
Social Entrepreneurship: (The Challenge for) Women as Economic Actors?

The Role and Position of Women in Dutch Social Enterprises

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8.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion concerning an empirical study and its gender-related results with respect to the role and position of women in Dutch social enterprises. The objective of the chapter is to discuss to what extent Dutch social enterprises are catalysts to promote the role and position of women in their organisational structure and functioning. As several social enterprises pursue as their societal goal the improvement of the position of women in society, or certain groups of (marginalised) women, this chapter analyses – on the basis of the empirical results – whether the role and position of women in Dutch social enterprises may indicate a change to sustainable organisational practices with positive outcomes for women in organisations, but also for women’s lives in society.

In the study, we collected the data by means of a survey that was filled out by 66 social enterprises. The study was performed in collaboration with PwC Netherlands (PwC NL) and the Dutch network organisation for social enterprises, Social Enterprise NL. We analysed the empirical data in view of the goal of this chapter and will discuss them in light of scholarly theory on entrepreneurship and governance with respect to the following research questions: (1) Do the examined social enterprises in the Netherlands facilitate the role and position of women as compared to men in the structure and functioning of the organisation?¹ (2) To what

¹ Although it is not usual to use closed-ended questions in academic literature, we formulated question (1) as a close-ended question because it is tested in the empirical part of the

extent do the results of the examined social enterprises suggest not only a change in the role and position of women in organisations, but also an improvement of women's lives in the Netherlands?

The chapter is structured as follows: Section 8.2 defines 'social enterprises' for the purpose of this chapter. The same section also discusses the manner in which social enterprises in the Netherlands may contribute to sustainable outcomes in organisations and in society. Section 8.3 elaborates on the relationship of gender and social enterprise to empower women's position and role in organisations. Section 8.4 discusses how female-driven social enterprises may be actors of change in women's lives in society. Section 8.5 begins with presenting the methodology of the survey and then the gender-related results. The section goes on to discuss the gender-related results in light of the extant literature discussed in Sections 8.3 and 8.4 and in response to the research questions. Conclusions are drawn in Section 8.6.

8.2 Social Enterprises in the Netherlands and their Contribution to Sustainability

A great number of EU countries have introduced the concept of social enterprises in their national legislation. By means of tailor-made legal forms and/or conducive legislation, social enterprises are promoted as economic agents which contribute to 'sustainable growth' and development.² According to the European Commission's definition, a social enterprise is:

research and because an open-ended question would provide results too broad to commence a meaningful discussion.

² A. Argyrou and T. Lambooy, 'An introduction to tailor-made legislation for social enterprises in Europe: A comparison of legal regimes in Belgium, Greece and the UK', (2017) 12 *International and Comparative Corporate Law Journal*, 3, pp. 47–107; T. E. Lambooy and A. Argyrou, 'Improving the legal environment for social entrepreneurship' (2014) 11 *European Company Law*, 2, 71–76; A. Argyrou, T. Lambooy, R. J. Blomme and H. Kievit, 'Unravelling the participation of stakeholders in the governance models of social enterprises in Greece' (2017) 17 *Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society*, 4, 661–677; A. Argyrou, T. Lambooy, R. J. Blomme, H. Kievit, G. Kruseman and D. H. Siccamo, 'An empirical investigation of supportive legal frameworks for social enterprises in Belgium: A cross-sectoral comparison of case studies for social enterprises from the social housing, finance and energy sector perspective', in V. Mauerhofer (ed.), *Legal Aspects of Sustainable Development: Horizontal and Sectorial Policy Issues* (Vienna: Springer International Publishing, 2016). European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Social*

an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involve[s] employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities.³

Social enterprises according to the Commission's definition are hybrid market organisations pursuing primarily social but also other types of sustainable objectives (i.e., environmental) while demonstrating participatory, transparent and socially responsible attributes in their structure and practice. Although the notion of sustainability is not reflected in the Commission's definition, scholarly literature establishes a direct link between sustainability and social enterprises' objectives.⁴ Social enterprises are organisations driven by entrepreneurs who 'find new and efficient ways to create products, services or structures that either directly cater to social needs or that enable others to cater to social needs that must be satisfied in order to achieve sustainable development'.⁵ However, social enterprises address the essence of sustainability in a way that does not refer only to the social dimension of sustainability but includes also the 'inextricable interrelatedness of the environmental, social, and economic facets of sustainability'.⁶ They provide solutions for societal problems and needs with a focus in their goal and mission on 'environmental,

Business Initiative: Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation (Social Business Initiative Communication), COM (2011) 682 final, p. 2. 'Sustainable growth' has been embedded in the EU strategy and policy goals for 2020, see http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/priorities/sustainable-growth/index_en.htm.

³ Social Business Initiative Communication, pp. 2–3.

⁴ A. Picciotti, 'Towards sustainability: The innovation paths of social enterprise' (2017) 88 *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, 2, 233–256 at 235. A. Rahdari, S. Sepasi and M. Moradi, 'Achieving sustainability through Schumpeterian social entrepreneurship: The role of social enterprises' (2016) 137 *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 347–360 at 352; Argyrou et al., 'An empirical investigation of supportive legal frameworks for social enterprises in Belgium', pp. 181–182.

⁵ Picciotti, 'Towards sustainability', p. 235. Picciotti citing C. Seelos and J. Mair, 'Social Entrepreneurship: The contribution of individual entrepreneurs to sustainable development' IESE Working Paper No. 553 (2004), p. 8. See also the distinction of the two types of social entrepreneurs in Ch. 9.

⁶ B. Sjäffell and B. J. Richardson, 'The future of company law and sustainability', in B. Sjäffell and B. J. Richardson, *Company Law and Sustainability: Legal Barriers and Opportunities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 313.

social and economic sustainability'.⁷ Picciotti notes that 'due to the emergence of new needs, such as environmental protection, the creation of new jobs for young people and the regeneration of social ties in local communities, projects and activities aimed at sustainable development are being considered with increasing frequency, and taking on the role of innovation strategies for the social enterprise'.⁸ Goyal and Sergi argue that sustainability is an important factor for social enterprises, because the way social enterprises behave is determined by their social goal, 'the need for sustainability and the prevailing environmental dynamics'.⁹

There are also scholars with diverging opinions on this topic. Hall et al. argue that social entrepreneurship differs from sustainable entrepreneurship, as according to these authors sustainable entrepreneurs focus more on the natural environment aspect, whereas social entrepreneurs mainly target a social issue.¹⁰ They state that on the basis of literature it appears that solving social problems drives both social and sustainable entrepreneurs; however, the sustainable entrepreneur would focus more on environmental problems, which may not be a priority for the social entrepreneur.¹¹ There could be an overlap between sustainable and social entrepreneurship, as 'the issue of sustainability is however, in the macro sense, a social issue as it impacts societal level concerns'.¹² This is confirmed by Kury, who argues that 'environmental problems are social problems as the impact that the choices made regarding sustainability have far reaching implications for society'.¹³

Additionally, social enterprises may be said to be organisations demonstrating participatory, transparent and socially responsible practices in managing the interests and the demands of multiple stakeholders to which they are accountable.¹⁴ In the literature, it is noticed that social

⁷ Picciotti, 'Towards sustainability', p. 234. ⁸ Ibid.

⁹ S. Goyal and B. S. Sergi, 'Social entrepreneurship and sustainability – Understanding the context and key characteristics' (2015) 4 *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*, 3, 269–278 at 270.

¹⁰ J. K. Hall, G. A. Daneke and M. J. Lenox, 'Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship: Past Contributions and Future Directions' (2010) 25 *Journal of Business Venturing* 5, 439–448; Also citing Hall et al. is K. W. Kury, 'Sustainability meets social entrepreneurship: A path to social change through institutional entrepreneurship' (2012) 4 *International Journal of Business Insights and Transformation*, 3, 64–71 at 64.

¹¹ Kury, 'Sustainability meets social entrepreneurship', p. 66. ¹² Ibid, p. 64.

¹³ Ibid, p. 66.

¹⁴ B. Doherty, H. Haugh and F. Lyon, 'Social enterprises as hybrid organizations: A review and research agenda' (2014) 16 *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 4, 417–436 at 422 and 426. Argyrou et al., 'Unravelling the participation of stakeholders in the

entrepreneurs carefully select their legal and organisational structures in order to effectively realise their social and other sustainable objectives while maintaining accountability to various stakeholder groups.¹⁵ The development of stakeholder participatory governance structures by social enterprises, and their adherence to socially responsible reporting obligations facilitate accountability to stakeholders. Additionally, it stimulates the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making processes and internalisation of social and environmental externalities.¹⁶

Although in the scholarly discussion in the Netherlands much weight is placed on the definition of social enterprises as well as on the development of legal and organisational forms to accommodate social enterprises, the Netherlands is still among the few EU countries which has not yet developed a uniform definition nor a tailor-made legal form for social enterprises in its national legal system.¹⁷ The Dutch Social and Economic Council (SER), upon request of the Dutch Government, identified the development of social enterprise organisations emerging in the Netherlands.¹⁸ The SER accumulated particular characteristics of the Dutch social enterprises which can be used to describe these organisations operating in the Netherlands. According to this, a Dutch social enterprise: (1) is primarily an enterprise (as opposed to non-entrepreneurial actors); (2) prioritises the pursuit of its social objectives as opposed to the pursuit of financial objectives; (3) is independent from the government in terms of financing by employing an income-generating business model without relying on public grants, gifts and subsidies; (4) pursues

governance of social enterprises', p. 665; Argyrou et al., 'Supportive legal frameworks for social enterprises in Belgium', pp. 154–156. For the purpose of this chapter, the term 'stakeholder' comprises broadly any individual, group or system which affects or is affected by the social and entrepreneurial activity of the social enterprise, e.g., employees, volunteers, users, clients, beneficiaries, local community groups, social investors and/or society at large.

¹⁵ Doherty et al., 'Social enterprises as hybrid organizations'. ¹⁶ Ibid. See also Ch. 9.

¹⁷ European Commission, 'A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe: Synthesis Report' (Publications Office of the European Union, 2015), see <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2149>; See also www.seforis.eu. A. Argyrou, P. A. Anthoni and T. Lambooy, 'Legal forms for social enterprises in the Dutch legal framework: An empirical analysis of social entrepreneurs' attitudes on the needs of social enterprises in the Netherlands' (2017) 12 *International and Comparative Corporate Law Journal*, 3, pp. 1–46.

¹⁸ The Dutch Social and Economic Council (SER), 'Summary of Council advisory report on social enterprises' (2015), see www.ser.nl/~media/files/internet/talen/engels/2015/2015-social-enterprises.ashx.

mainstream market activities which are independent from government policies.¹⁹ In this way, the SER formulated the most common characteristics of Dutch social enterprises instead of formulating a uniform definition.

Contrary to the normative and political levels, in which the social enterprise concept is still underdeveloped in the Netherlands, in mainstream social entrepreneurial practice, the term 'social enterprise', in a converging way, is understood to comprise the cumulative elements introduced by the Commission's uniform definition concerning the social enterprise.²⁰ The Commission's definition of the social enterprise has been adopted by the largest platform organisation for social enterprises in the Netherlands, Social Enterprise NL,²¹ as well as by professional organisations assisting the business development of social enterprises in the Netherlands.²² The cumulative criteria for the social enterprise presented in the Commission's definition differ from the thin description of the Dutch social enterprise provided by the SER. As such, the Commission's definition regarding the social enterprise is the one adopted by the authors in the context of this chapter.

Additionally, in contrast to other European legal systems which offer a tailor-made legal form and framework particularly suited to social enterprises, social entrepreneurs in the Netherlands have to choose between various available legal forms provided in the Dutch legal system in order to initiate and incorporate their business activities. They can select to employ the partnership structure (VOF, *vennootschap onder firma*), the private limited liability company (BV, *besloten vennootschap*), the limited liability public company (NV, *naamloze vennootschap*), the cooperative (*coöperatie*), the foundation (*stichting*) or the association (*vereniging*), or

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 1–2.

²⁰ Social Business Initiative Communication 2011, p. 2. See also concerning the Social Business Initiative at the European Commission, social entrepreneurship at http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/social_business/index_en.htm.

²¹ Social Enterprise NL, see www.social-enterprise.nl/english.

²² PwC NL, 'What is a social enterprise', see www.pwc.nl/en/onze-organisatie/social-impact-lab/what-is-a-social-enterprise.html; EY, 'Social entrepreneurship: Emerging business opportunities creating value for society' (Amsterdam, 2014) at 3, see [www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-social-entrepreneurship/\\$FILE/EY-social-entrepreneurship.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-social-entrepreneurship/$FILE/EY-social-entrepreneurship.pdf); McKinsey & Company, 'Scaling the impact of the social enterprise sector' (Amsterdam, 2016) at 5, see www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/scaling-the-impact-of-the-social-enterprise-sector.

combine any two of these. For example, various Dutch social enterprises use a combination of the BV and the foundation.²³

The lack of a tailor-made legal form and of a uniform definition has resulted in less visibility for social enterprises in the Netherlands. For years, Dutch social enterprises were to a great extent untraced, and they could not be recognised as such. Currently, membership organisations, platforms and networks (e.g., Social Enterprise NL) provide more visibility. Furthermore, less visibility has led to difficulty in acquiring accurate and credible statistical data concerning the types and the number of active Dutch social enterprises. Several attempts were made by scholarly academics and business professionals to categorise types and identify the number of social enterprises in the Netherlands. For instance, the Social Entrepreneurship GEM study in 2009 showed the existence of a variety of social enterprises in the Netherlands, such as ‘hybrid social enterprises’, ‘NGO organisations’, and ‘socially committed regular enterprise’.²⁴ McKinsey reported in 2011 and subsequently in 2016 the size of the ‘social enterprise sector’, elaborating on data retrieved by the Dutch Chamber of Commerce.²⁵ According to these McKinsey reports, the Netherlands had approximately 4,000–5,000 social enterprises in 2011 and 5,000–6,000 in 2016. However, two completely different definitions were employed concerning the social enterprises in the two McKinsey reports, such that the results might not be considered reliable.

In 2015, the Commission published the findings of a large mapping study that examined the ecosystems (i.e., the network of legal frameworks, social impact investment markets, impact measurement and reporting systems, network and support organisations, business development services and support, certification systems and labels) of social enterprises in Europe.²⁶ A country report on the Netherlands provided

²³ Argyrou et al., ‘Legal forms for social enterprises in the Dutch legal framework’, p. 18; Argyrou and Lambooy, ‘An introduction to tailor-made legislation for social enterprises in Europe’, p. 48.

²⁴ S. Terjesen, J. Lepoutre, R. Justo and N. Bosma, ‘Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM): 2009 Report on social entrepreneurship’ (2012) at 19, see www.gemconsortium.org/report/48437.

²⁵ Mckinsey & Company, ‘Opportunities for the Dutch social enterprise sector’ (Amsterdam, November 2011) at 10–13, see <https://www.social-enterprise.nl/files/6714/4181/6376/Opportunities.pdf> and <https://www.social-enterprise.nl/files/9314/7809/5072/Scaling-the-impact-of-the-social-enterprise-sector.pdf> Mckinsey & Company, ‘Scaling the impact of the social enterprise sector’, p. 5.

²⁶ European Commission, ‘A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe: Synthesis Report’ (Publications Office of the European Union, 2015), see <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2149>.

relevant information regarding the ecosystem of Dutch social enterprises, their spectrum and the legal forms that social enterprises in the Netherlands use.²⁷ The study also provided a numeric overview which illustrated an estimated number of the Dutch social enterprises which might fulfil the uniform criteria of the definition for social enterprises provided by the Commission in 2011.²⁸ According to this report, up to 7,000 organisations belong to the social enterprises sector in the Netherlands.

Finally, the most recent development is a synthesis of a multi-stakeholder group comprising social entrepreneurs, consultants, experts and academics in 2016 under the initiative of Social Enterprise NL. The goal was to elaborate on a proposal for a Dutch *Code Sociale Ondernemen* (i.e., to develop a text of a Code of Conduct for Dutch social enterprises).²⁹ The final text, published in June 2017, introduces the concept that social enterprises which adhere to this code can be registered in a to-be-formed Social Enterprise Register with the purpose of being more easily identifiable as a social enterprise for stakeholders.³⁰

8.3 Social Enterprises as Agents of Change to Empower Women's Position in Organisations

Several studies indicate that worldwide, but also in the Western world, there are notably fewer women than men involved in entrepreneurship.³¹

²⁷ European Commission, 'A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe: Country Report: the Netherlands' (Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), see <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?pager.offset=10&&langId=en&mode=advancedSubmit&advSearchKey=socentcntryrepts>.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 21.

²⁹ Social Enterprises NL, *Commissie Code Sociale Ondernemen*, see www.social-enterprise.nl/actueel/nieuws/commissie-code-sociale-ondernemen-is-van-start-699.

³⁰ Ibid. The Code Sociale Ondernemen, see www.social-enterprise.nl/actueel/code-sociale-ondernemen/reageren-op-de-code-als-geheel-738.

³¹ Minniti examined in her study 34 countries from the five continents including: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States. M. Minniti, 'Female entrepreneurship and economic activity' (2010) 22 *European Journal of Development Research*, 3, 294–312 at 295 and 299–300; See Minniti at 295 citing the studies of Y. Georgellis, and H. Wall, 'Gender differences in self-employment' (2005) 19 *International Review of Applied Economics*, 3, 321–342 and G. Kim, 'The analysis of self-employment levels over the life-cycle' (2007) 47 *Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance*, 3, 397–410.

The lower participation and involvement of women in entrepreneurship may be attributed to the existence of gender stereotypes and perceptions which influence not only the willingness of women to start an enterprise (i.e., their entrepreneurial intentions), but also their employment or operational position in enterprises.³² Scholarship claims that gender stereotypes may have shaped labour and entrepreneurship on the basis of the dominant gender characteristics of men.³³ These stereotypes may have influenced widely held perceptions concerning the qualities and the roles that women and men could bring into a job.³⁴ Additionally, there are societies, even in the Western world, which – regardless of women having daily full-time employment or being involved in entrepreneurial attempts – due to patriarchal attitudes still assign to women the main role of carer of the family.³⁵ In these societies, women’s responsibility to take care of the household, raise children and care for elderly or dependent relatives is a determinant of their choices regarding their profession and ability to start an enterprise.³⁶

However, although entrepreneurship has been predominantly viewed as an economic activity in which the low participation of women is noticed, this concept is being challenged primarily by upcoming social enterprise business ventures and also most fundamentally by the theory of entrepreneurship as a social change activity with positive outcomes.³⁷ Calás et al. reframe ‘for-profit entrepreneurship’ to ‘entrepreneurship as part of society and fundamentally a process of social change – which can be understood without attention to economic and managerial logic’.³⁸

³² V. K. Gupta, D. B. Turban, S. Arzu Wasti and A. Sikdar, ‘The role of gender stereotypes in perceptions of entrepreneurs and intentions to become an entrepreneur’ (2009) 33 *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 2, 397–417 at 409.

³³ Ibid, p. 398. See Ch. 11. ³⁴ Ibid Ch. 11.

³⁵ For instance, in Greece, see A. Argyrou and S. Charitakis, ‘Gender equality in employment utilizing female social entrepreneurship in Greece’ (2017) 12 *International and Comparative Corporate Law Journal*, 2, 36–60.

³⁶ C. Christopher Baughn, B. L. Chua and K. E. Neupert, ‘The Normative context for women’s participation in entrepreneurship: A multicountry study’ 30 *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 5, 687–708 at 689–690. See Ch. 11.

³⁷ M. B. Calás, L. Smircich and K. A. Bourne, ‘Extending the boundaries: Reframing “entrepreneurship as social change” through Feminist Perspectives’ (2009) 34 *Academy of Management Review*, 3, 552–569. K. D. Hughes, J. E. Jennings, C. Brush, S. Carter and F. Welter, ‘Extending women’s entrepreneurship research in new directions’ (2012) 36 *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 3, 429–442.

³⁸ Calás et al., ‘Extending the boundaries’, p. 553; D. M. Hechavarría, A. Ingram, R. Justo and S. Terjesen, ‘Are women more likely to pursue social and environmental entrepreneurship?’ in K. D. Hughes and J. E. Jennings (eds.), *Global Women’s Entrepreneurship*

Additionally, feminist theories would contribute to reframing entrepreneurship as social change. As Calás et al. mention, 'all feminist theorizing is about social change. It is premised on the assumption that gender is fundamental in the structuring of society, with women being historically disadvantaged, and it seeks to end this condition. Feminist theorizing critically analyses social change agendas on these terms'.³⁹

Entrepreneurship may contribute to the social change pointed out by Calás et al. if more equal opportunities are created for women in entrepreneurial organisations. In this vein, barriers that impede women from becoming an entrepreneur should be removed, and instead, opportunities for women should be implemented, such as the possibility of flexible working hours and better work-life balance. Other opportunities could be provided in the form of 'equal access to resources and/or enhancing human and social capital', meaning that if more women are engaged in entrepreneurial activities, this social change may happen.⁴⁰

The extant literature describes that entrepreneurship in general is, amongst other things, about opportunities and recognising these opportunities. According to De Bruin et al., self-perceptions influence the way in which opportunities are recognised.⁴¹ Due to stereotyped, gender-role-influenced self-perceptions in the current societal environment, women often become blind to business opportunities. As a result, women may feel that they do not have the right knowledge and opportunities to set up, lead or manage their own business. Therefore, they may not choose to either initiate or evolve an entrepreneurial career path.⁴² However, these self-perceptions are also influenced by how society thinks about female entrepreneurs. If society does not support female entrepreneurs, this may influence their number negatively. Consequently, if society and societal values regarding gender roles and capacities support female

Research (Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012), pp. 135–151 at 135.

³⁹ Calás et al., 'Extending the boundaries', p. 554.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 555. See also Gupta et al., 'The Role of gender stereotypes in perceptions of entrepreneurs', p. 398.

⁴¹ A. de Bruin, C. G. Brush and F. Welter, 'Advancing a framework for coherent research on women's entrepreneurship' (2007) 31 *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 3, 323–339 at 330.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 330; M. D. Griffiths, L. K. Gundry and J. R. Kickul, 'The socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants of social entrepreneurship activity: An empirical examination' (2013) 30 *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 2, 341–357 at 350.

entrepreneurs, their number is likely to increase,⁴³ as women will perceive opportunities differently.⁴⁴

Social enterprises could bring about a social change with respect to the roles and capacities of women as female entrepreneurs but also in their lives in society. This is confirmed by Lyon and Humbert, who claim that social enterprises, in particular, are more egalitarian organisations and could therefore contribute to eliminating inequality in the workforce for women.⁴⁵ This could be done in terms of creating opportunities for employment, opportunities for education, opportunities for leadership, and convenient work settings to facilitate a better work-life balance for women in social enterprises. For instance, social entrepreneurship could bring women's issues into prominence, such as child care, women's health or violence against women, as well as opportunities for their re-entry to the labour force or building up their skills.⁴⁶

However, this chapter does not suggest that social enterprises are suitable for women just because they 'align their interests with the roles that have been attributed to them culturally, closely linked to altruism, care and protection of disadvantaged groups',⁴⁷ as this stance might perpetuate stereotypically established perceptions concerning the role and position of women. On the contrary, we suggest that social enterprises, with their sustainable objectives and responsible and participatory character, may strategically be used by women to change their position in organisations and their lives in society in general, and through that to contribute to a necessary societal change.

Griffiths et al. observe in an empirical study the social change which was mentioned by Calás et al.: 'as more women enter and participate in the workforce [of social enterprises], they may have greater access to

⁴³ Griffiths et al., 'The socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants of social entrepreneurship activity', p. 350.

⁴⁴ De Bruin, 'Advancing a framework for coherent research on women's entrepreneurship', p. 331.

⁴⁵ F. Lyon and A. Humbert, 'Gender balance in the governance of social enterprises' (2013) Third Sector Research Centre, Working Paper 107, pp. 1–18 at 14. See also Argyrou and Charitakis, 'Gender equality in employment utilizing female social entrepreneurship in Greece', pp. 56–59.

⁴⁶ A. L. Humbert, 'Women as social entrepreneurs' (2012) Third Sector Research Centre, Working Paper 72, pp. 1–14 at 8; Argyrou and Charitakis, 'Gender equality in employment utilizing female social entrepreneurship in Greece', pp. 56–59.

⁴⁷ C. Nicolás and A. Rubio, 'Social enterprise: Gender gap and economic development' (2016) 25 *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*, 2, 56–62 at 56. See the criticism regarding this type of gendered construction of values in Chs. 11 and 12.

funding resources and support networks and training that may, in the future, determine their entrepreneurial behaviour (either social or commercial).⁴⁸ Other empirical findings indicate a better representation of women on the boards of social enterprises as opposed to commercial enterprises.⁴⁹ As such, female social entrepreneurs may also be able to challenge the stereotypical hierarchical patterns predominantly viewed in mainstream organisations and to generate this type of ‘more egalitarian’ organisation.⁵⁰ Lyon and Humbert’s study provides an insight into the gender balance in the governance of social enterprises. These scholars found that women are particularly active on boards of social enterprises operating in specific sectors, particularly those sectors in which women are stereotypically working, such as youth and childcare, health and social care, arts, culture and sports and education.⁵¹

Other scholars note in that respect that the features of social entrepreneurship may ‘align ideologically’ with women’s ‘feminine’ characteristics, such as with ‘altruism’, ‘caring’ and ‘relational values’ influencing their intention to start an enterprise. On the contrary, commercial entrepreneurship would be historically linked to the dominant male ideology.⁵² Bruni et al. assert main features of commercial entrepreneurship which are assigned to leaders, such as ‘initiative-taking’, ‘accomplishment’ and ‘risk-taking’ and which stereotypically reside ‘in the symbolic domain of the male’, but when assigned to women ‘they become uncertain’.⁵³ In the empirical study conducted by Hechavarría and Ingram, men were found to be more interested in entrepreneurial opportunities related to commercial business than social business.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Griffiths et al., ‘The socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants of social entrepreneurship activity’, p. 351.

⁴⁹ Lyon and Humbert, ‘Gender balance in the governance of social enterprises’, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Calás et al., ‘Extending the boundaries’, p. 557. See also the need for structural reforms in the corporate sector in Ch. 11.

⁵¹ Lyon and Humbert, ‘Gender balance in the governance of social enterprises’, pp. 8–9.

⁵² D. M. Hechavarría and A. E. Ingram, ‘The entrepreneurial gender divide: Hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity and organizational forms’ (2016) 8 *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 3, 242–281 at 247–248. D. Urbano, E. Ferri and M. Noguera, ‘Female social entrepreneurship and socio-cultural context: An international analysis’ (2014) 2 *Revista de studio sempre sariales. Segunda Época*, 2, 26–40 at 35. See the criticism regarding this type of gendered construction of values in Chs. 11 and 12.

⁵³ A. Bruni, S. Gherardi and B. Poggio, ‘Doing gender, Doing entrepreneurship: An ethnographic account of intertwined practices gender’ (2004) 11 *Work and Organization*, 4, 406–429 at 408–409.

⁵⁴ Hechavarría and Ingram, ‘The entrepreneurial gender divide’, p. 250.

8.4 Female Social Enterprises as Actors of Change for Women's Lives in Society

Calás et al. point out that it is not easy to bring about the social change in a world where men are still dominating all the structures of society.⁵⁵ In literature, however, a direct link is established between social entrepreneurship and social change towards 'social wealth'.⁵⁶ One of the key elements of the social enterprise is that it creates social value – intrinsically tied to its mission – for its various stakeholders and beneficiaries and for society at large (as a beneficiary of the social purpose that the social enterprise pursues) rather than creating financial value for the business only.⁵⁷ This is done in a process of internalising the stakeholders' (social and/or environmental) interests through participatory decision-making processes which are 'open to diverse stakeholder influences' while these organisations are also 'embedded in local communities' and 'relational in [their] approach by shaping networks across sectors (commercial, non-profit, and government) to stimulate social change as well as to leverage resources'.⁵⁸ Their primary mission is to generate 'the social change and development of their client group'.⁵⁹

The role of social entrepreneurs as change agents is significantly embedded in the definition of the social entrepreneur as noted by Nicholls and outlined by Hubert.⁶⁰ Nicholls mentions that 'social entrepreneurs play

⁵⁵ Calás et al., 'Extending the boundaries', p. 554.

⁵⁶ S. Estrin, T. Mickiewicz and U. Stephan, 'Entrepreneurship, social capital and institutions: Social and commercial entrepreneurship across nations' (2013) 37 *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 3, 479–504 at 481. S. Estrin, T. Mickiewicz and U. Stephan, 'Human capital in social and commercial entrepreneurship' (2016) 31 *Journal of Business Venturing*, 4, 449–467 at 450–452. Bruni et al., 'Doing gender, doing entrepreneurship', p. 408.

⁵⁷ Estrin et al., 'Human capital in social and commercial entrepreneurship', p. 452. Nicolás and Rubio, 'Social enterprise', p. 56.

⁵⁸ Estrin et al., 'Human capital in social and commercial entrepreneurship', p. 452, citing U. Stephan, M. Patterson, C. Kelly and J. Mair, 'Organizations driving positive social change: A review and an integrative framework of change processes' (2016) 42 *Journal of Management*, 5, 1250–1281.

⁵⁹ J. Levie and M. Hart, 'What distinguishes social entrepreneurs from business entrepreneurs? Insights from GEM', p. 2, unpublished paper, see <http://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/32357>. The official article was published as J. Levie and M. Hart, 'Business and social entrepreneurs in the UK: Gender, context and commitment' (2011) 3 *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 3, 200–217.

⁶⁰ A. Nicholls, 'Social entrepreneurship', in S. Carter, and D. Jones-Evans (eds.), *Enterprise and Small Business: Principles, Practice and Policy* (Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2006), pp. 220–242.

the role of change agents in the social sector'.⁶¹ Brouard and Larivet designed their own definition of social entrepreneurs and define them as 'any individuals who with their entrepreneurial spirit and personality will act as change agents and leaders to tackle social problems by recognising new opportunities and finding innovative solutions, and are more concerned with creating social value than financial value'.⁶² Accordingly, women as social entrepreneurs could serve as a paradigm to change hierarchical patterns and stereotypical positions in organisations and in society not only for themselves but also for others. This paradigm may allow women to 'influence change and to make a difference in the lives of other women and the community in general'.⁶³ In this way, female social enterprises may lead to a social change in organisations in a more sustainable direction, but also the lives of other women in society. As such, female social enterprises may be actors of change that would not only promote gender equality and diversity in the (entrepreneurial) workforce and organisation, but 'also play a fundamental role in improving society' and in improving the lives of women in it.⁶⁴

8.5 Women in the Dutch Social Enterprises' Structure and Functioning

8.5.1 Methodology Employed in the Survey

As explained in Section 8.1, our empirical analysis is based on data collected in 2015 by means of a survey that was sent to 366 and responded to by 66 social enterprises in the Netherlands, in collaboration with Social Enterprise NL⁶⁵ and PwC NL.⁶⁶ The aim of this survey was to

⁶¹ Humbert, 'Women as social entrepreneurs', p. 4, citing Nicholls, 'Social entrepreneurship', p. 224.

⁶² Kury, 'Sustainability meets social entrepreneurship', p. 64, citing F. Brouard and S. Larivet, 'Essay of clarifications and definitions of the related concepts of social enterprise, social entrepreneur and social entrepreneurship' in A. Fayolle and H. Matlay (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Social Entrepreneurship* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2010), pp. 29–56.

⁶³ Griffiths et al., 'The socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants of social entrepreneurship activity', p. 351; Nicolás and Rubio, 'Social enterprise', p. 61.

⁶⁴ Hechavarria et al., 'Are women more likely to pursue social and environmental entrepreneurship?', p. 147; Estrin et al., 'Human capital in social and commercial entrepreneurship', p. 465.

⁶⁵ Social enterprises NL, see www.social-enterprise.nl.

⁶⁶ Among the 366 selected social enterprises, 242 were registered at the time of the survey as members of the Social Enterprise NL, whereas 124 additional social enterprise organisations were selected from the direct client network of PwC NL.

identify the needs and perceived barriers of social enterprises in the Netherlands in relation to the Dutch legal system, as well as success factors of social enterprises in terms of their business-operating model. The survey included gender and gender-related questions. The response rate for the survey was approximately 18 per cent, a low response rate with which to provide generalizable and representative statistical results with certainty with respect to the entire population evaluated. However, the survey results are adequate to provide preliminary information which can be used for exploratory purposes, such as shedding light on this emerging sector and its characteristics, as well as the role of female social entrepreneurs in the Netherlands.⁶⁷

Although the survey was predominantly elaborating on questions regarding the success factors of Dutch social enterprises in relation to their operating models and legal-institutional environment, a number of demographic questions were also posed. These were dichotomous, close-ended, and multiple choice questions requiring information concerning gender-related and other characteristics of the respondents. For instance, there were questions asking the respondent's gender, position and working experience, and educational and professional background, as well as the organization's name, mission, size, number of employees, legal form and means of financing.

The collected data were processed by an explorative analysis with the use of descriptive statistics (i.e., an analysis of the responses by means of multivariate data displays).⁶⁸ The statistical analysis of data was supported by an analysis of digressions provided via open text boxes following the dichotomous, close-ended, and multiple-choice questions included in the survey. Those text boxes allowed the respondents to provide clarifications, explanatory descriptions and/or elaborate on their responses. The digressions comprised the perceptions, thoughts and personal opinions of the survey respondents. To analyse and shorten the qualitative data collected from the open text boxes, a method of coding was applied.⁶⁹ By means of coding, patterns were identified in

⁶⁷ Among those responding social enterprises, 42 organisations were members of the Social Enterprises NL platform, whereas 14 organisations were members of the PwC client network. The survey results on the other topics, as well as further details concerning its methodology can be found in Argyrou et al., 'Legal forms for social enterprises in the Dutch legal framework', pp. 12-34.

⁶⁸ The multivariate pivot function in Excel was used to sort, analyse, visualise and filter the collected data. By means of the pivot functions, the percentages were compared.

⁶⁹ J. Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2009).

the data on the basis of periodically repeated and routine responses by which commonly occurring thematic categories were developed.

8.5.2 *Female Involvement, Role and Position*

Although the number of male respondents to the survey was higher than the number of female respondents, the survey data revealed that women are notably involved in the sixty-six Dutch social enterprises which participated. As a matter of fact, out of the sixty-six respondents to the survey, 59.09 per cent were men, whereas 40.91 per cent were women. This is in line with scholarly literature in entrepreneurship which shows that the percentage of women involved in entrepreneurship worldwide is in general lower than that of men, but there may be a shift in social entrepreneurial practice.⁷⁰ It was also previously noted that women generally are less involved in enterprises than men, and that men are more likely to become commercial entrepreneurs than women.

However, literature on social enterprises indicates that women – in comparison with men – are more likely to become social entrepreneurs and engage in social and environmental entrepreneurial activity rather than becoming commercial entrepreneurs.⁷¹ One possible reason suggested in the literature is that women are more likely driven in their entrepreneurial careers by societal rather than economic motives, whereas for men it is the other way around.⁷² This aligns well with social enterprises because their main goal is to tackle sustainability and social challenges and to contribute to solving these issues.⁷³ However, these interlinkages are not directly reflected in the examined data from Dutch social enterprises.

⁷⁰ Minniti, 'Female entrepreneurship and economic activity', p. 298; T. J. Devine, 'Changes in wage-and-salary returns to skill and the recent rise in female self-employment' (1994) 84 *The American Economic Review*, 2, 108–112; Georgellis and Wall, 'Gender differences in self-employment', pp. 321–342; Kim, 'The analysis of self-employment levels over the life-cycle', pp. 397–410.

⁷¹ Estrin et al., 'Entrepreneurship, social capital and institutions: Social and commercial entrepreneurship across nations', p. 496. Estrin et al., 'Human capital in social and commercial entrepreneurship', pp. 458, 462 and 464; Hechavarria et al., 'Are women more likely to pursue social and environmental entrepreneurship?', p. 144; Levie and Hart, 'What distinguishes social entrepreneurs from business entrepreneurs? Insights from GEM', p. 6.

⁷² Griffiths et al., 'The socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants of social entrepreneurship activity', p. 346. Urbano, Ferri and Noguera, 'Female social entrepreneurship and socio-cultural context', p. 35.

⁷³ S. Teasdale, S. McKay, J. Phillimore and N. Teasdale, 'Exploring gender and social entrepreneurship: Women's leadership, employment and participation in the third sector and social enterprises', pp. 3–37 at 19, unpublished. The official publication was published as S. Teasdale, S. McKay, J. Phillimore and N. Teasdale, 'Exploring gender and

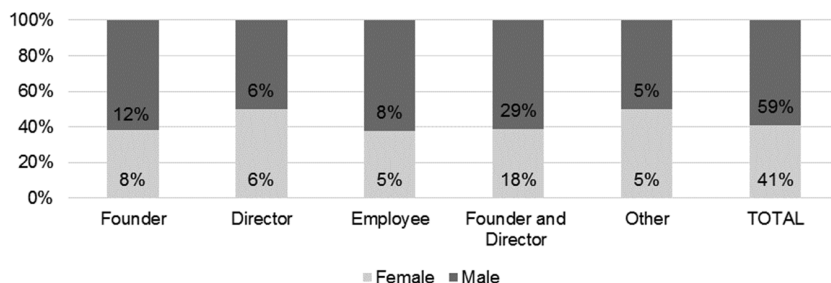


Figure 8.1 Role of female respondents as opposed to male respondents in the Dutch social enterprises. In this figure the numeric values are displayed as percentages of the grand total of respondents. E.g. 8% of respondents were female founders, while 12% of total respondents were male founders. Participation in the particular role can also be estimated as a percentage by reference to the percentage scale on the left so that less than 40% of founders are women and more than 60% of founders are men.

Women in the examined Dutch social enterprises were found to have various roles and positions in their organisations' functioning. They participate in the higher echelons of their organisations, such as in the position of 'director and founder', but also in the human capital of their organisations, such as in the position of the 'employee'. The survey responses revealed that female respondents comprise predominantly managerial positions in the social enterprises (i.e., as founders and directors). The results can be found in Figure 8.1.

Most of the female respondents (approximately 78 per cent, or 32 per cent of the 41 per cent; see Figure 8.1) reported that they hold a high position in the organisational structure of the social enterprise, such as 'founder', 'founder and director', or 'director', whereas only 11.11 per cent of female respondents (Figure 8.1) belong to the category 'employee', and 11.11 per cent to the category 'other'. Other positions held by female respondents include 'treasurer' and 'advisor'. These results suggest a lower gender bias in the higher managerial positions and roles in Dutch social enterprises than what generally is reported in the literature concerning commercial companies. Please note that in small and medium-sized social enterprises, the roles of 'founder', 'founder and director', 'director' and 'employee' often overlap. For the survey, respondents were only able to select one position, because this question was multiple-choice.

social entrepreneurship: women's leadership, employment and participation in the third sector and social enterprises' (2011) 2 *Voluntary Sector Review*, 1, 57–76.

Nonetheless, when comparing the data concerning the responses of female survey participants with those of male respondents, women's participation was found to be significantly lower than men's in almost all the higher organisational positions in the examined Dutch social enterprises, particularly in the positions of 'founder and director' and 'founder' (i.e., respectively, 18 per cent female versus 29 per cent male and 8 per cent female versus 12 per cent male in Figure 8.1). However, in regard to the category 'director', female respondents were found to have equal standing with male respondents (i.e., 6 per cent for both female and male). That is interesting, as Lyon and Humbert point out that despite the fact that women are in general more often participating in social enterprises rather than in commercial enterprises, women are still under-represented in social enterprises.⁷⁴

In their study on Dutch listed companies, Diepeveen et al. also refer to the undermined role of women in the Dutch economy in general – women are underrepresented in senior-management and decision-making positions, in the government, in universities, and in particular in large Dutch companies. Moreover, these scholars point at the inequality in wages and in opportunities for women in the Dutch labour market.⁷⁵

Furthermore, the survey results reveal that although the participation of women and men is equal in the role of director, it appeared that in the position of CEO (or 'president' or any other applicable term to express the position of the chief executive officer or equivalent), the male gender prevails (70.83 per cent) over the female (29.17 per cent) in the participating social enterprises. This result shows that the examined Dutch social enterprises may not facilitate women into leadership and authority as much as theory would claim. Nonetheless, scholarship reflects that the career and leadership experiences of women and men are still regarded as being more equal in social entrepreneurship than in commercial entrepreneurship.⁷⁶ As we have argued on the basis of the literature review, this phenomenon might be attributed to the societal goal, type, structure

⁷⁴ Lyon and Humbert, 'Gender balance in the governance of social enterprises', pp. 13–14.

⁷⁵ R. A. Diepeveen, T. E. Lambooy and R. M. Renes, 'The Two-pronged approach of the (semi-) legal norms on gender diversity: Exploratory empirical research on corporate boards of Dutch listed companies', 12 *International and Comparative Corporate Law Journal*, 2, 103–139 at 110–113.

⁷⁶ K. Addicott, 'There may be trouble ahead: exploring the changing shape of non-profit entrepreneurship in third sector organizations' (2017) 37 *Public Money & Management*, 2, 81–88 at 81.

and size of the enterprise (for instance, the possibilities and opportunities to build relationships in a career path).⁷⁷

A lower score was also revealed in the survey results concerning the prevalence of women as 'founder' in comparison to men. This might suggest that generally women have lower intentions to initiate a social enterprise and/or lower opportunities, which is in line with the findings in literature that women have lesser appetite to initiate a business or an enterprise.⁷⁸ However, the age-related results indicate that women aged 30–40 prevail over men in the category 'founder and director' (16.67 per cent female respondents as opposed to 11.11 per cent male respondents), hence a finding which suggests that young women more often take the lead in social enterprises.⁷⁹ Women also exceed men in the position 'director' in the age category of 40–50 (11.11 per cent female respondents as opposed to 5.56 per cent male respondents); this shows that older women might be preferred in more responsible positions in social enterprises.

8.5.3 *Flexible Working Hours and the Possibility of Working at Home*

Levie and Hart,⁸⁰ who particularly assess the characteristics of social entrepreneurs and their businesses, indicate that female social entrepreneurs are more likely to work part-time than women in purely commercial enterprises. Levie and Hart indicate that almost 74 per cent of the social entrepreneurs devoted less than 10 hours a week to their business; this was only the case for 22 per cent of business (commercial) entrepreneurs.⁸¹ The flexibility in social enterprises in terms of working time and ability to work from home might also be a reason for women in the Netherlands to prefer social entrepreneurial positions in order to maintain a better work-life balance. Many Dutch women work part-time

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Gupta et al., 'The Role of gender stereotypes in perceptions of entrepreneurs and intentions to become an entrepreneur', p. 409.

⁷⁹ Griffiths et al., 'The socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants of social entrepreneurship activity', p. 346.

⁸⁰ Levie and Hart, 'What distinguishes social entrepreneurs from business entrepreneurs? Insights from GEM', pp. 6 and 8.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 8.

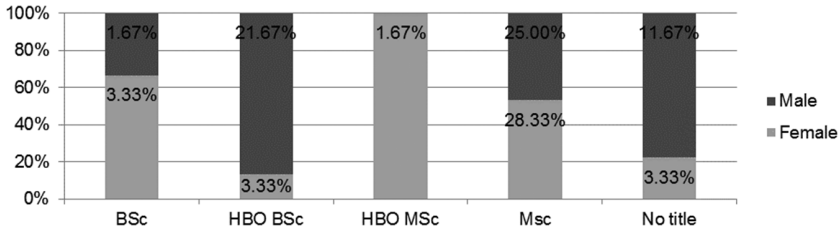


Figure 8.2 Educational background of female respondents as opposed to male respondents. The numeric values are displayed as percentages of the grand total of respondents.

for this reason. Part-time work by women in the Netherlands reaches the highest percentage of all European countries.⁸²

8.5.4 Level of Education

The women involved in the examined social enterprises were found to have a high educational background, although variations were observed. The results can be found in Figure 8.2. The majority of female respondents (28.33 per cent) hold an academic master's (MSc) degree. Only 3.33 per cent of female respondents have no educational title, as opposed to 11.67 per cent of male respondents in this category. Scholarship indeed indicates that social entrepreneurship not only is likely to attract more women than men, but particularly, more highly educated women.⁸³ Other empirical studies show that in developed countries women entrepreneurs generally attain a higher education level than male entrepreneurs and that they mainly undertake entrepreneurial activities around the age of 35–44.⁸⁴ This can be explained by the fact that in richer countries women may spend more time on their education.⁸⁵ This proposition finds ground in the survey's findings, which reveal that in the survey sample, more women than men are highly educated with a master's degree, and more men than women have no educational title.

⁸² OECD, *Part-time employment rate for women 2016*, see <https://data.oecd.org/emp/part-time-employment-rate.htm>.

⁸³ Estrin et al., 'Entrepreneurship, social capital and institutions', p. 498.

⁸⁴ E. Allen, N. Langowitz and M. Minniti, 'The 2006 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Special Topic Report: Women in Entrepreneurship' (2007) Center for Women Leadership, Babson College, Babson Park, MA; M. Cowling and M. Taylor, 'Entrepreneurial women and men: Two different species?' (2001) 16 *Small Business Economics*, 3, 167–176.

⁸⁵ Minniti, 'Female entrepreneurship and economic activity', p. 298.

8.5.5 *Types of Social Enterprises Involving Women*

The survey digressions indicate that female respondents are predominantly involved in Dutch social enterprises whose purpose relates to women's improvement of life. Particularly, the results demonstrate that women are predominantly involved in social enterprises with the objective to improve women's lives (24 per cent) in terms of: (1) offering education to women; (2) addressing work integration considering women's inferior position in the labour market; and (3) stimulating women in gaining financial independence and empowerment in society considering the existence of a gender pay gap and their undermined role in society. Other categories were also identified which align with the sectors in which women stereotypically are working in, such as: (4) children's education, assistance and access to culture (20 per cent); (5) support and work integration of people with disabilities (8 per cent); and (6) elderly care (4 per cent). Finally, other types of Dutch social enterprises with broader sustainability-oriented objectives were identified to involve women such as: (7) sustainable and ecological market activities (12 per cent); (8) sustainable financing of organisations and access to capital (8 per cent); (9) improving social interaction and recreation (20 per cent); and (10) social impact measuring (4 per cent). The results can be found in Figure 8.3. These findings suggest that indeed female social entrepreneurship can contribute to sustainability but also to changing women's lives – that is, not only the life of the female social entrepreneur herself, but also the lives of other women and their role in society. The identified categories of social objectives of the social enterprises involving particularly women also confirm that female entrepreneurs are likely to focus on social and environmental value creation.⁸⁶ As such, they would be found to participate in social enterprises which promote sustainable and ecological market activities and sustainable financing, with improving social interaction and/or the care of the vulnerable parts of society (i.e., children, the elderly and the disabled) as a goal.

The survey also indicated that the BV is the most common legal form used by the participating social enterprises (42.42 per cent).⁸⁷ Few enterprises indicated that they use the legal form of a foundation (22.72 per cent) and even fewer indicated that they use a complex

⁸⁶ Hechavarria et al., 'Are women more likely to pursue social and environmental entrepreneurship?', pp. 135–136, 144.

⁸⁷ Argyrou et al., 'Legal forms for social enterprises in the Dutch legal framework', p. 18.

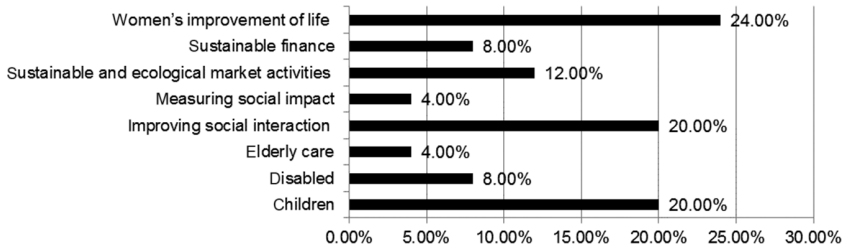


Figure 8.3 Mission of social enterprises in which female respondents are involved

combination of the legal forms of BV and foundation (12.12 per cent).⁸⁸ The remainder of the respondents indicated that their business was either performed in the form of sole trader (3.03 per cent), or that they employed the legal forms of partnership (1.52 per cent) or association (3.03 per cent).

The female respondents were predominantly found to participate in the legal forms of foundation and association and had a weaker presence in the BV and/or in the combination BV-foundation legal form as compared to men, whose participation was dominant in the legal forms of BV, partnership, and sole trader. As such, the results of this survey indicate that women are often involved in enterprises which are organised in not-for-profit legal forms such as the foundation and the association, rather than in organisations employing for-profit legal forms such as the BV and the combination BV-foundation. These findings from the survey also align with scholarship which shows that in private sector enterprises, the number of female entrepreneurs remains low in comparison to men, whereas in third (voluntary) sector organisations, the number of male and female entrepreneurs are nearly equal.⁸⁹ In relation to the legal form, scholarly findings also point out that when comparing female-owned businesses and male-owned businesses, female entrepreneurs are more likely to set up their businesses with a lower start-up capital and to finance with equity instead of debt – attributed to legal forms with such characteristics – than male entrepreneurs, who were found to have a higher ratio of debt finance.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Teasdale et al., 'Exploring gender and social entrepreneurship', pp. 5–6, 24; Humbert, 'Women as social entrepreneurs', p. 9. Argyrou et al., 'Legal forms for social enterprises in the Dutch legal framework', p. 17.

⁹⁰ De Bruin et al., 'Advancing a framework for coherent research on women's entrepreneurship', p. 325.

8.6 Conclusions

The undermined position of women in economic activities in general can be evidenced from gender gaps in entrepreneurship and a lack of opportunities for women to thrive in economic activities. Existing stereotypes, patriarchal attitudes and the perceived (female) duty of care in various countries predominantly determine women's choices regarding employment or intention to start an enterprise. Gender stereotypes also dominate the entrepreneurial world, undermining women's skills and talents. Empirical evidence shows that women's participation in entrepreneurship is lower than men's. In general, women's participation in entrepreneurship is a way to access opportunities and improve life in economic terms. Accordingly, we emphasise the reframing of entrepreneurship as an actor towards social change and the concept of social entrepreneurship as a type of economic activity that may also lead to the changing of women's role in organisations and the improvement of women's lives as well as to changing the dominant perception of women's capacities in society. This type of social change can be achieved if more women are engaged in social entrepreneurship and if more opportunities are provided to them in terms of human capital, education and promotion in leadership. Female social entrepreneurship might result in reducing inequality in employment for women, in providing a better representation of women in higher organisational positions and in providing access to opportunities with respect to education and a better balance in work and life. Female social entrepreneurs may challenge structural inequalities and hierarchical patterns based on stereotypes while changing society's dominant perception concerning the role of women. Social entrepreneurship may also gradually contribute to a change through introducing women's issues into organisational aspects and social entrepreneurial objectives. As such, social change and social value may be created by female social entrepreneurship. Social enterprises may be change agents, and thus women in social enterprises could contribute to that change. Accordingly, social enterprises might be women's vehicle to social change.

In the Netherlands, the social enterprises sector is young and evolving. However, the discussion concerning women's role in Dutch social enterprises has not previously been addressed by academic scholarship. This chapter introduces the discussion and presents empirical evidence which demonstrates that women have taken up various roles in Dutch social enterprises. They can be found in the higher as well as in managerial and

employee positions of the examined Dutch social enterprises. However, we have shown that their overall participation in higher organisational positions is lower than men in the majority of the organisational positions identified in the examined organisations. At the same time, the empirical results reveal that women in the participating Dutch social enterprises were found to be more highly educated than men.

Additionally, women in the examined Dutch social enterprises are more involved in social enterprises that employ a non-profit rather than a for-profit organisation legal form. Most importantly, women in Dutch social enterprises are predominantly involved in social enterprises which have adopted sustainability objectives and that promote the improvement of women's lives. As such, they could constitute agents for change in their lives and in the lives of other women, consequently effecting broader social change as well.