of existing independently as a set of objective social arrangements with an intrinsic makeup" (Blumer, 1971, p. 298). Hence, Blumer (1971, p. 298) disagrees with the idea that objective 'harmful' conditions can be identified and solved; according to him, there is no objective criterion for when a deviance in society becomes a social problem (p. 300). Rather, a situation becomes a social problem because it is perceived troublesome by individuals and groups in society (Schneider, 1985, p. 209); they see or experience dissatisfaction about a situation and address this (Spector & Kitsuse, 1973, p. 149). Hence, whether a situation is a social problem depends on actors' interpretations of the need to improve a situation (Hervieux & Voltan, 2018, p. 281). This means that social problems are socially constructed (Schneider, 1985, p. 209): they are the result of processes of collective definition in society (Blumer, 1971, p. 298). However, this does not necessarily mean that the people who collectively construct and define a social problem are also directly affected by it themselves (Hervieux & Voltan, 2018, p. 281). Based on these assumptions underlying social problems theory, it is thus not possible to develop objective criteria for social problems; rather, the definition of social problems is dependent on people's perceptions and their attention for it. This does not only make it difficult to develop a definition of a social problem, it also causes difficulties for developing solutions to social problems. This is because a social problem consists of divergent and sometimes conflicting interests, intentions, and objectives, often making it impossible to find one ideal objective solution (Blumer, 1971, p. 301).

4.2.2 Helping a vulnerable subject

Related to the previous paragraph, the question arises who could be the possible subject of such social problems. This is relevant, because the one that is subject to the problem, is the one that is ought to be helped by 'social' initiatives aimed at solving this problem. What is clear, is that a problem only emerges if the one that is subject to the problem is not able to solve the situation. Logically, if this subject could solve it, there would not be a problem. This means that the subject of a social problem is vulnerable in a certain way. Hence, helping a vulnerable subject is at the core of the socialness concept.

The first and most often mentioned example of a vulnerable subject that could be helped through social entrepreneurship, is a group of vulnerable people. Within the social entrepreneurship research field, many different scholars have addressed the fact that social entrepreneurial initiatives do not serve all citizens in society, but focus on one primary target group of beneficiaries. Particularly, they

state that this target group of beneficiaries should be one that is in a certain way vulnerable or disadvantaged (Di Domenico, Haugh & Tracey, 2010, p. 683; Hervieux & Voltan, 2016, p. 282; Kroeger & Weber, 2015, p. 44; Martin & Osberg, 2007, p. 35). In line with this, Galera and Borzaga (2009, p. 213) argue that social enterprises are "oriented to address the needs of the most fragile segments of society". Although this focus is indeed visible in social entrepreneurship in practice, the question remains what a 'vulnerable' or 'disadvantaged' group precisely is. In general, there are two approaches to define this concept. Firstly, by using the definition of 'disadvantaged groups'. Although this concept has not exhaustively been defined in the academic research field, the European Institute for Gender Equality (n.d.) provides a clear definition: "groups of persons that experience a higher risk of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and violence than the general population, including, but not limited to, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, isolated elderly people and children". The definition of the Social Protection and Human Rights platform (n.d.) adds to this that the higher risks these groups face can be due to various factors, which can either be lifelong, such as sex or ethnicity, or may change throughout the life cycle, such as age or geographic location.

The second approach to this concept is by using the term 'vulnerable' instead of 'disadvantaged' groups, which is often referred to in the literature. "Vulnerability represents the physical, economic, political or social susceptibility or predisposition of a community to damage in the case of a destabilizing phenomenon" (Cardona, 2003, p. 1). Hence, people who are vulnerable face higher risks when something happens, which can have different reasons, either on the individual, the community, or the population level (Mechanic & Tanner, 2007, p. 1220). Because the level of vulnerability always stems from the interaction between the resources a person has, and the life challenges he or she faces (Mechanic & Tanner, 2007, p. 1220), vulnerability can differ per person, and can also differ over time. Mechanic and Tanner (2007, pp. 1223-1225) distinguish between four main sources of vulnerability. The first source is poverty and race, and issues of stigma and discrimination that often come with this. The second source refers to social networks and then specifically a lack of social support, which is often needed to solve problems or overcome difficult situations. Personal limitations form the third source, referring to both physical and cognitive incapacities of persons. The fourth source is someone's physical location, as, for example, low-density or impoverished areas often have less developed facilities and services, limiting people's possibilities. Moreover, Mechanic and Tanner (2007, p. 1220) argue that all these different factors interact with each other over someone's life course, possibly also changing someone's vulnerability over time.

Although the majority of socially entrepreneurial initiatives focus on vulnerable or disadvantaged groups of people, people are not the only possible vulnerable subject of social entrepreneurship. Vulnerability is defined as an internal risk factor of a subject or system that is exposed to a hazard, which is related to the subject's or system's intrinsic predisposition to be damaged (Cardona, 2003, p. 1). Hence, this definition refers to vulnerability of a 'subject or system', not exclusively of people. In practice, this is indeed also visible in the field of social entrepreneurship, as many initiatives for example focus on topics related to sustainability. In these situations, the 'system' – the environment, nature, or the planet in general – is the vulnerable subject central to the social problem that is aimed to be solved, and thus central to the activities of the enterprise. This is in line with the statement from Argyrou (2018, p. 3) that societal challenges can be either social or environmental in focus. However, also for this second type – the planet being the vulnerable subject – there is almost always an link to people, as the vulnerability of the planet also directly or indirectly affects the lives of people, either now or in the future.

4.2.3 Two types of socialness

Taken together, the two previous paragraphs conclude that socialness could either be focused on solving a social problem related to people, or a social problem related to the planet. To illustrate the difference between these two types of social problems, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – which were adopted by the United Nations member states in 2015 to together work on sustainable development (United Nations, n.d.) – form an interesting example (see figure 1).

Firstly, SDG 1, 2, and 3 are related to social problems associated with people, namely poverty, hunger, and bad health or wellbeing. These are understood as being problems on a societal level, however, they can also be connected to the individual level; the needs faced by individuals in society. Secondly, SDG 7, 12, and 14 are related to social problems associated with the planet, with environmental challenges such as climate change and overexploitation of natural resources. These problems are also visible at a societal level, however they do not directly affect individual needs of people in society; there is only an indirect link between these social problems and the individual level.

Figure 1 – Sustainable Development Goals

The example provided above shows that these two categories of social problems – based on their subjects – are different in their nature. As the core of socialness lies in solving these social problems, this categorization also has implications for the meaning of socialness. In short, the literature has shown that the core of socialness can either be solving social problems that focus on people – on a more individual level – or solving social problems that focus on the planet – on a more societal level. Hence, based on these first findings from the literature, these two possible types of socialness that can be distinguished are displayed in figure 2.
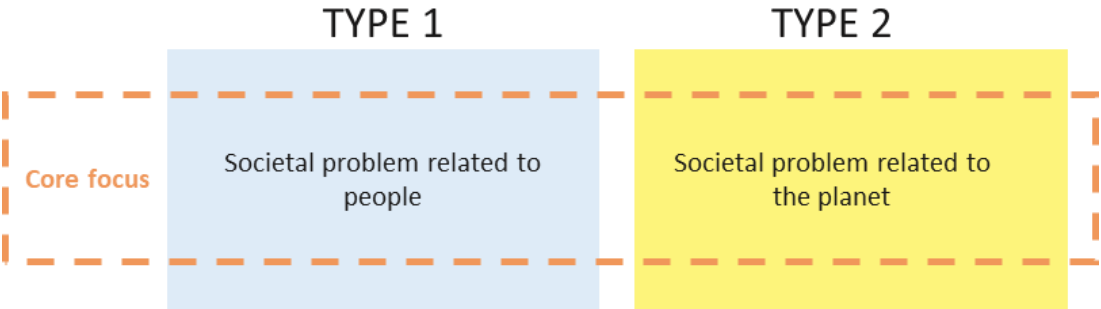

Figure 2 – Two types of socialness

4.3 Additional aspects of socialness

The previous paragraph concluded that solving social problems from vulnerable subjects lies at the core of socialness. However, this definition does not answer the questions <u>what</u> exactly social entrepreneurial initiatives should do to achieve this or <u>how</u> they should do this. Hence, this core typology does not suffice to describe what socialness entails. Rather, according to the literature, being social entails taking into account several additional aspects. Therefore, this paragraph distinguishes between six possible additional aspects of socialness that have been derived from the literature, that can be divided into substantive and procedural aspects. The substantive aspects include focusing on basic needs and capabilities and striving to make a change in the long term. In addition, the procedural aspects are involving beneficiaries, being transparent about effects, doing no harm, and integrating the societal mission.

4.3.1 Substantive aspects

Focusing on basic needs and capabilities

Having shown that socialness entails aiming to help vulnerable subjects, the question arises what it is a 'social' organization should help them with. Certo and Miller (2008, p. 267) argue that creating social value involves the fulfillment of basic and long-standing needs to those members of society who are in need. This idea of focusing on fulfilling or improving basic needs has also been mentioned by other scholars in the field of social entrepreneurship, social business and social innovation (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013; Kroeger & Weber, 2015, p. 44; Yunus, 2010). Basic needs can be defined as needs essential to live and sustain a meaningful life (Hummels, 2018, p. 26). When people think about basic needs, often examples like food or education are mentioned. However, Max-Neef (1992, pp. 199-200) argues that, for example, food and education are only the means by which needs are satisfied, also referred to as satisfiers. Examples of real basic needs are subsistence, protection, affection, understanding and participation (p. 199), all interrelated, and all equally important (p. 211). These needs will, according to Max-Neef, be the same in all cultures and in all historical periods. What changes is the way by which we satisfy these needs: the satisfiers we deem relevant (p. 200), such as education.

Now, why are basic needs a relevant focal area for 'social' initiatives? This question is related to the concern for the inability of vulnerable people to fulfill their basic needs, and for the lack of capability to do something about it (Hummels, 2018, pp. 26-27). "What matters, is the extent to which people can (develop their capability to) freely fulfil their personal needs" (Hummels, 2018, p. 27). Not everyone has same capabilities and talents, and even if they have, not every person has the same power and resources to use these capabilities and talents (Den Braber, 2015, p. 10). Hence, in the well-known 'capabilities approach', developed by Sen and Nussbaum, people's capabilities – what they are able to do and to be – are central (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 5). To clarify this, Nussbaum has developed a list of ten basic capabilities, displayed in table 6.

Capability	Meaning
Life	Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length
Bodily health	Being able to have good health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter
Bodily integrity	Being able to move freely from place to place; to secure against assault; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction
Senses, imagination, and thought	Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – informed and cultivated by adequate education
Emotions	Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger
Practical reason	Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life
Affiliation	Being able to live with and toward others; having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation
Other species	Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature
Play	Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities
Control over one's environment	Political: being able to participate in political choices that govern one's life
	Material: being able to hold property; having the right to seek employment; having he freedom from unwarranted search and seizure

Table 6 – Ten capabilities (based on Nussbaum, 2001, pp. 78-79)

These ten capabilities are, according to Nussbaum, (2001, p. 6) important for every citizen. For each capability there is a threshold level that defines the social minimum that is necessary for truly human functioning; if people fall below the threshold, that is an unjust and tragic situation (p. 71). Therefore, this principle of basic capabilities can function as a basis for the central aims of social entrepreneurship. A social goal should, following the reasoning of Nussbaum, be focused on getting citizens above the capability threshold (p. 6), regardless of their different starting points (pp. 81-82). "A social structure that aids the recognition and articulation of needs, and accepts a responsibility for meeting those needs, will further the advancements of human capabilities (Hill, 2003, p. 122).

Creating long-term change

The insights presented so far have shown that socialness entails causing change in the (problematic) situations of vulnerable subjects, for example by fulfilling basic needs or improving basic capabilities. The second additional aspect of socialness refers to this 'change' that is aimed for. The central aim underlying social entrepreneurship is creating <u>sustainable</u> change: change that makes a difference on the long-term, instead of only on the short term. El Ebrashi (2013, p. 188) refers to this by stating that social problems should be addressed sustainably, Young (2006, p. 67) refers to creating "a sustained shift in the social or economic relations of disadvantaged groups", and Martin and Osberg (2007, p. 35) argue that social enterprises should make a change in an "unjust equilibrium", forging a new, stable, equilibrium to be and sustain the new standard. This strive for change in the long term distinguishes social entrepreneurship from traditional forms of entrepreneurship, in which the core aim behind a product or service does not necessarily have to be change the situation or the life of the buyer in the long term.

There are several ways in which social entrepreneurship contributes to long-term change. The first example is drawn by Porter and Kramer (2011, p. 5), who plead for a new way of creating value. Instead of redistributing the existing value in a fairer way, they argue for expanding the total pool of value, both economic and social. For example, many fair trade initiatives are built on the idea of paying higher – more fair – prices for the same crops, which can be understood as redistribution of money in the supply chain. Instead, Porter & Kramer value techniques like improving the farmers' growing techniques, which provides a bigger revenue for the farmers in the long term. In this way, the value created is more sustainable. In addition, Santos (2012, p. 345) describes that creating sustainable change can be achieved by permanently addressing the root causes of a problem: instead of alleviating current practices of people, looking at the underlying problems and trying to tackle these. An approach that is often related to this, is focusing on empowerment of people. Empowerment is an approach that confronts the structural forces that create disproportionate vulnerabilities of people (Christens, 2012, p. 550), and that enables people to gain mastery over their affairs (Rappaport, as cited in Christens, 2012, p. 542). A more elaborate definition of empowerment is provided by Maton (as cited in Christens, 2012, p. 542): "a group based, participatory, developmental process through which marginalized or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, and achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization". In practice, such an empowerment approach means that people develop the means to improve their situation themselves. The example about improving farmers' growing techniques described above can also be seen as a form of empowerment, as the farmers are then no longer dependent on the willingness of others to pay higher prices. Clearly, if this empowerment works, this is a more sustainable solution, which will help the people on the longer term. A last interesting point about this approach is that in a sense, the empowerment of people through social entrepreneurship has a paradoxical character: by changing the people or systems that create and maintain the problem, the social enterprise ultimately becomes smaller or less viable, as people's dependence on the enterprise decreases (Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004, p. 261; Santos, 2012, p. 347). However, a situation in which people helped by a social entrepreneurial initiative become fully independent of the initiative is not often achieved in practice.

4.3.2 Procedural aspects

Involving beneficiaries

Whereas stakeholder participation is an often mentioned concept in the literature on social entrepreneurship, one specific part of this is most important for socialness: involving beneficiaries. "Social enterprises set up organizational structures which further the participation of several stakeholders, including those that are affected by the activity that is explicitly aimed at benefiting the community or disadvantaged groups of people" (Galera & Borzaga, 2009, p. 214). Here, "those that are affected by the activity" are called the beneficiaries. In line with this statement of Galera and Borzaga, other scholars have also included the involvement of beneficiaries in their definitions of social entrepreneurship (Argyrou, 2018, p. 282; Defourny & Nyssens, 2013; Di Domenico, Haugh & Tracey, 2010, pp. 682-683; Huybrechts, Mertens & Rijpens, 2014, p. 158; Tan, Williams & Tan, 2005, p. 358). The involvement of beneficiaries is about involving them in processes, but most important, in defining what they need and when the enterprise's activities are successful. To do this, Nicholls and Cho (2006, p. 106) propose a dialogical approach, as opposed to a monological approach in which the central goal

and vision are those of the entrepreneur. A dialogical approach, on the contrary, is a consensus-based, participatory approach to the identification of social problems and solutions.

Thus, the involvement of beneficiaries is often mentioned as being important, but why is that the case? The reason that this is so important that it can be seen as an aspect of socialness, is the subjectiveness or people's needs. What people need depends on personal and cultural values (Seelos & Mair, 2004, p. 4). This subjectiveness implies that different people can have different understandings of what the needs and problems of beneficiaries are. The study of Kissane and Gingerich (2004) studied this phenomenon in nonprofit organizations, and found that indeed, the perspectives of the organizations' members and the beneficiaries differed often. For example, they noted that the organizations' members focused more on long-term problems, and the clients more on immediate problems (p. 313), and that the organizations' members ought to think more positively (e.g. from a strengths perspective, as they are trained to avoid stigmatization) than the clients themselves (p. 329). Hence, the organizations' members cannot exactly know what it is the clients think, value, or need. Therefore, to get to know whether the enterprise's social aim and activities are actually relevant, it is important for them to see how the people that are ought to be helped, value this help (Robson, Begum & Locke, 2003, p. 2; Young, 2006, p. 57). "Otherwise, rich-country 'do-gooders' run the risk of attempting to replicate their own norms and values in locations that just don't need them" (Zietsma & Tuck, 2012, p. 516). Therefore, this beneficiary involvement is perceived as crucial for enterprises' legitimacy (Huybrechts, Mertens & Rijpens, 2014, p. 165; Kissane & Gingerich, 2004, p. 313), and it might also be necessary from an ethical perspective, because the enterprise's activities affect the lives of the beneficiaries (Robson, Begum & Locke, 2003, p. 2).

Integration of the societal mission

Another topic that is often mentioned in the social entrepreneurship literature, is the importance that an enterprise attaches to its societal mission. According to Dacin, Dacin and Matear (2010, p. 42), the primary mission being "creating social value by providing solutions to social problem" is a common theme across the majority of social entrepreneurship definitions, as is also visible in the definitions used by Bacq and Eddleston (2018, p. 589), Defourny and Nyssens (2013, p. 46), Hervieux and Voltan (2018, p. 280), Mair and Marti (2006, p. 39), and Santos (2012, p. 335). Nuancing this statement, Peredo and McLean (2005, p. 64) state that an initiative should aim to create social value, either exclusively, or at least in some prominent way. This is in line with the perspective that for achieving success in social entrepreneurship, also economic outcomes are important to take into account, as these are seen as the drivers behind achieving social aims (Dacin, Dacin & Matear, 2010, p. 42).

Since this topic is often mentioned in the literature being a part of social entrepreneurship, the question arises why it is also an aspect of socialness. This is explained by Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2017, p. 380). In their article, they show that sometimes, social entrepreneurial initiatives or enterprises over time become increasingly focused on their organizational interests, such as for example the challenge of procuring resources for the organization. If the efforts are focused too much on other interests than the social, this can go at the cost of social value creation and the paths to creating social value can become blurred (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2017, p. 380). Hence, this is a risk that can be tackled by ensuring that the social goal is integrated and prioritized, to prevent this mission drift from happening. When looking at this aspect from this perspective, it becomes clear that integration of the societal mission is a way to ensure that socialness of the enterprise will be maintained both over time, and in all organizational activities.

Doing no harm

The fifth aspect of socialness in this study, is one that might sound obvious, but that should be part of our understanding of socialness: the requirement to complete social change without causing another social problem. Meddling in social structures often has unintended consequences that the initiators did not think of before, either within the own field of work or in other aspects of the ecosystem. Hence, it is important to pose the question whether social entrepreneurial initiatives, maybe inadvertently, do more harm than good (Zietsma & Tuck, 2012, p. 514). An example of this is provided by Moyo (as cited in Zietsma & Tuck, 2012, p. 515), who described a story of a bed-net supplier who was put out of business by a free distribution of bed-nets, leaving no way of obtaining bed-nets once the free distribution was over. This story shows that it is important to take into account all possible side effects of an initiative, to be certain that this initiative actually has a social contribution (Zietsma & Tuck, 2012, p. 516). Hence, to assess the socialness of an enterprise, it is important to look at both positive and negative outputs and outcomes.

One topic that often comes across when talking about 'do no harm' is environmental impact: "the requirement that social entrepreneurship activities be environmentally sustainable" (Lumpkin, Moss, Gras, Kato & Amezcua, 2013, p. 768). Although scholars argue that social entrepreneurship is not the same as sustainable entrepreneurship, and that the step from social to sustainable entrepreneurship is not always necessary (Hall, Daneke & Lenox, 2010, p. 442; Stenn, 2016), this does not mean that social entrepreneurs should not take into account the possible negative influence they can have on the environment. The concept of sustainable development is relevant here, implying that economic growth should satisfy the basic needs of present generations without limiting options available to future generations (Argyrou, 2018, p. 3; Mäler, Aniyar & Jansson, 2007, p. 9501; Seelos & Mair, 2004, p. 4).

In some situations, however, enterprises have negative effects that cannot easily be banned out. These enterprises then create negative externalities: social costs, created by organizations, that they often do not automatically have to bear (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 5). An option that could be taken into account is that of internalizing these negative externalities. If enterprises internalize the externalities they create, they take responsibility for their possible negative effects by paying for it, which can be a way to cope with negative effects in a responsible way.

Transparency about effects

The aspects described above are all about the aims that could be achieved through social entrepreneurship and the ways this could be done. However, an important addition here is the question whether the enterprise actually succeeds in this: an enterprise can only be called 'social' when it proves to achieve its 'social' aims (Hummels, 2018). Therefore, the literature refers to the importance of being transparent about the effects of enterprises' activities, which is according to Galera and Borzaga (2009, p. 222) one of the general principles social entrepreneurship is subject to. "The goal of fulfilling a social mission raises the question of how the impact these organizations have on society should be addressed, to understand if and how they are really achieving their objectives and contributing to the well-being of society" (Grieco, Michelini & Gasevoli, 2014, p. 1174). Hence, organizations working on social problems should be able to demonstrate results in <u>solving</u> social problems (Ebrahim & Rangan, as cited in Hummels, 2018, p. 38).

Nicholls and Cho (2006, p. 116) add to this statement that it is the complexity of the 'social' dimension of social entrepreneurship that leads to this demand for openness: the enterprises' grappling with the nature of their missions should "demonstrate openness to competing visions for social change" (Nicholls & Cho, 2006, p. 116). Only this way, it is possible for external stakeholders to understand and evaluate enterprises' choices and effects, because these cannot be only assessed based on straightforward financial results. Hence, this openness is important to ensure accountability to the stakeholders of the enterprise (Arena, 2015, p. 652).

4.4 Resume: answering sub question 2

The three previous paragraphs described several elements of the concept of socialness. To draw a conclusion based on these insights, this paragraph aims to answer sub question 2: *How can socialness be understood based on the literature?*

At the core of socialness lies the aim to solve social problems. Social problems are situations that are recognized and addressed by a group of people in society as being problems that need to be solved. These social problems are always related to a certain extent of vulnerability. The vulnerable subject of a social problem can either be (groups of) people, or the planet in general (for example the environment or nature). Hence, the conclusion here is that two types of socialness can be distinguished: type 1) solving social problems related to people, and type 2) solving social problems related to the planet. Social entrepreneurial initiatives could thus be placed in one of these two categories.

Next to this typology of socialness, six other aspects of socialness were derived from the literature: focusing on basic needs and capabilities, creating long-term change, involving beneficiaries, integration of the societal mission, doing no harm, and transparency about effects. These aspects can also be a part of the meaning of socialness. However, when linking these aspects to the two types of socialness, it seems to be the case that not all aspects fit both types.
Firstly, the aspect 'focusing on basic needs and capabilities' is about "the needs essential to live and sustain a meaningful life" and the capabilities to fulfill these needs. Hence, when an enterprise is working on directly fulfilling basic needs or improving basic capabilities, it is explicitly about helping (individual) people. For an initiative that is aimed at solving an environmental issue, such as reducing the amount of plastic that is used, this aspect might be less relevant to focus on. Hence, for enterprises working on an environmental issue, directly improving basic needs and capabilities of people might not be a necessary requirement to be social. Secondly, the same goes for the aspect 'involving beneficiaries'. Although enterprises focusing on environmental issues also have stakeholders, their core business is not focused on helping a specific group of beneficiaries, which makes 'involving beneficiaries' less relevant or even impossible to be a requirement for socialness. The other four aspects – long term change, integration of the mission, doing no harm, and transparency about effects, – seem to have a more general nature and could (based on the literature) thus be relevant for initiatives in both categories of socialness.
In general, this finding implies that the type of socialness partly determines what socialness exactly entails. The content of socialness could be different when working on societal issues related to people than when working on societal issues related to planetary challenges: for example, for an enterprise that focuses on reducing food waste to be social, it is not necessary to 'involve beneficiaries', whereas

for an enterprise working on labor participation of disadvantaged youngsters, it is. Thus, the relevance of the additional aspects (partly) depends on what is at the core of the initiative. A visualization of this is displayed in figure 3, see below.
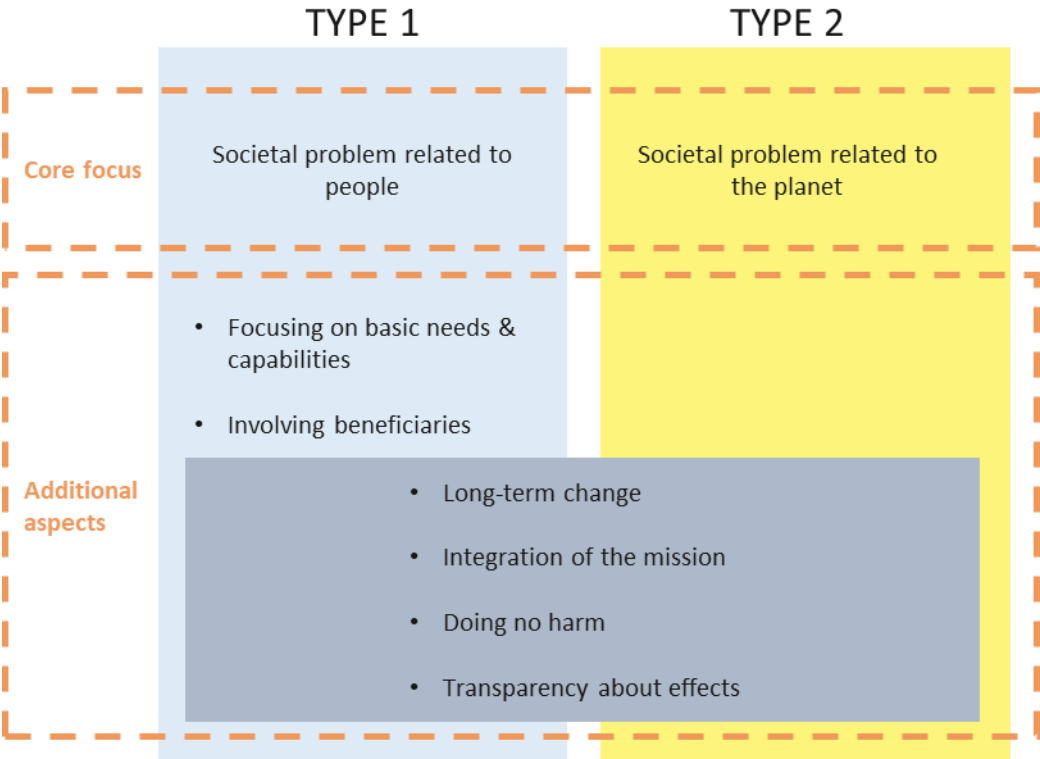
Figure 3 – Two types of socialness and related aspects

When reading this answer to sub question 2 and seeing the figure above, the question arises how these results should be interpreted. This overview of two types and additional aspects of socialness are to be understood as an 'ideal' type of socialness: in an ideal situation, according to the literature, enterprises that are social should take into account all these aspects (depending on whether it is about type 1 or type 2 of socialness). To see whether that is possible and how that would look like in practice, chapter 5 adds empirical insights to this 'ideal' type of socialness.

5. Empirical research

In the previous chapter, an overview of the relevant literature on this theme has led to a typology of socialness and additional aspects of socialness whose relevance is (partly) dependent on this typology. This has raised the question whether the typology, the aspects, and the relation between these two are also visible in practice. Therefore, this fifth chapter presents the results from the empirical data, that were collected through interviews and document analyses of people working at various organizations related to social entrepreneurship. The aim here is to illustrate and analyze the meaning of socialness that was derived from the literature using insights from practice. The chapter starts with an introductory paragraph that presents some important general notes about defining socialness mentioned by the research participants, which are relevant to keep in mind when reading the rest of the chapter. Hereafter, paragraph 5.2 dives into the meanings of socialness used in practice, hence answering sub question 3: *how do people that have to do with social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands understand socialness in practice?* Lastly, paragraph 5.3 aims to look at reasons behind these meanings of socialness used in practice, hence answering sub question 4: *how can the differences between the meanings of socialness used in practice be explained?*

5.1 About defining socialness

5.1.1 A complex concept

As stated in the beginning of this thesis, the heterogeneous nature of socialness makes it a complex concept. This complexity was also mentioned by the research participants (R2, R3, R5, R7, R10, R11, R14). They brought up several reasons for this complexity. According to one of the social entrepreneurs, the reason that socialness is difficult to define is because it is a *"package of different types of things together that create the social"* (R2). Furthermore, a research participant from one of the network organizations states that socialness can be seen as a very broad concept, varying from the Corporate Social Responsibility strategies of big corporates to startups who work on reducing loneliness among elderly (R7). This is the case because all different types of organizations can have an impact; you do not necessarily have to be a social enterprise (R5, consultancy organization). Hence, this variety of different concepts makes seeing the overlap between them sometimes difficult (R7, network organization). One of the researchers also refers to this increased variety of 'forms of socialness' by sketching a broader tendency in society. As being social is becoming increasingly important nowadays, all organizations try to position themselves as 'social' in a certain way or to a certain extent. They have a lot more freedom in how to do this than they did in the past, when there was a tendency of clear government regulations that organizations had to meet. Nowadays, the Dutch 'poldercultuur' has created a variety of policy instruments that are only partly obligatory, leaving more freedom for organizations to build their own strategies to relate themselves to the issues that are at play. This leads to a broader variety of socialness, which makes the concept more complex (R10).

5.1.2 The importance of language

Another reason that the concept is this complex is the use of language. A main difficulty here is the translation of 'social entrepreneurship' to the Dutch language. Although the correct Dutch translation would be 'maatschappelijk ondernemerschap', it is usually translated as 'sociaal ondernemerschap'

(R4, network organization). However, the Dutch 'sociaal' is often perceived as being related to helping (a certain group of) people. More specifically, people usually tend to think about labor participation first. However, the English 'social' is broader than that, not only referring to initiatives related to people, but also to nature or environment (R8; R11D2). This is because both types of initiatives can be about solving social problems that need to be acted upon, that need to be solved (R14, network organization), whether it is about poverty, deforestation or CO2 emissions (R2, social enterprise). At its core, there is no difference between working on helping people or helping the climate, because in both cases you work on something that is bigger than your own interests; it is in the interest of society (R4, network organization). Hence, in this research, when referring to socialness, the broad concept is used, concerning both people and environment or nature.

Another difficulty is that the language used to describe socialness can differ significantly between contexts. In the public sector, for example, people often refer to the term 'societal issues', whereas corporates rather use the SDGs and the phrase 'entrepreneurship with impact' (R8, network organization). These choices are often made quite conscious to create recognition (R8; R10). An example of this is provided by two social entrepreneurs, who describe that although the term 'purposeful entrepreneurship' is also present in the Netherlands, many social entrepreneurs still choose to use the term 'social entrepreneurship', because the majority of the sector does so and it is important to form a strong movement together (R1; R3).

5.1.3 Relevance of developing a strict definition

These difficulties related to the meaning of socialness lead to the question whether socialness should be defined in a strict manner, or whether that is not desirable. The opinions on this topic differ significantly. On the one hand, one of the social entrepreneurs states that the current broadness of the concept can be a threat for organizations that are truly trying to contribute to society (R3). When there are no clear boundaries to the concept of socialness, it is easy to be skeptical, because using the term for a lot of things makes it difficult for people to distinguish between what is social and what is not (R8, network organization). According to a member of a network organization, a threat can be the rise of greenwashing (R4). On the other hand, an advisory report written for the government points out a risk of a strict definition: a sharp demarcation of social entrepreneurship is complex, because this entails the risk that some organizations are – unintentionally – not part of the definition, whereas others – mistakenly – are (R11D2). Moreover, the question arises whether it is desirable to have a strict definition of socialness. According to a research participant from a network organization, maybe we should see socialness as a movement that all organizations have to go through, improving over time – which is a good thing on its own, independent of whether each organization immediately meets a list of strict requirements and is in that sense 'perfectly social' from the start (R8). One of the social entrepreneurs also experiences this himself, and states that although we should be critical, we should also realize that becoming social is a development which takes some time: *"We only started working in this totally new economy about three or four years ago, so give us some time"* (R13).

5.2 The meaning of socialness

This paragraph dives into the meaning that the research participants attach to socialness. Based on the literature review, this paragraph first discusses the core of socialness, after which the additional aspects are discussed. Lastly, these findings are taken together to answer sub question 3.

5.2.1 The core of socialness

Solving social problems

The literature review has shown that for enterprises to be social, their core focus should be solving social problems (Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004, pp. 260-261; Bacq & Eddleston, 2018, p. 590; Galera & Borzaga, 2009, p. 212; Hervieux & Voltan, 2018, p. 280; Kroeger & Weber, 2015, p. 43; Mair & Marti, 2006; Nicholls & Cho, 2006, p. 109; Perrini & Vurro, 2006, p. 63; Santos, 2012, p. 350; Seelos & Mair, 2004, p. 4; Stryjan, 2006, p. 196). This focus is also recognized by research participants from all types of organizations that were included in this research (R1D1; R3; R4; R4D2; R6; R7; R8; R11; R11D1; R11D2; R13; R14; R14D3; R15; R16). Moreover, it is not only important that social entrepreneurial initiatives use a social problem as a topic, but that what they do also really contribute to solving it: are you bringing an effective answer to the problem (R4; R8; R14; R14D2; R14D3)? Moreover, according to a research participant working at an energy provider, it is important to make sure that by solving the problem at a certain place, you do not move the problem to another place. This is a risk that often occurs in afforestation projects: when a part of a forest is protected with fences, other parts of the forest can still be cut down instead. When your aim is to contribute to afforestation, you should therefore prevent this from happening. Only then, you can show that you really contribute to solving the problem of deforestation (R15).

Although solving societal problems is also in practice seen as an important part of socialness, the research participants bring up that it is difficult to define what a social problem exactly is. According to a research participant from a network organization, people in society will always have different opinions about what is a problematic situation and what is not (R8). One of the researchers adds that this mainly depends on the topic. For some issues, almost everyone in society will agree that it is a problem and will therefore also agree that it needs to be solved, such as topics related to child protection. However, the opinions about for example asylum policy will differ a lot more. People have different perspectives on what exactly is the problem concerning asylum policy: is there a threatening situation for refugees, who need to be protected, or a threatening situation for the national culture, which needs to be protected? Hence, for this theme, people do not agree about what actually is the problem, and therefore neither do they about what the solution should be (R6). This example is in line with the statement from Blumer (1971, p. 301) that social problems consist of different and sometimes even conflicting interests. Another difficulty in defining what a social problem is, is that social problems can change over time, making it difficult to draw strict boundaries for what is a social problem at a certain point in time (R4; R6; R11D2; R15). An example of this is provided by a research participant from one of the network organizations: *"when looking from a historical perspective, you can foresee that in a few years from now, we will face other social problems than we do now. Currently, you can start to see some indications that data privacy might become our next big social problem"* (R4). Furthermore, things that are not perceived as being a problem at first, might be perceived as problems over time (R6, research organization). A research participant working at an energy provider explains that such changes in perceptions are often the case because of changing knowledge. *"For example, some time ago the criticism started about using biofuel for energy provision, as this might happen at the cost of growing food crops. If that is the case, there would be a competition between food and energy, which is not a good thing. (…) So over time, we come across effects we didn't know about before, and then we have to carefully adapt our strategy to that"* (R15).

This difficulty in defining social problems that the research participants experience, can be explained by the statement from Social Problem Theory that there are no objective criteria to assess whether a situation turns into a social problem; rather, this depends on a process of collective definition (Blumer, 1971, p. 298), in which people in society perceive a situation as a problematic one, and they address this (Hervieux & Voltan, 2018, p. 281; Schneider, 1985, p. 209; Spector & Kitsuse, 1973, p. 149). In line with Social Problem Theory, the research participants' attempts to define what a social problem is, build on the idea that a problem is faced and recognized by society. A problem can be a social problem because it is recognized or experienced, and also addressed, as a social problem by more people (R4; R6; R13). Most important here are the people who are not necessarily subject to, but that are close to the problem: do the people in the local environments, ecosystems, communities or economies perceive this as a core problem? And if they do so, is there also a need for the problem to be solved (R6; R14)? Thus, a social problem is not only a problem for one organization or person, but it is bigger than that: the problem extends the individual level (R8; R13). An important addition made here is that although the problem has to be recognized or experienced by people, this does not mean that it cannot be a problem concerning nature, animals, or environment (R4, network organization). This was also argued by Argyrou (2018, p. 3): these challenges can either be social or environmental in their nature. As a final addition, three research participants working in network organizations state that a way to see whether an issue is a social problem, is by assessing whether the problem currently costs money for society, for example because the government uses an instrument to solve it which is paid for by tax money. When tax money is used to solve a problem, it could be stated that solving it has become a shared responsibility. Therefore, solving this problem is then not only in the interest of one person or one organization, but it is in the common interest (R3, R4; R7; R8).

Vulnerable subject

The literature review described that social problems are always related to a vulnerable subject. Also according to one of the researchers, *"it* [socialness, red.] *is always focused on a societal challenge (…), so it is always something that is a problem, and an issue always has to do with a certain level of vulnerability. Not necessarily a whole vulnerable group, but a certain vulnerability, somehow"* (R6). The distinction between the vulnerable subject being people and the vulnerable subject being the planet that was derived from the literature is recognized by the research participants, and is described in more detail below.

Firstly, a vulnerable subject can be (a group of) vulnerable or disadvantaged people (Di Domenico, Haugh & Tracey, 2010, p. 683; Hervieux & Voltan, 2016, p. 282; Kroeger & Weber, 2015, p. 44; Martin & Osberg, 2007, p. 35). A majority of the research participants recognized this to be a part of socialness, although not using clear definitions of what they actually understand as 'being vulnerable'. However, the relevance of helping these 'beneficiaries' is clear to the research participants, which is often done by providing services, organizing activities, or providing employment (R1; R2; R3; R6; R7; R8; R12; R16; R17; R18). According to two research participants from network organizations, helping vulnerable people is automatically attached to the concept of social problems: when an initiative exclusively helps people that are able to pay a large amount of money for it, they are provided an extra option to choose from, instead of really being helped in solving a problem that is experienced by them (R4; R7). For these research participants, the ability of really solving a problem is thus very important. In line with this, one of the social entrepreneurs argues that among different people in society, vulnerable people are often ones that are in the most urgent need for support (R1). This urgency of a change in the

situation of vulnerable people is also brought up by one of the researchers: trying to improve the situation of a vulnerable group of people is relevant because it can be a trigger for a bigger change in the system, as it enables others to see that something needs to be changed about their situation (R10). Although also agreeing on the relevance of helping (a group of) vulnerable people for socialness, the other researcher adds a critical note to this core aspect of socialness. Within the category of 'vulnerable people', different levels of vulnerability are present, and for being social it is not always necessary that the focus is on the <u>most</u> vulnerable group. For example, a social enterprise that works on employment of youngsters with a distance to the labor market should not necessarily select the most vulnerable youngsters as a target group, such as youngsters with complex problems like being involved in criminal activities or psychiatric issues. Rather, it is important to select a target group of youngsters who need this help on the labor market, but for whom it is also to some extent possible to succeed in this, so those who can really be helped and achieve a change in the long term. For the most vulnerable youngsters, this might be difficult to achieve, and therefore they may not really be helped by the initiative (R6).

A final critical note on this theme that is shared by a part of the research participants, is on the term 'vulnerable people' in itself: they value the term 'vulnerable people' as wrong in itself as it is stigmatizing (R1, R3, R8, R12). According to a research participant working at a network organization, all people have their own limitations, and the system that is designed by people in this society has made choices on which limitations make you vulnerable, and which limitations don't (R8). To avoid this stigmatization in working with beneficiaries, one of the social entrepreneurs explains that one should for example not talk about minimizing differences between people, but about strengthening one's own potency (R1). Rather than vulnerability, terms like inclusiveness, cohesion, and diversity are used, as they are more positive and open (R3, R12, R17D1).

According to a part of the research participants, this focus on a vulnerable group of people is rather a possibility than a necessity. Not in all cases this focus is relevant or important; this is dependent on the concept (R1, R2, R3, R8, R10, R11D2, R14D2, R16, R17). An example that is provided by one of the social entrepreneurs, is that when an enterprise aims to reduce the amount of plastic that is used, by selling reusable products, it does not necessarily also have to help a vulnerable group of people with this; targeting a richer group of people as potential customers will probably be better suitable for achieving their goal (R2). This is an example of an initiative in which the planet (environment/nature) can be understood as the vulnerable subject of the social problem that is aimed to be tackled. This is in line with the literature, stating that vulnerability can also refer to systems, not explicitly limiting vulnerability to be attached to people (Cardona, 2003, p. 1). This option being a part of socialness is also explicitly mentioned by one of the social entrepreneurs – although she is not working on such a sustainability issue herself – and one member of a network organization (R2; R4). Thus, this perspective of the research participants illustrates the importance of solving a societal problem from a vulnerable subject, but shows that this subject does not necessarily have to be people.

5.2.2 Additional aspects of socialness

Focusing on basic needs and capabilities

The first additional aspect of socialness derived from the literature is helping people to fulfill their basic needs or to develop their basic capabilities necessary to fulfill these needs (Hummels, 2018, Max-Neef,

1992; Nussbaum, 2001). Part of the research participants indeed recognizes this as being an aspect of socialness. According to one of the researchers, fulfilling the basic needs of your target group is necessary to gain legitimacy (R10). Moreover, focusing on basic needs and capabilities is most clearly recognized by the research participant whose social enterprise works in a developing country. *"When the conditions in people's lives don't meet a certain basic level, it is very difficult to move beyond that"* (R2). This can be related to the 'threshold level' mentioned by Nussbaum (2001, p. 71); for each basic capability, there is a threshold level that defines the social minimum that is necessary for truly human functioning. Hence, in a context where citizens do not meet these thresholds, such as in developing countries, helping them to get there is important (R2).

However, three critical notes are also brought up related to this aspect of socialness. According to one of the social entrepreneurs, when working with beneficiaries, it could be in their favor to try to go beyond their basic needs and capabilities*. "In the beginning, of course, everyone has basic needs and rights and we need to work on meeting those. However, it is not the case that when that is achieved, you stop being social: socialness also entails enabling people to develop extra skills that make them stand out"* (R3). Whereas Nussbaum (2001) argued that a social goal should be aimed at getting citizens above a capability threshold, this social entrepreneur argues that that is not the end point: socialness can also include going beyond that.

Another critical note that is mentioned by the research participants is that in some situations, it is difficult to distinguish what exactly are basic needs and capabilities (R4; R8; R12). For example, is it a basic need for people to reach their full potential in life, to develop themselves (R4, network organization)? What makes this distinction complex is that what is perceived as a basic need or capability can often depend on the context people are in: what is 'need to have' and 'nice to have' can differ between different contexts (R8, network organization).

A third critical note added by the research participants is that there is also a difficulty in defining when an enterprise or an initiative actually contributes to a basic need or capability: namely, many initiatives might not directly contribute to a basic need or capability, but do so indirectly (R1; R7). An example is provided by a research participant from a network organization: smartphone apps in health care might not seem to be a basic need but mainly make the lives of patients easier. However, indirectly they can increase patients' health which could possibly be seen as a basic need (R7). This makes it likely that for many initiatives and activities, an indirect link can be found with a basic need or capability, hence making it less clear when an initiative does <u>not</u> contribute to a basic need or capability.

Some of the research respondents add a different perspective to this aspect of socialness. Sometimes, enterprises or initiatives provide products or services that are not perceived as directly contributing to basic needs or capabilities, but that do contribute to solving a social problem (R4; R10; R18). Examples of this are green energy suppliers or sustainable banks: the products and services they provide are rather seen as luxury products, but they do contribute to solving the problem of CO_2 emissions and investments in unethical sectors such as the arms industry (R10, research organization). Therefore, for such initiatives, directly contributing to basic needs and capabilities might not be necessary to be social.

Creating long-term change

Based on the literature review, a second additional aspect is that social entrepreneurship should make a difference in the long term instead of only in the short term. There should be a sustained shift in the (socially problematic) situation, leading to a new, sustained, standard (El Ebrashi, 2013; Martin &

Osberg, 2007; Young, 2006). This topic is valued as a very important aspect of socialness by all research participants (R1, R2, R2D1, R3, R3D1, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R14, R15, R16, R17, R18). Why is this so important? According to one of the social entrepreneurs, if you do not strive for a long-term change, your 'social' side makes no sense. That would mean that at a certain point, the positive effects experienced by the people would disappear, so they would be put back in the old situation or be even worse off (R2). Moreover, having a long-term perspective might also be necessary to achieve impact on complex issues: for example, changing employees' mindsets concerning sustainable practices in their work might take some time (R17, clothing production enterprise), and also consumers getting used to new types of products will not be done in a short amount of time (R12, foodservice organization). Therefore, if you aim to make a long-term change that will last, such as changing people's habits, a long-term vision is also necessary to make this happen (R1; R9; R12; R17). In addition, a more critical note related to this aspect is posed by one of the researchers: sometimes achieving long-term change simply does not work, for example due to external factors that cannot be influenced. However, this does not necessarily mean that the initiative is not social: it can still have inspired people and have created ideas for the future, which will have its own positive effects. The starting point should always be aiming to achieve long-term change, but if that does not exactly work out the way it was supposed to be, that does not necessarily have to be a big problem (R10).

This aspect of socialness is further illustrated by various research participants by explaining how long-term change could be achieved. The most direct way to have influence in the long term is ensuring the continuity of your own organization (R1; R2; R2D1; R13; R17D1). However, the research participants indicated that there are many different ways to achieve long-term change. One way to do this is by making sure the core activities of the enterprise are designed to create long-term change. This can be done in three manners.

Firstly, the core activities of an enterprise can be focused on tackling the root cause of a problem: before developing the activities, the enterprise should critically investigate what exactly is the cause, the starting point, of a problem that is faced in society. This means that, for example, selling a product that is a 'better' alternative for a product that is currently in the supermarket, would not meet this criterion, as producing this product does not change the core cause of the problem (R14, network organization). This way of working towards long-term change is in line with the statement made by Santos (2012, p. 345), who also pleads for addressing the root causes of a problem to attack the underlying problems.

Secondly, the core activities of an organization can focus on empowerment of a group of people, often referred to as the beneficiaries. This strategy for long-term change was also mentioned in the literature review by Christens (2012): changing the structural forces that create vulnerability of people. Working on empowerment refers to helping people to get control over their own lives, according to one of the social entrepreneurs (R1). According to two of the social enterprises, this can be done by teaching people to make conscious choices in their lives (R2D1), helping people in discovering their opportunities, which can give them more chances in the long term (R3D1). Another strategy pointed out by the consultancy organization is capacitating organizations or people to be able to do things themselves, without external help (R5; R5D1). In all these ways of working on empowerment, it is important that awareness or knowledge is created that will last, so that the people keep on using this in future choices (R3, social enterprise). In this way, working on empowerment can be a way of creating long-term change.

Thirdly, it is also possible that the core activities of the organization don't have direct long-term effects, but that spill-over effects emerge that do so. Two examples of these spill-over effects that are relevant

for the long term are mentioned by one of the researchers. Initiatives that work on labor participation of people with a distance to the labor market, for example, have as a direct effect that these people have a job and an income and that there is a decrease in social benefits that are paid for by the government. However, indirect effects emerge in the lives of these people, like having more structure in and more control over their lives, possibly also increasing their confidence and self-esteem. Another example is organizing activities for elderly, which directly provides the elderly with a fun afternoon, but can indirectly lead to a decrease of loneliness, hence leading to better health et cetera (R6). As a last example, a research participant working at an enterprise in the food and agriculture sector describes that many organizations are now working on providing fair incomes to the farmers in their supply chain. A fair income has many spill-over effects, such as enabling the farmers to send their children to school, which has a positive effect on the long-term of these children's lives (R9). In all these examples it is clear that the direct effects will not necessarily stay in the long term, as these are dependent on the continuity of the enterprise, and thus are at risk to be only temporary. However, the spill-over effects often do create change on a long term.

A more thorough approach in creating long-term change through social entrepreneurship is working towards a systemic change, an approach that was not discussed in the literature review. In order to solve a social problem as a whole, often a change is needed in the current system of institutions and structures, for example by changing policy or regulation (R4; R6; R7; R8; R11; R13; R14; R14D2). Social entrepreneurship can thus be 'disruptive', not only focused on fulfilling demands in the current system, but also trying to change the current situation (R11, informant). Three main strategies can be distinguished to achieve this systemic change.

The first strategy is scaling the own enterprise, in order to expand the part of the system that starts working in another, new, way. For social entrepreneurship, scalability is often seen as an important topic (R1D1; R5; R8; R9; R12; R14; R14D2).

However, for social entrepreneurial initiatives, being able to scale up to an extent that a problem can really be solved is often difficult (R6; R8; R11). Hence, this leads to a second strategy to work towards systemic change: inspiring others, such as 'regular' entrepreneurs, to do the same (R4; R14; R15). *"A social entrepreneur can do the first, small and local, step, and then something bigger needs to be changed to really solve the whole problem"* (R6, research organization). A culture of change making needs to be created, by which others are inspired to 'do good' too (R14D2, network organization). For this to happen, according to an advisory report written for the government, social entrepreneurs should be willing to share their experiences so that other parties can learn from these solutions (R11D2). Then they can be role models, spreading their models to be adopted by other parties (R14D1, network organization). To work on a real change of the system, the biggest potential is when bigger parties use the insights or take over the solutions, because of the size of impact they can make (R8; R10; R11D2). This is relevant because *"doing good always makes sense, but it only starts to have real impact when everyone starts doing it"* (R9, food and agriculture enterprise).

A last strategy to work towards systemic change is agenda setting. In order for the system to be changed for example via policy or regulation, the problem in the current system should first be put on the agenda. Therefore, agenda setting is a popular strategy in social entrepreneurship. Some problems will not be recognized by citizens and politicians, until someone addresses this problem and shows there is potential to do something with it and to improve the situation. In this way, awareness is created to do something about things that have been unnoticed before (R4; R8; R17D1). Addressing such problems that exist in society and trying to create awareness around these problems makes it

possible to put these issues on the agenda (R11D2; R13). This is a way to really transform things, such as policy or regulation (R6; R14; R14D2).

Looking at these different strategies for working towards systemic change, one of the researchers states that the strategies often go hand in hand, as they can reinforce each other. For example, scaling up an initiative to various cities will create more visibility, which provides more possibilities for agenda setting strategies. Hence, in practice, these strategies are often combined (R6).

Involving beneficiaries

Concerning the procedural side of socialness, many scholars in the research field of social entrepreneurship have mentioned the importance of involving beneficiaries (Argyrou, 2018, p. 282; Defourny & Nyssens, 2013; Di Domenico, Haugh & Tracey, 2010, pp. 682-683; Huybrechts, Mertens & Rijpens, 2014, p. 158; Tan, Williams & Tan, 2005, p. 358). Beneficiaries are here defined as "those that are affected by the activity that is explicitly aimed at benefiting the community or disadvantaged groups of people" (Galera & Borzaga, 2009, p. 214). This importance is also illustrated by many of the research participants, who state that when helping people (beneficiaries) is the central aim of an enterprise, involving them is an important part of socialness (R1; R2; R4D3; R14, R17). This involvement is then usually characterized by a dialogue between the enterprises' employees and the beneficiaries, often referred to as co-creation (R1; R17). One of the social enterprises describes this as follows: *"we organize dialogue with people who have experienced the same as the people for whom we work, and investigate the needs, wishes and opportunities of, and together with the people for whom we work"* (R1D1).

According to the literature, the main reason that this aspect is important, is the subjectiveness of needs. What people need depends on personal and cultural values (Seelos & Mair, 2004) and involving the beneficiaries is thus necessary to know whether they are actually helped and also positively value this help (Robson, Begum & Locke, 2003). This importance of investigating what beneficiaries need is also mentioned by the research participants. One of the social entrepreneurs describes this as follows: *"we want to meet the needs of the people, so we need to stand next to them and investigate what their needs are"* (R1). According to her, this increases the chance that the right result will be achieved, as interventions that are only designed behind a desk often turn out not to work in practice (R1). Another social entrepreneur also states that some things you can only know when you talk to the people you're trying to help. Before starting their current enterprise, the founders came up with an idea for a product, which was not used by any of the local people: they already had their own ways of solving this problem, hence, there was no need for them to buy another product. The problem that the founders thought to be solving with their product, was not considered as a problem by their target group (R2). This is in line with the statements of Kissane and Gingerich (2004, p. 313) and Zietsma & Tuck (2012, p. 516) that the perspectives of organizations' members and beneficiaries can differ, for example due to Western norms and values being replicated in other contexts where they are not suitable. *"We just noticed that the people didn't need this, so we didn't go on with it"* (R2). Now, this enterprise talks to people on all levels to see what they need, and they always start a pilot when they enter a new area. Involving beneficiaries has become the core of their business: *"if they do not agree, they are not happy, and then we are not happy"* (R2). Next to this core necessity of getting to know the needs of the beneficiaries, involving the beneficiaries can also contribute in another way: it can bring up surprising ideas that the people in the organization didn't think of. One of the social entrepreneurs provides an example of this. One of her enterprise's projects is focused on stimulating

residents from a neighborhood to help other people in their neighborhood who live in poverty. In addition to the 'normal' activities from the project, the beneficiaries came up with the idea to facilitate a weekly moment where residents can meet and talk. This was not in the original plan of the project, but it adds positive effects for the beneficiaries, as this surprising idea perfectly fits their needs (R1). Although the majority of the research participants recognizes the importance of this aspect, a critical note is also mentioned. Beneficiaries should not <u>always</u> be involved in <u>every</u> decision; the main importance here is what is relevant, to them and to the enterprise, and also what is practical (R3; R6; R7; R8; R9; R10). For example, a social entrepreneur explained that asking the beneficiaries to take place in the advisory board would make them totally unhappy: they would have to sit in a meeting, wouldn't understand everything, and would also not be interested in large parts of it. Therefore, she decided to include someone who can talk on behalf of the beneficiaries (R3). Thus, what is relevant for the beneficiaries should be taken into account – *"they might not be interested in the strategic policy for the upcoming ten years, for example"* (R6, researcher) – but also the ability of the beneficiaries to articulate their needs is important: enterprises should be cautious with asking too much from their beneficiaries (R3, R8; R9).

There is also another side to this aspect of socialness. As has become clear before, not all social entrepreneurial initiatives work on helping a specific group of people; social entrepreneurial initiatives can also be focused on environmental challenges for example. The research participants for whom this is the case often refer to involving other stakeholders than beneficiaries in their organizational practices, such as employees, users or consumers, suppliers, or partners (R9; R10; R12; R12D1; R13; R15; R16; R17; R17D1). This shows that whom enterprises involve in their decisions depends on their concept (R4, network organization). An example of this is provided by an advisory report written for the government: when the focus of an initiative is on improving social cohesion in a neighborhood, it makes sense that people living there are asked for input, whereas a product-focused business-to-business concept does not work with specific beneficiaries that can be included, making 'the involvement of beneficiaries' impossible (R11D2). However, it becomes clear from the research participants that the involvement of these other stakeholders is mostly motivated by commercial instead of social reasons, for example to be able to achieve a change in the organization, or to develop a product that is most suitable to the market (R10; R12; R15; R17). Therefore, involving these other stakeholders is not perceived as an important aspect of socialness.

Integration of the societal mission

As a second aspect concerning the procedural side of socialness, the literature review brought up the integration of the societal mission of the enterprise. According to the literature, it is important that for being social, providing solutions to social problems is the primary, or at least a very prominent, mission of the enterprise (Back and Eddleston; 2018, p. 589; Dacin, Dacin & Matear, 2010, p. 42; Defourny and Nyssens, 2013, p. 46; Hervieux and Voltan, 2018, p. 280; Mair and Marti, 2006, p. 39; Peredo & McLean, 2005, p. 64; Santos, 2012, p. 335). Many research participants also referred to the 'societal mission being central to the enterprise' as an aspect of being social (R1; R3; R3D1; R3D2; R4; R4D2; R5; R8; R9; R12; R14; R15; R16; R17). As described by them, it should be the primary aim of the enterprise (R1; R3D1; R3D1; R4), and be the core of the company (R15; R16; R17).

According to the literature, this is seen as an aspect of socialness because it is a way to ensure that nothing goes at the cost of social value creation (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2017, p. 380). This

reasoning is similar to the reasons provided by the research participants. According to a research participant working at a food and facility service enterprise, 'doing good' as a side activity does not work well enough: then you are not able to really change something (R12). One of the social entrepreneurs adds that if you only do social things on the side, your core is still working like the old economy, it is not focused on making change (R3). Furthermore, having a social character central to the enterprise enables the enterprise to see taking responsibility as a normal thing, and to develop a holistic and integral policy (R12, R15, R17). For example, by only offering 'good' products to consumers, instead of giving them a choice between 'bad' (and often cheaper) and 'good' products, which is often the case in the provision of green energy, as explained by the research participant working in this sector (R15). Integration of the mission is also important because it will influence the way an enterprise makes choices. At a certain point, every enterprise will face the moment they have to make choices, that there are dilemmas. And then, having a societal mission as the core of your enterprise, will ensure that you make the right choices. This is because when doing good is a priority, the enterprise will always be critical on whether the activities are good for the world (R4; R5). Furthermore, having this societal mission central to the enterprise attracts a type of people with a drive for this mission. *"Then, the DNA is good. This is important because both employees and consumers will notice it if you're only faking it"* (R15, energy provider). A research participant from one of the network organizations refers to the changing economy that society is in right now, and that having a purpose central to an organization will in the future be a requirement for legitimacy: *"I think that all organizations need to start doing this to stay relevant in the future, in the long term"* (R8). However, also a critical note on this topic is mentioned by the informant: it might be difficult to assess to what extent an enterprise puts a societal mission at the core of the organization, in all its activities and decisions (R11).

Doing no harm

Another aspect of socialness, according to the literature, is that it is important to complete social change without causing another social problem. All possible side effects of an initiative need to be taken into account to be certain that the initiative actually has a social contribution (Zietsma & Tuck, 2012). According to the research participant from the consultancy organization, doing no harm can also be referred to as 'not creating negative societal costs' (R5; R5D1), which should be taken into account for both enterprises' core activities – such as CO_2 compensation when transport is an important part of the enterprises' activities – (R15; R16; R17) and enterprises' side activities – such as using sustainable materials for business cards (R1; R3; R17; R18).

Although people often think about environmental damage (R9; R12; R13; R17D1) – as was also argued in the literature review by Hall, Daneke & Lenox (2010) and Stenn (2016) – doing harm can also refer to social damage. An example of this is when the efforts of an enterprise that works on labor participation of a specific group of vulnerable youngsters leads to displacement on the labor market (R6, research organization). An important addition here made by a research participant working at a consultancy organization, is that an enterprise cannot compensate its negative effects by creating positive effects in another area: for example, when the enterprise's activities help in decreasing CO_2 emissions, but on the other hand, farmers in their value chain work under bad labor conditions, this is still a negative effect that cannot be compensated (R5). Therefore, for social entrepreneurship this aspect is also important, even though they already have a positive impact on society.

The importance of doing no harm as an aspect of socialness is recognized by all research participants. However, a critical note is also shared by all of them: this should not be a too strict criterion for being

social. In theory, you could say that an organization shouldn't have any negative effects, but in practice that is hardly possible, because you cannot prevent all negative effects from happening (R6, research organization). *"Yes, practice what you preach, and yes, do your best to do things as well as possible, but there also has to be a balance. Sometimes I think we're too strict. Should we really say 'you're not far enough, so you cannot call yourself social'? Should we really define this bar, and state that only if you reach that point you're perfect?"* (R8, network organization). Being too strict on enterprises could threaten the effectivity of their businesses and could therefore be a waste of positive impact (R6; R8; R13). *"I'd rather see some changes that are not perfect yet, than no change at all"* (R10, research organization). Hence, the main reason that the research participants think that 'do no harm' should not be a too strict criterion is that doing everything perfectly is sometimes not possible. One of the social entrepreneurs explains that sometimes this is a budgetary challenge, because for example, using sustainable paper is more expensive than 'normal' paper. *"So, when we can, we will do so, but sometimes it is difficult in terms of financials"* (R1). Furthermore, for some products, there is strict regulation on which types of materials can, and which types cannot be used. Therefore, sometimes there are barriers in choosing the best material from a sustainability point of view, because this material does not meet the legal requirements (R17, clothing production enterprise). Moreover, difficulties can also arise when the value chain of the enterprise is spread over several countries. Imposing strict rules on other countries, from a Western perspective, can be difficult because of cultural differences and difficulties in monitoring (R9, food and agriculture enterprise). Related to this, for example, flying to one of these other countries has a negative effect on the environment, although it can be essential in terms of improving transparency and sustainability in the value chain (R17, clothing production enterprise). Another difficulty that is present here is that also for initiatives the majority of people perceives as 'good', there is always a risk that other people experience harm from it. For example, windmills contribute to green energy, but people who have these windmills in their backyard might not be that enthusiastic. Hence, *"you can never keep everyone perfectly happy, you also have to run a business"* (R15, energy provider). Lastly, when organizations realize that something they do has negative effects, they might consider to stop doing it. However, stopping with certain activities can also have negative effects in itself: for example, because people are working in this division who then have no jobs any more. So just leaving behind parts of the organization that have negative effects is also not an easy solution for doing no harm; the effects of stopping have to be taken into account as well before making such a decision (R15; R17).

So, the research participants agree on the fact that doing no harm is not a strict criterion, however they still state that it is a very important aspect of socialness. So how should this be coped with, to be social? Several examples of how to do this are presented by the research participants.
Firstly, it is important for enterprises to be aware of the effects they create. You have to know about your effects and be conscious about it, and be able to explain your choices (R4; R6; R10). *"At this moment, there is no value chain in the world in which there is no harm. So, it is very important to recognize this, and to have a plan to improve it"* (R5, consultancy organization).
Secondly, enterprises should look at their priorities (R2; R3; R8; R10; R12; R13). *"You cannot work on all 17 SDGs at the same time; you have to prioritize and then hope you don't put other sustainability challenges in danger"* (R10, research organization). An example is provided by one of the social entrepreneurs, whose enterprise once in a while creates a magazine to spread the message of the enterprise. He would prefer doing this online instead of on paper, but he knows that the target group will not read an online magazine. And having them reading it is essential to spread the message; that is the priority (R13). Furthermore, another social entrepreneur argues that they always look what is

the best solution for their beneficiaries. As their beneficiaries don't have much money to spend, offering the products at a low price is best for them, however, that could sometimes mean that the product has to be transported from a place that is further away, thus less sustainable. *"At this point, our priority is the best solution for the beneficiary"* (R2). A third social entrepreneur also mentions this: they try to do as much as they can to be sustainable, however, being very strict on their beneficiaries by for example asking them to not bring plastic packaging in their lunch boxes might be a bit too much, as this is not the priority of the enterprise. *"But we do try to create awareness"* (R3).

Thirdly, the alternatives should be taken into account. *"If something is not perfect, you have to look at what would have been the alternative. Is that better or worse than the 'not perfect' solution?"* (R15, energy provider). The research participants argue that if the not perfect solution is indeed still better than the alternatives, providing this solution that is not 100% perfect, it is not immediately a major problem (R7; R8; R12).

Fourthly, when having negative effects, enterprises should look at the size of these effects (R2; R5; R7; R11; R12). If the negative effect is not too big, it is okay not to focus on it too much (R2; R5). The size of the effect should be compared to the value you create for society: when the societal or environmental costs of your activity are higher than the profit you bring to society, this is not a good thing (R11, informant).

Fifth and lastly, many research participants state that this process is often also a matter of time (R7; R9; R8; R17; R18). *"Imagine some things are not perfect at the starting point. Then we should not say 'well, we'll stop doing this activity or producing this product'; no, we should just work on that and try to look how we can improve things"* (R17, clothing production enterprise). Things can be improved over time, people and organizations take small steps, become more and more aware, and make their choices in an increasingly conscious manner (R8, network organization). Not everything can be perfect from the beginning, but it is important to always keep on looking for new and better ways (R9; R17; R18). For example, sometimes, being not too strict on these things enables the enterprise to grow or to professionalize, which at a later stage provides possibilities to improve the concept because then you have more resources to work on this (R7; R8). In that way, the effects of the enterprise can change over time.

Transparency about effects

As a final aspect of socialness, the literature review described that an enterprise can only be called 'social' when it proves to achieve its 'social' aims (Hummels, 2018). Enterprises should not only explain their aims, but should also show whether they are actually achieving these, by being transparent about effects and results in solving societal problems (Ebrahim & Rangan, as cited in Hummels, 2018, p. 38; Galera and Borzaga, 2009, p. 222; Griezo, Michelini & Gasevoli, 2014, p. 1174). This transparency about enterprises' effects is illustrated by the research participants (R3; R4; R5; R8; R9; R10; R12; R15; R16). *"You should prove that you contribute something to society"* (R3, social enterprise), that you contribute something to a societal issue, that you really help people (R4, network organization). Most importantly, you should show that you really contribute to <u>solving</u> a social problem (R4; R8; R14; R14D2).

This transparency and openness are found to be important because of the complexity of the social dimension of social entrepreneurship (Nicholls & Cho, 2006, p. 116). Assessing the results of social entrepreneurship is not as straightforward as it is for 'traditional' entrepreneurship, which makes transparency a necessity for being held accountable by external stakeholders (Arena, 2015, p. 652). The importance of being held accountable is recognized by the research participants: *"if you state that*

you act in the interest of society, society has the right to know about this, and to ask critical questions about it" (R4, network organization). One of the social entrepreneurs mentions that if you claim to be social, you should be able to show that you indeed do things in a way that is good for society. *"If what you do is good, you have nothing to hide, right? Then you can just be transparent"* (R3). Being transparent is thus a way to create trust and legitimacy in society (R4D3; R10). A research participant from a food and agriculture enterprise adds to this that in the current society, people will not believe that enterprises are really 'doing good' only because they say they do. Therefore, you need to show it (R9). Also, the demand for this proof is increasing because citizens have become more critical and more autonomous, and they have to make choices between various options (R5; R10; R15).

As a further illustration of this aspect of socialness, the research participants make more concrete how this could be achieved in practice. Being transparent about the effects of your activities concerns showing what difference you make; what else happens in society now compared to when the initiative wouldn't have been there (R5; R15). One of the social entrepreneurs explains what is often meant by 'showing that your enterprise makes a difference'. For example, if an initiative focuses on employing couriers by bike, they can replace courier services executed by car, which makes a clear difference in CO_2 emissions. However, if in the future courier services would not be done by cars any more, and this bike courier service only competes with other bike courier services, then this enterprise does not make a difference anymore in reducing CO_2 emissions (R16). Taking this one step further, an enterprise can prove this by measuring the impact and assessing whether the initiative does indeed create the effects it was meant to create (R12, foodservice organization). However, related to this, a critical note is posed by some of the research respondents. They state that some effects are difficult to measure in a quantitative way, and for some effects, it is difficult to prove whether they are directly caused by the activities of the enterprise, or rather by external factors (R1; R3; R6).

In addition to this, one of the research participants from a network organization argues that enterprises should not only be transparent about their effects, but about as much as possible: who is behind the organization, who are stakeholders, what do you achieve, how do you do this, and what do the financials look like (R4). The main importance here is that an enterprise is transparent about decisions that are made (R4; R5; R9; R12). As became clear in the paragraph about doing no harm, a lot of choices that are made are compromises and might not be perfect. Therefore, for enterprises, it is important to be transparent about the fact that they are aware of these imperfections, that the decisions are made in a conscious manner, and that they are also aware of what still needs to be done. This can be a way to avoid heavy criticisms which are unjustified (R4; R9; R10; R12).

5.2.3 Resume: answering sub question 3

In this paragraph, the empirical data were used to illustrate what the findings from the literature review look like in practice. Putting together the insights from this paragraph, the third sub question can be answered: *how do people that have to do with social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands understand socialness in practice?*

The findings from the empirical research illustrated that socialness can in its core indeed be understood as solving a societal problem, either focusing on vulnerable people, or the vulnerable planet as a subject. Most research participants referred to the former, which can possibly be explained by the Dutch translation of the word social entrepreneurship (sociaal ondernemerschap), which is often understood as being focused on helping people (see paragraph 5.1.2). In addition, the other

aspects from the literature review were recognized as relevant for defining socialness, although some critical notes were put forward. For basic needs and capabilities, difficulties arise in defining what this exactly is and when an enterprise contributes to it, and also socialness is not limited to this: helping people to go beyond their basic needs and capabilities can also be social. Long-term change is perceived important, however also a situation in which this is aimed for but not achieved might have positive effects on society. Involving beneficiaries is important when the enterprise works with a group of beneficiaries, but it should be carefully organized, taking into account what is relevant and practical for both the beneficiaries and the enterprise. The integration of the societal mission is important to ensure socialness in all organizational facets and ensure this over time, however measuring this can be difficult. The aspect of doing no harm is important, but should not be a too strict requirement: doing everything perfect is not possible, and this can be solved by making conscious choices based on, for example, the enterprises priorities, the size of the effects and a comparison with alternatives. Lastly, enterprises should be transparent about all this and their effects, to prove that they also achieve social results, mostly because of accountability and legitimacy in society.

Thus, the empirical additions stemming from this chapter nuance the view on to what extent all aspects of socialness should be implemented in practice. Hence, this gives the 'ideal' overview of socialness that was presented in the literature review a more practical character. However, this research still does not draw a strict line on when something is social and when something is not: this overview of what socialness entails is based on the findings in this research, and can thus function as a basis for people for developing their own perspective on this theme.

5.3 Explaining differences

Paragraph 5.2 described how the research participants define socialness in practice. However, the explanations also showed that for each aspect, a variety of opinions exists on what the aspect means and to what extent it is relevant for being social. In this paragraph, the aim is to find patterns in these opinions that can explain the differences between the research participants, thereby answering sub question 4: *how can the differences between the meanings of socialness used in practice be explained?* In this way, a better understanding of why certain people attach a certain meaning to socialness is created.

5.3.1 Possible explanations for differences

What did the theory say?

In chapter 2 of this research, the question was answered which theoretical perspective can explain how people give meaning to concepts. By using theory on sense-making, it became clear that sense-making is an external, interpretative and mostly interactive process. What was found to be an important influential factor in this process, is the organization a person works in, as this is a context for interactions in which new meanings are developed (Weick, 1979, p. 13): "people cannot totally rise above institutional perspectives from the organization to which they owe primary loyalty" (Mills, 1978, p. 402). Hence, the expectation based on theory is that the meanings people attach to socialness are influenced by the organization they work in. In the case of the research participants, whose work is to some extent all related to social entrepreneurship, socialness is a concept they have to deal with in

their working context or working life. Therefore, it would make sense to expect that their work – the organization they work in – is at least one of the important places for them to be thinking and talking about this concept of socialness, hence developing their meaning of the concept. Because of this expectation, the sample of this research consisted of people working in different types of organizations related to social entrepreneurship. Therefore, this paragraph will investigate whether the type of organization can indeed be used as an explaining factor of differences between the meanings of socialness found in the data.

What do the respondents say?

In order to find patterns to explain differences between people, the research participants were asked to reflect on how they have developed their personally used meaning of socialness. Where does it come from, what were factors that influenced this meaning? Two main factors are mentioned by the research participants to be influencing their personally used meanings of socialness.

Firstly, almost all research participants feel like their perspective on socialness is mainly influenced by their personal values (R1; R2; R3; R4; R5; R6; R8; R9; R10; R12; R13; R14; R15; R17; R18). They experience a clear internal motivation to work on socialness the way they do. In the interviews, these personal values are sometimes related to youth, family, study background, or working history. However, as these personal values are very individual and thus influencing each research participant in a very different way, using this to find patterns in the data will be difficult.

Secondly, another factor that is mentioned by a majority of the research participants (R3; R4; R5; R8; R9; R10; R12; R14; R15; R18) is the organization they work in. According to the research participants, the type of organization can put you, as a person, in a certain role in society, which can influence the way you look at things. For example, one of the social entrepreneurs feels like having this role motivates her to tell the world about what social entrepreneurship is and what it actually entails in practice, sometimes even in an almost activist way (R3). One of the researchers explains that because the role of science in society is to always provide new, more, and better information to inform people, formulating value judgements about phenomena is not part of the work, but presenting facts and explanations behind these facts is (R10). Both roles, that are determined by the organizations these research participants work in, can influence the way a person looks at phenomena. Furthermore, often, missions and perspectives are formulated within their organizations by interaction between the different people. This could either be in a formal way, for example in meetings from the board or founders, or in a more informal way, for example in conversations between employees during lunch. Via these processes in the organization, people's opinions are consciously or unconsciously influenced by opinions from others, according to the research participants (R8; R12). Lastly, the atmosphere and drive within organizations is also stated to be influencing research participants' perspectives. A certain type of organization attracts a certain type of people who share this vision, which leads to organizations in which people share the same ideals and ambitions, which in turn also influences these people's perspectives (R4; R5; R9; R15; R18).

5.3.2 Explanations visible in practice

In the previous paragraph it became clear that the organization the research participants work in could be a factor influencing their perspectives, and could therefore possibly be an explanation for possible

differences between research participants. However, the fact that the research participants mention this as a relevant factor does not ensure that a pattern will also be found in practice. Therefore, this paragraphs investigates the question whether this factor can indeed be used to explain the differences visible in practice.

When looking at the research participants' perspectives on what socialness entails – both its core and the additional aspects – in general, they often agree about what is relevant for socialness. However, two main differences can be distinguished.

Firstly, there is a difference visible in opinions about the aspect 'basic needs and capabilities'. According to a part of the research participants (R1; R2; R3; R10), it is relevant to focus on this, but another opinion is that this is not always necessary (R3; R4; R8; R10; R18). Moreover, most of the other research participants could not really relate to this aspect and mainly referred to the difficulty of understanding what exactly are basic needs and capabilities. What becomes clear here, is that a focus on basic needs and capabilities is mainly perceived relevant by research participants from enterprises whose central aim is solving a social problem related to a group of (vulnerable) people, their beneficiaries, and perceived as less relevant, or not clearly understood, by other research participants. Secondly, there is a difference in the research participants' opinions about the aspect 'involving beneficiaries'. A part of the research participants recognized the importance of involving beneficiaries in their practices and decisions (R1, R2, R3, R6, R7, R8, R14, R17), and a part referred to other possible stakeholders to involve (R2, R4, R12, R13, R15, R16, R17). What is visible here, is that for a part of the enterprises involving beneficiaries is not even possible, because they do not work with a specific group of beneficiaries. This explains that they refer to other stakeholders to involve when being asked about this topic.

Thus, in general, these two main differences are explained by the core focus of these enterprises: whether or not they aim to help a group of people (beneficiaries). This is a difference between enterprises who focus on a social problem related to a group of people (R1, R2, R3), and other enterprises, who mainly focus on social problems regarding sustainability – hence having the planet in general as a vulnerable subject (R9, R12, R13, R15, R16, R18). Within this second group of enterprises, sometimes it is the case that they do have a group of vulnerable people as employees, but because helping these people is not the main focus of their enterprise (e.g. because their core aim is producing a sustainable product), consciously working on fulfilling basic needs or improving basic capabilities is usually also not their focus.

Next to this general pattern that became clear in the data gathered from the enterprises (both the 'social enterprises' and 'bigger enterprises', see paragraph 3.2.3), one other pattern is visible concerning the meanings attached to socialness. Whereas the research participants often have clear opinions about the different topics related to socialness, the two academic researchers (R6 and R10) have a nuanced perspective on all of the topics: they almost never make a clear value judgement, and they often refer to different sides of the story. This pattern can be explained because this nuance is a well-known characteristic of researchers; they attempt to oversee the field in general and are often less focused on pleading for one story, but are more eager to understand phenomena in various ways and from different perspectives. For last group of research participants, people working in support organizations, no clear pattern was found concerning their perspectives on socialness.

5.3.3 Resume: answering sub question 4

Taking together the insights from this paragraph, the fourth and last sub question of this research – *how can the differences between the meanings of socialness used in practice be explained?* – can be answered. An overview of the data shows that the differences between the meanings of socialness used by the research participants can to some extent be explained by the type of organization they work in. However, by the 'type of organization' here is not meant whether it is a social enterprise, a bigger enterprise showing social developments, a support organization, or a research organization (the categorization made in the research design, see paragraph 3.2.3), but more specifically whether it is an enterprise focusing on social problems related to people or an enterprise focusing on social problems related to the planet. Thus, this finding confirms the statement made in the literature review that this typology of socialness – people versus planet – does indeed have effects on which aspects are and are not relevant for being social. Thus, the relation between the typology and the other aspects that was drawn in the literature review is illustrated by insights from practice.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to work towards a better understanding of socialness of enterprises in the Netherlands. The insights provided in the previous chapters allowed for answering the four sub questions central to this research. In this chapter, these insights are combined to answer the main research question: 'How can the socialness of enterprises in the Netherlands be understood?'.

6.1 Overview of the findings

Looking back at all chapters of this research, the research consisted of two main components.

Firstly, investigating the content of socialness: what does it mean when an enterprise is social? This was studied through a literature review and empirical research, and came forward in sub question 2 and 3. Based on the literature review, it was concluded that socialness consists of a core focus that could be divided into two types, and additional aspects. These findings were illustrated and sometimes refined or nuanced by the insights from the empirical research. Hence, the conclusion here was that the core of socialness consists of solving a social problem either related to people (type 1) or to the planet in general (type 2), and that the additional aspects – focusing on basic needs and capabilities, creating long term change, involving beneficiaries, integrating the societal mission, doing no harm, and being transparent about effects – complete what socialness entails, however the relevance and necessity of these aspects depends on whether the enterprise or initiative in its core belongs to type 1 or type 2.

Secondly, the other component central to this research was looking at the differences between perspectives of the research participants, because the complexity and heterogeneity of socialness causes people to attach different meanings to the concept. This was studied in the theoretical framework and the empirical research, and was described in sub question 1 and 4. Concerning this topic, the expectation based on theory was that people from different types of organizations would attach different meanings to socialness. Therefore, people from different types of organizations were involved in the empirical research. Analyzing patterns in the empirical data indeed showed that general differences are present between the perspectives of people working in different types of organizations. The most important finding here was that there is a difference between people working in enterprises that focus on helping people (beneficiaries) and other enterprises, that mostly focus on sustainability issues. Hence, this finding can be related to the conclusion from the first research component described above: what socialness entails according to people depends on the core focus of the enterprise they are working in – whether this is focused on people or on the planet. Thus, the components of the research strengthen each other, and it can be concluded that understanding what socialness entails cannot be done without making clear what type of core focus the enterprise has.

6.2 Towards a typology of socialness

Thus, this research has found that there are two types of socialness that both consist of two layers: a core focus and additional aspects. Figure 4 (see below) presents this in a visual way.
Both types of socialness can be understood as a state of being that at its core focuses on solving a social problem. It is difficult to define what a social problem is, but this can be done by assessing if it is

a situation that is recognized, perceived, and addressed as problematic by more people in society; most importantly, the people close to it. By further specifying what these social problems can be about, a distinction can be made between two types of socialness.

The first type of socialness focuses on solving a social problem related to a group of (vulnerable) people. This should be a group of people that is in need for help, although they should not necessarily be the most vulnerable people; it is also important that they can really be helped by the social initiative. Moreover, these people should not be referred to by the stigmatizing term 'vulnerable', but rather terms like inclusiveness, cohesion and diversity should be used. Moreover, for being social, enterprises with this core focus should take into account two other aspects. Firstly, for them, being social also entails assessing whether the people's basic needs are fulfilled and basic capabilities are developed to a certain level. If not, this could be a goal of the enterprise, which is often most relevant for initiatives that take place in developing countries. Whether it matters if the enterprise directly or indirectly contributes to these basic needs and capabilities is up for discussion. If these basic needs and capabilities already meet a certain level, a social initiative can also be aimed at helping people beyond the basics; for example, to help developing skills that make them stand out. Furthermore, a critical note linked to this aspect is that it might be difficult to define what exactly basic needs are in a certain context. Related to this, a second aspect to take into account is the importance of involving the beneficiaries. This is necessary to know what exactly it is they need, and thus whether what the enterprise does is actually relevant according to the beneficiaries; whether they are actually helped. However, this involvement should be executed in a way that is relevant and practical for both the beneficiaries and the enterprise.

The second type of socialness focuses on solving a societal problem related to the planet as the vulnerable subject. This is because social problems do not always have to do with people in a direct sense: for example, in our current society problems like global warming, overexploitation of natural resources, and plastic soup are more urgent than ever before. Therefore, it is not necessary that an enterprise directly helps people; it can also focus on a social problem related to the planet. Indirectly and in the long term, such initiatives or enterprises can also improve the situation for people, but in their core they focus on helping the planet. This research has not found additional aspects that are specifically and exclusively related to this type of socialness.

For both types of socialness, some general aspects are important to aim for or include in the procedures, in order to be called social. The first is aiming to create a change in the long term, which can be done, for example, by tackling the root cause of the problem, by empowerment of people, or by contributing to a systemic change through putting the problem on the agenda. The second is integrating the societal mission in the core of the enterprise, so that being social is ensured to be taken to account in all decisions and will stay over time. The third is aiming to do no harm in society, or at least as little harm as possible, and make conscious choices about this for example based on the enterprises' priorities, the sizes of effects and a comparison with alternatives. The fourth and last aspect is being transparent about the enterprises practices and effects, to show that the enterprise actually contributes to solving the problem that was aimed to be solved, in order to create trust and legitimacy in society.

One important addition to this meaning of socialness is that this is not to be understood as a complete and exclusive definition: rather, it presents the way socialness can be understood based on the data collected in this research. The model thus provides a basis to understand the concept of socialness and allows different people or parties to develop their own perspectives based on this, by selecting which components or aspects they deem relevant or important.

TYPE 1   TYPE 2

Core focus

Societal problem related to people

Societal problem related to the planet

Additional aspects

Focusing on basic needs & capabilities
- Note: if a certain level is achieved, socialness can also entail going beyond the basics; e.g. helping people to develop skills that make them stand out

Involving beneficiaries
- Note: involvement should be implemented in a way that it is relevant and practical for both the beneficiaries and the enterprise

Long-term change
- Note: this might not always be achieved due to external factors, but it should at least be aimed for, e.g. by tackling the root cause of a problem, empowering people, or contributing to systemic change

Integration of the mission
- Note: the extent to which this integration is present might be difficult to measure

Doing no harm
- Note: it is not possible to prevent all negative effects from happening, so at least an enterprise should be aware of its effects and make conscious choices based on e.g. priorities and the sizes of effects

Transparency about effects
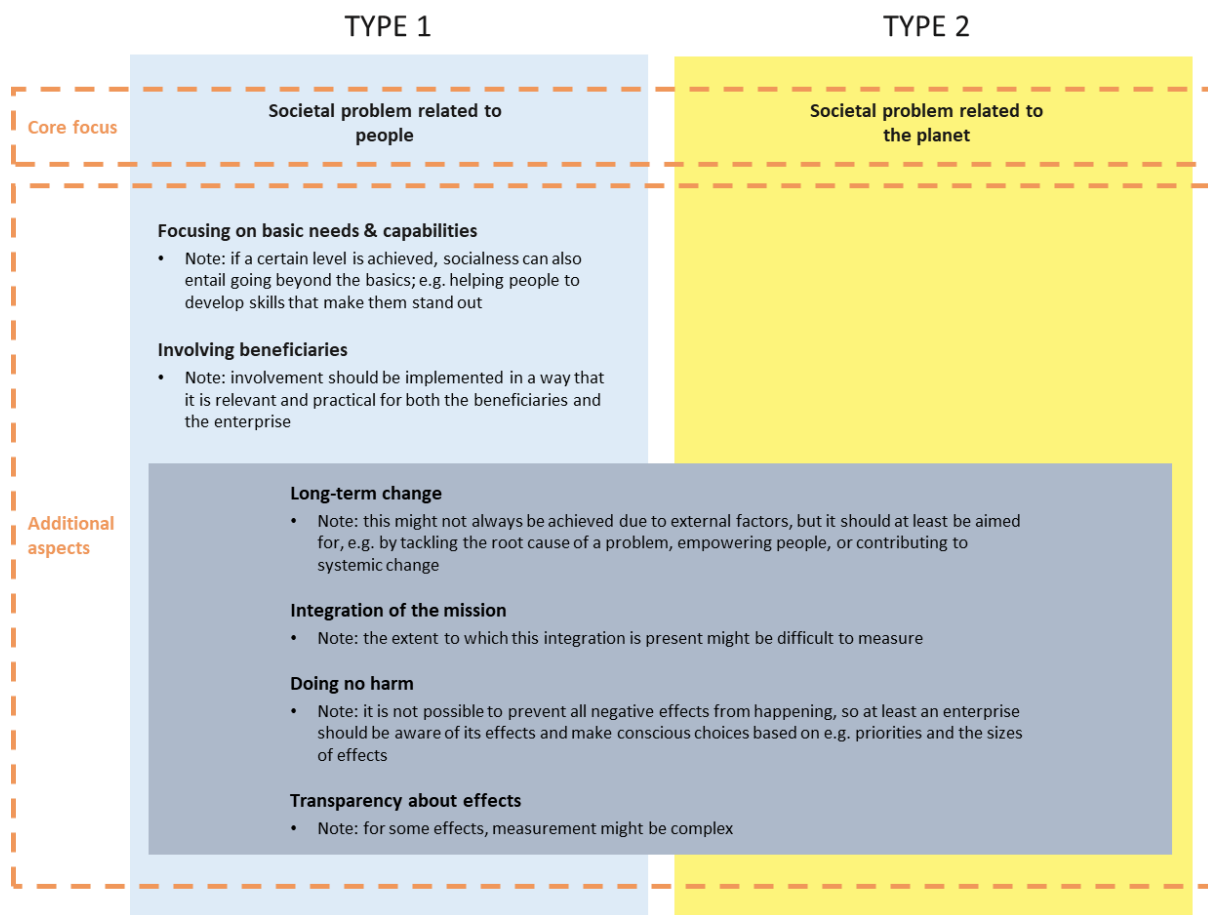- Note: for some effects, measurement might be complex

Figure 4 – A typology of socialness

To answer the question central to this research, this research has developed a new typology of the socialness concept as a way to understand what being social for enterprises in the Netherlands entails. What is important here, is that the distinction between a focus on 'people' and 'planet' has not been made before in this way, including showing that it also has implications for what we should understand as 'being social'. For example, the discussion paper of Hummels (2018) argued that socialness and social entrepreneurship should be looked at from a needs perspective, putting the beneficiaries central to solutions by involving them and analyzing their needs on an individual level. This individual level perspective is comparable to the first type of socialness presented in this research, that focuses on people and their basic needs and emphasizes the importance of involving them in processes. However, this research has shown that another type of socialness is present in the field, which focuses on social problems on a more societal instead of individual level, regarding planetary issues. This perspective is an addition to the research field, and an important one, because it is shown to have implications for what is needed to be called social. This new typology can thus be used to better understand socialness, and to structure the field of social entrepreneurship.

7. Discussion

As a final chapter, this discussion looks back on the research. The chapter starts with a reflection on the implications of this research for the broader scientific and societal context. Hereafter, a critical reflection on the limitations of the research is presented. Lastly, based on both the implications and the limitations of the study, suggestions for future research are described.

7.1 Implications of the research

As stated in the introduction, this research aimed to contribute to both the scientific and the societal debate. When looking at the findings, it can be concluded that the research has implications for both fields.

7.1.1 Scientific implications

Firstly, this research has an implication for the way that concepts like socialness can be studied in the research field. Until now, most attempts made in the research field to define social entrepreneurship or socialness consist of relatively general statements. However, this research demonstrates the usefulness of working with a distinction between several individual aspects, which allows for more specific and concrete conclusions about what a complex concept, such as socialness, entails. Hence, this research shows that socialness does not have to be defined in one general sentence: rather, diving deeper into specific aspects of socialness can contribute to our understanding more than the development of more general definitions does. Moreover, developing a meaning of socialness which consists of different aspects leaves room for different perspectives on the theme; even when people do not agree with all aspects, the rest of the model can still be useful to them.

Secondly, as socialness is an integral part of the concept 'social entrepreneurship', the findings of this research can be used in the research field concerned with defining social entrepreneurship as a whole. As this research field is characterized by many inspiring examples and anecdotes coming from case studies of specific social entrepreneurial initiatives (Swedberg, 2006, p. 21), this more conceptual meaning of socialness could be used as an underlying basis when studying these initiatives in the future. For example, the typology presented here showed that several practices or aims are more or less important to take into account for one initiative than for another, hence showing what are relevant aspects to study in a certain case. Moreover, the typology also shows that for the two types of initiatives, different levels of analysis could be most suitable to assess what is needed and when the aim is achieved (as shown by the example of the SDGs in paragraph 4.2.3). For example, to study initiatives focused on helping disadvantaged people, it might be relevant to analyze what are needs and successful results on an individual level, whereas an initiative focused on plastic-free waters might be more suitable to analyze on a societal level.

7.1.2 Practical implications

In the Netherlands, a societal debate is going on about social entrepreneurship, especially in the political field. The current national government has not yet developed a clear vision on social entrepreneurship and possible policies in this field; based on the coalition agreement, suitable

regulation and more possibilities will be created for social enterprises (Keijzer, 2019), however this is still a developing process and thus social enterprises are now not yet treated differently than other enterprises. Currently, the debate is still about what exactly is social entrepreneurship and how the government should cope with this phenomenon. This research has two main implications for these societal and political debates about social entrepreneurship.

Firstly, this research shows some specific characteristics of social entrepreneurship that clearly distinguishes social entrepreneurship from 'traditional' entrepreneurship. By making more explicit what social entrepreneurship aims to achieve, their contribution to society can be better compared to that of other enterprises, which are often also stated to contribute to society (for example by creating jobs). Hence, the findings from this research demonstrate that social entrepreneurship is indeed a different concept working on a different mission, implying that the uniqueness of social entrepreneurship, and its possibilities for solving societal issues, should not be underestimated.

Secondly, next to this broader perspective on the demarcation of social entrepreneurship, the specific findings can be used as a basis for developing definitions of social entrepreneurship in the future. For example, when it is necessary for policy to set certain requirements to social entrepreneurship, the aspects distinguished in this research can provide a basis for this. Moreover, the distinction between two types of socialness can also be of use here: this shows that only making one list of requirements for all initiatives might not work in practice, hence demanding for a more elaborate definition including different requirements for different types of social entrepreneurial initiatives. An example of an area in which this could be used is the area of government procurement. Government organizations aim to stimulate social developments among the organizations applying for their tenders, currently usually by using the principle of social return: organizations that apply for a tender are then required to employ people from outside the existing workforce, to increase labor participation (Pianoo, 2014). However, this is a rather narrow perspective, as this research has shown that there are more ways to contribute to society than only by working on labor participation. Hence, when using the findings from this research as a basis to develop a different set of requirements, this would enable the government to make a bigger and broader societal impact via their procurement policies.

7.2 Reflection on limitations

Although the findings of this research have interesting implications for the scientific and the societal debate, it is also important to critically reflect on the limitations of this research. Two main topics are discussed here: the sample size and the point of saturation.

7.2.1 Sample size

As described in the research design, the sample of this research consisted of eighteen research participants. Although suitable for the explorative character of this research, this relatively small sample caused challenges for identifying clear patterns in the data. On the one hand, the conscious composition of the sample made it possible to indeed identify one clear pattern: the fact that research participants working in different types of enterprises (either helping a group of people or focusing on environmental issues) attach different meanings to what socialness entails. On the other hand, a bigger sample could maybe have made it possible to identify additional patterns, based on other characteristics of the research participants, as the current sample was not suitable for that. This means

that there might be other factors that can explain similarities and differences between people's meanings of socialness, but they have not become visible in this research due to the sample composition and size.

7.2.2 Data saturation

Furthermore, in the process of data collection in qualitative research, researchers often aim to reach 'data saturation': the point when no new information or themes are observed in the data (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006, p. 59). Because this research is about how individuals give meaning to the socialness concept, these meanings are collected on an individual level. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve data saturation, as new information could possibly be brought up by each new research participant that would be added to the sample. To cope with this limitation, two choices were made: firstly, the insights from the literature review have a major role in drawing a conclusion in this research, and secondly, the research explicitly reflected on the fact that the conclusions drawn are not complete or exclusionary: including other individuals' perspectives on this theme could possibly add new insights to it.

7.3 Future research

Based on this research, some suggestions can be made for future research to further develop the meaning of social entrepreneurship in the Netherlands. This could be done in three steps.

7.3.1 Further testing with a bigger sample

Firstly, this research had an explorative character, providing interesting first insights on the meaning of socialness. Hence, future research could be aimed at further developing this knowledge, by testing these aspects among a bigger sample in the Netherlands. In this way, the types and additional aspects of socialness could be further developed and possibly complemented, hence adding to our general understanding of how socialness can be understood in the Netherlands. For this future research, a qualitative approach has the biggest potential, as this research has shown the importance of interpretation and language in this topic. Maybe in a later stage, when the knowledge about socialness has developed further, a quantitative approach could be useful to test these findings on the meaning of socialness on a significantly bigger scale.

7.3.2 Including the entrepreneurial dimension of social entrepreneurship

Secondly, as mentioned before, the concept of socialness is only one dimension of social entrepreneurship. In addition, the entrepreneurial dimension is also important in order to be able to define social entrepreneurship as a whole. Future research could therefore study the implications of this meaning of socialness for the entrepreneurial dimension of social entrepreneurship. For example, does this typology of socialness have implications for the business models used by different social entrepreneurial initiatives? Or for example, when an enterprise explicitly chooses to focus on achieving the aspect 'doing no harm', what does that mean for its organizational structure and financials? Combining these insights on both the social and the entrepreneurial dimension could lead to a clearer conceptualization of the whole concept of social entrepreneurship.

7.3.3 Operationalizing the meaning of socialness

As a final step, in order for this conceptualization of social entrepreneurship to be directly used in practice, future research could work towards an operationalization of the different aspects central to socialness (and possibly of the entrepreneurial dimension as well). Further developing these aspects into specific (possibly measurable) items to assess their presence in practice could contribute to this conceptualization being used in the future, for example in policies regarding social entrepreneurship or the organizational strategies of social entrepreneurial initiatives.

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Appendix I – Protocol informed consent

This protocol is used to explain important aspects of the research to the research participants before the start of the interview. After explaining the different topics, each research participant is asked for his or her permission. This is a verbal agreement between the researcher and the research participant. N.B. because the interviews will be conducted in Dutch, the protocol is written in Dutch too.

Doel: dit onderzoek wordt gedaan in het kader van een masterscriptie in de master 'Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science' aan de Universiteit Utrecht. Het doel van het onderzoek is begrijpen van wat het begrip 'social' in 'social entrepreneurship' inhoudt. Dit concept kan voor verschillende personen verschillende betekenissen hebben, en in dit onderzoek wordt dan ook gezocht naar overeenkomsten en verschillen tussen opvattingen van personen, wat ruimte geeft voor de gelaagdheid en heterogeniteit van het concept.

Opname: het interview zal worden opgenomen en later worden getranscribeerd. Het interviewtranscript dat hier het resultaat van is zal worden gebruikt voor de analyses in het verdere onderzoek.

Privacy: de data en persoonlijke gegevens worden geanonimiseerd opgeslagen en geanonimiseerd verwerkt in het uiteindelijke onderzoeksrapport. Hierin zullen zich dus geen tot concrete personen herleidbare gegevens bevinden.

Dataopslag: de opgeslagen geanonimiseerde data en persoonlijke gegevens zijn alleen toegankelijk door de begeleiders van het onderzoek, wanneer nodig. Maximaal een jaar na opslag wordt de data verwijderd.

Deelname: deelname aan dit onderzoek is vrijwillig, en terugtrekken is dan ook te allen tijde mogelijk.

Appendix II – Coding tree

General
- Social entrepreneurship general
- Social entrepreneurs
- Improvements social entrepreneurship
- Profit
- Impact measurement general
- Importance of doing good
- Conditions socialness
- NGOs
- CSR

Socialness
- General
    - Language
    - Strict or broad definition
    - Unclarity
    - Social versus environmental
    - Different opinions in the field
- Substantive aspects
    - Social problems
        - What is a social problem
        - Solution
        - Societal needs
    - Vulnerable subject
    - Basic needs and capabilities
    - Long term change
        - Empowerment
        - Spill-over effects
        - Continuity of the organization
        - Scaling
        - Inspiring others
        - Agenda setting
        - Systemic change
- Procedural aspects
    - Involve beneficiaries
        - Necessity/relevance
        - How
    - Do no harm
        - Core activities
        - Side activities
    - Integration of the mission
    - Visible effects/impact
    - Transparency
    - Societal value creation

Organization
- Type of organization
- Emergence
- Activities
- Vision and mission

Person
- General
    o Function
    o Study background
    o Work history
    o Job motivation
- Socialness perspective
    o Function
    o Study background
    o Work history
    o Personal drive/interests/norms/values
    o Personality
    o Youth/family
    o Experience
    o Type of organization
    o Influence from the own organization
    o Influence from the field of social entrepreneurship

Appendix III – Two pager for research participants

This Dutch summary presents an overview of the research for the research participants, which is focused on elements that are most relevant for them to read.

Doel van het onderzoek

Social entrepreneurship – in dit onderzoek gedefinieerd als zowel de handelingen van sociale ondernemingen als van grotere ondernemingen die sociale ontwikkelingen laten zien – is sinds een aantal jaar enorm in opkomst in Nederland. Ondanks dat er veel aandacht voor is en onderzoek naar gedaan wordt, is er nog geen duidelijke definitie van wat social entrepreneurship precies inhoudt. Met name één specifiek element is hierin structureel over het hoofd gezien: de sociale dimensie van social entrepreneurship: wanneer kan een onderneming 'social' worden genoemd? Om bij te dragen aan zowel het wetenschappelijke als het maatschappelijke veld, was het doel van dit onderzoek om toe te werken naar een beter begrip van het concept socialness. De onderzoeksvraag die centraal stond in dit onderzoek was *'How can the socialness of enterprises in the Netherlands be understood?'*.
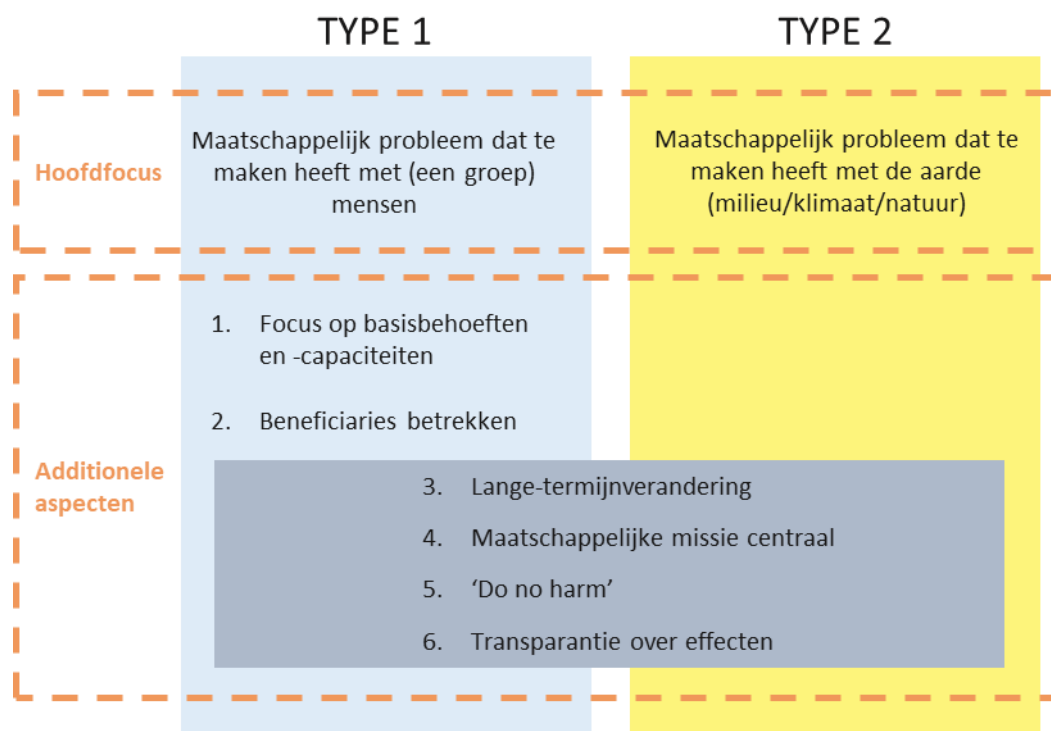
Twee componenten waren van belang om deze vraag te beantwoorden. Allereerst, de inhoud van het begrip socialness: wat betekent het wanneer een onderneming 'social' is? Ten tweede, het feit dat socialness een complex en heterogeen concept is, waardoor mensen verschillende meningen hebben over wat socialness betekent. Dit onderzoek geeft daarom ruimte aan verschillende perspectieven op het concept en bestudeert ook hoe deze perspectieven verklaard kunnen worden. Op basis van 'sense-making theory' was de verwachting dat het type organisatie waarin mensen werken invloed heeft op hoe zij betekenis geven aan concepten. Het type organisatie zou dan ook een mogelijke verklarende factor kunnen zijn voor de verschillende betekenissen die mensen geven aan socialness.

Methoden

De eerste methode was een literatuurreview, waarin op systematische wijze acht aspecten van socialness zijn opgesteld. Deze bevindingen zijn vervolgens onderzocht in de praktijk, om zo de aspecten van socialness verder te illustreren en/of nuanceren. Hiervoor zijn interviews afgenomen met achttien respondenten uit verschillende typen organisaties: sociale ondernemingen, grotere ondernemingen die niet automatisch sociaal worden genoemd maar wel sociale ontwikkelingen laten zien, organisaties die sociaal ondernemerschap in Nederland ondersteunen en stimuleren middels het bieden van netwerk en advies, en academische onderzoeksorganisaties die onderzoek doen naar sociaal ondernemerschap. Van de organisaties van deze respondenten zijn tot slot ook relevante documenten geanalyseerd op inzichten over socialness.

Bevindingen

Op basis van de twee componenten die hierboven beschreven zijn heeft dit onderzoek resultaten opgeleverd over enerzijds de betekenis van socialness, en anderzijds over het verklaren van de verschillende perspectieven hierop. Het samenvoegen van deze bevindingen laat zien dat deze elkaar bevestigen. Daarmee resulteert dit onderzoek in een typologie van socialness: initiatieven in het veld van sociaal ondernemerschap kunnen vallen onder type 1 of type 2, wat vervolgens bepaalt wat socialness voor hen betekent: met welke aspecten zij wel of niet rekening moeten houden om 'social' te zijn. Hoewel dit onderzoek niet stelt dat deze bevindingen compleet of uitsluitend zijn, biedt deze typologie wel een goede basis voor het begrijpen en indelen van het veld van sociaal ondernemerschap in de toekomst. Op de volgende pagina zijn de resultaten gepresenteerd.

	TYPE 1	TYPE 2
Hoofdfocus	Maatschappelijk probleem dat te maken heeft met (een groep) mensen	Maatschappelijk probleem dat te maken heeft met de aarde (milieu/klimaat/natuur)
Additionele aspecten	1. Focus op basisbehoeften en -capaciteiten 2. Beneficiaries betrekken 3. Lange-termijnverandering 4. Maatschappelijke missie centraal 5. 'Do no harm' 6. Transparantie over effecten	

1 Focus op basisbehoeften en –capaciteiten

- **Wat?** Kijken naar de situatie van de doelgroep: zijn basisbehoeften vervuld en basiscapaciteiten ontwikkeld tot op een bepaald niveau? Zo niet, dan is het relevant om hier aan te werken.
- **Waarom?** Wanneer mensen in een situatie leven waarin niet wordt voldaan aan basisbehoeften en basiscapaciteiten, is het moeilijk om verder te kijken en andere dingen te bereiken.
- **Let op:** socialness houdt niet op wanneer een bepaald niveau van basisbehoeften en –capaciteiten bereikt is: het kan ook gaan over het helpen van de doelgroep om verder te komen dan dat, bijvoorbeeld door vaardigheden te ontwikkelen die hen boven de basis uit laten steken.

2 Beneficiaries betrekken

- **Wat?** Het betrekken van de 'beneficiaries' (de specifieke doelgroep die geholpen wordt) in bepalen wat ze precies nodig hebben en wanneer het initiatief voor hen succesvol is.
- **Waarom?** Omdat behoeften subjectief zijn, kan de onderneming niet precies weten wat de beneficiaries nodig hebben en dus wat er moet gebeuren om hen daadwerkelijk te helpen; hiervoor is het belangrijk om hen te betrekken.
- **Let op:** dit betrekken van beneficiaries moet wel gebeuren op een manier die relevant en realistisch is voor de beneficiaries en de onderneming, bijvoorbeeld door te focussen op bepaalde onderwerpen waarvoor dit specifiek van belang is.

3 Lange-termijnverandering

- **Wat?** Zorgen dat de effecten van de onderneming op de lange termijn blijven en niet wegvallen. Dit hoeft niet altijd af te hangen van het voortbestaan van de onderneming, maar kan ook bereikt worden door bijvoorbeeld de hoofdoorzaak van een probleem aan te pakken, te werken aan empowerment, of bij te dragen aan een systeemverandering in de maatschappij (bijv. door het probleem op de politieke agenda te krijgen)
- **Waarom?** Als de effecten van een onderneming op een gegeven moment <u>volledig</u> verdwijnen is de maatschappij weer terug in de oude situatie, en is er dus niets structureel verbeterd.
- **Let op:** Lange-termijnverandering zal soms in de praktijk niet bereikt worden door externe factoren, maar het is van belang dat hier altijd naar gestreefd wordt en er een strategie voor is.

4 Maatschappelijke missie centraal

- **Wat?** Het bereiken van de maatschappelijke missie – het oplossen van een bepaald maatschappelijk probleem – centraal stellen in de activiteiten van de onderneming
- **Waarom?** Om te zorgen dat de 'socialness' van de onderneming altijd gewaarborgd blijft in alle activiteiten en keuzes die gemaakt worden
- **Let op:** het kan lastig zijn om te 'meten' in hoeverre hieraan wordt voldaan.

5 'Do no harm'

- **Wat?** Zorgen dat de onderneming geen negatieve effecten heeft op de maatschappij, zowel op het klimaat en de natuur als op de mens.
- **Waarom?** Het oplossen van een maatschappelijk probleem heeft minder waarde als daardoor vervolgens een ander maatschappelijk probleem veroorzaakt of vergroot wordt.
- **Let op:** in de praktijk is het niet mogelijk om geen enkel negatief effect te hebben. Daarom is het van belang dat de onderneming zich hier bewust van is en keuzes maakt die ze kan verantwoorden, bijvoorbeeld op basis van de prioriteiten van de onderneming, de grootte van de effecten, of het vergelijken met alternatieve producten of diensten.

6 Transparantie over effecten

- **Wat?** Het in kaart brengen van de impact van de onderneming en hierover transparant zijn naar de omgeving.
- **Waarom?** Om te bewijzen dat de onderneming inderdaad de positieve impact maakt die ze voor ogen had, bijvoorbeeld door daadwerkelijk bij te dragen aan de oplossing van een maatschappelijk probleem. Dit is met name belangrijk voor de legitimiteit van de onderneming.
- **Let op:** In sommige gevallen is het moeilijk om effecten te meten, of om precies te weten in hoeverre effecten veroorzaakt zijn door de onderneming.