

Glocalisation: Think Global, Act Local

An exploration into the interplay between the global United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and a local Amsterdam based social enterprise and how they speak to each other (influencing the operationalisation of glocal action)



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This document is a Master Thesis for the completion of the Master of Environment and Society Studies (specialisation Global Environment and Sustainability) at the Radboud University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

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Abstract

As evidence continues to emerge identifying human activities as the root-cause for the deterioration of the earth there is an increasing need for societal-change and a transition towards more sustainable modes of operation. Research has found that social enterprises play a crucial role in this solution, and in achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2019, the UN Secretary General called upon all sectors of society to mobilise for a Decade of Action (DoA) over three levels (global, local, and people) to generate an unstoppable movement pushing forward the required transitions for the achievement of the SDGs. This people action, including groups such as civil-society, private-sector, and academia can be linked to the bottom-up action undertaken by social enterprises. Understanding how social enterprises are able to contribute to the achievement of these goals remains understudied, as does the communication and link between the local and the global, known within the literature as glocalisation.

Several concepts are introduced and critically reviewed within this research in order to explore the role of glocal communities as partners in promoting sustainable social change and contributing towards the achievement of the SDGs. The overall objective of this research is to contribute to and gain an insight into the local contributions of a social enterprise, to the global goals of the UN's SDGs and the DoA, in order to understand how the global speaks to the local and vice versa. In doing so, the aim of this research is to gain an understanding of glocalisation in action, achieved via a single case-study strategy, with primary data obtained via participant-observation at Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. This research builds upon the existing literature of glocalisation, local action, the SDGs, and social enterprises. Applying a bottom-up approach, providing insights into the micro-level dynamics of the operationalisation of macro-level institutions in accordance with the theory of glocalisation in relation to the SDGs, revealing that while the strength of the tie between the glocal action of a social enterprise may be weak, it does exist. There is something which can be built upon, and this small local ripple in the pool of global sustainability has the potential to create a wave of transformation if only it is continued and cultivated and supported effectively. The conclusions of this research therefore also have the potential to impact efforts to inspire change toward these important global sustainable goals (the SDGs), by helping groups develop more effective strategies to better communicate their importance to the wider public.

Due to the inductive nature of this research, and its use of a single case-study in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, somewhat limited conclusions can be made. However, this experience demonstrates at least one way in which the SDGs have manifested at the glocal level and hence can inform our understanding of the SDGs and the glocal action which they represent. This study could therefore be used as a starting point for other research concerning glocalisation in regard to social enterprises and their realisation of reaching global social and environmental goals such as the SDGs.

Key words: *sustainability, sustainable development goals (SDGs), glocalisation, glocal, social enterprise*

Preface and acknowledgements

This thesis marks the end of my masters studies at Radboud University Nijmegen. A year and a half ago, my desire for knowledge, career progression, and a life in Europe persuaded me to return to study after a 10-year hiatus, leading me to continue what was supposed to be a one year stay in the Netherlands to an enriching new life in this little flat country, full of memorable friendships and experiences. This thesis was written primarily to comply with completing a MSc Environment and Society Studies, specialising in Global Environment and Sustainability at Radboud University. Secondly, it is an accompaniment to my four-month internship which was undertaken at Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, specifically within the Oview project, from February to May 2021. During this internship I followed my personal interest and passion in sustainable and ethical social business practices, and the nexus between global goals and local action, enabling my thesis and research to relate to this.

My time with Sapient Social and Environmental Enterprises allowed me to become an integral and valued member of an organisation which strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations through their projects, collaborations, helping other initiatives, and a lot of hard work by all individuals involved. Working within a democratic organisation that truly believes that every individual is unique, talented, and has the potential to create a positive change is exactly the experience I wanted after returning to study sustainability and society studies after so many years. Through many challenges and unexpected experiences throughout my time with Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises I was able to learn a lot about both what works and what doesn't work within a social enterprise, how passionate people can, and are making a difference in our local community, as well as where I may like my career to head after completing this masters degree. In addition to this, I was lucky enough to make both personal friendships and professional connections during this period.

As well as my personal interest in this topic and internship with Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, writing this thesis would not have been possible with the support of my classmates, lecturers, and my study advisor throughout this masters year, all of whom gave me the confidence and support in my return to study, and made me believe in myself and improve my research and analytical skills. I value the conversations I had with my thesis supervisor which allowed me to play to my strengths and write this thesis in the most suitable way for me, making it seem a little less daunting and a little more achievable, and essentially – just get it done! I found myself surprisingly able to write thousands of words on this topic, and essentially enjoy the research-process as a whole.

On a more personal level, thank you to my friends and family, near and far, old and new. Living abroad and studying during a global pandemic was challenging at the best of times, and I would not have made it through without the constant support and encouragement of my international family and friends – to you I am eternally grateful!

Phoebe Dennis

Nijmegen, the Netherlands, August 2021

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List of abbreviations

EU	European Union
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DoA	Decade of Action
FC	Food Circle
GLUE	Genuine Love Unifying Everything
H&A	Healthy & Affordable
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MNC	Multi-national corporations
OWG	Open Working Group
Sapiient	Sapiient Social & Environmental Enterprises
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
TBAN	Think Big Act Now
TBYW	Taste Before You Waste
UN	United Nations
WCED	World Commission on Environmental Development

Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter outlines an introduction of the research. Starting with context on the topic, leading to the research problem and research question(s), followed by the scientific and societal relevance of the research, concluding with a reading-guide for this research.

1.1. Context

Over recent decades, individuals worldwide including academics, businesses, politicians, and everyday people of all ages have begun aligning their values, uniting together, sharing the same common interest and concern in the challenge of the world's current environmental, social, and economic problems. These problems include most importantly; global climate-change, population-growth, social inequalities, and biodiversity loss (Stigzelius & Mark-Herbert, 2009). Our Common Future (Brundtland, 1987), or the Brundtland Report as it's commonly known, marked a profound moment in time, making us, as a global society reconsider how we attempt to connect the bio-physical environment with social and economic policy-goals, and the way in which we conduct business and our day-to-day lives. As evidence continues to develop recognising human activities as the root-cause for the deterioration of the earth (Allen *et al.*, 2018), there is an increasing acknowledgment of the need for societal-change and a transition towards more sustainable modes of operation (Raworth, 2012). Acknowledging the inability to continue with the status-quo, a multitude of international treaties, agreements, and global initiatives have been implemented over the years such as the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement. Finally, in accordance with a global shift in sustainable thinking and a push for a social-transition, in 2015 the United Nations (UN) established 17 interconnected goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (fig. 1), to be achieved by 2030, creating a world where '*no one is left behind*' (United Nations, n.d.d). These goals provide a global blueprint to achieve a better, more sustainable future for all, addressing the global challenges we, as a united world face (United Nations, n.d.c).



Figure 1. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (adapted from UCLG, 2021)

While some progress within the SDGs has occurred, overall, there hasn't been enough action to meet the goals at the speed or scale required for their achievement by 2030 (UN, 2018). Thus, in 2019, the UN declared a Decade of Action (DoA). This call-to-action marks a period of time in which we, as a global society, are to deliver the SDGs, from 2020 until their deadline.

"It is now up to all of us, governments, businesses, civil society and the general public to work together to build a better future for everyone."

United Nations (Project Everyone, n.d.)

Accordingly, this DoA calls for an acceleration in sustainable solutions to the world's biggest challenges, calling on all sectors of society to mobilise over three levels (table 1).

Table 1. The Decade of Action's levels of action (adapted from United Nations, n.d.b)

Level	Description
Global action	Focuses on securing greater leadership, more resources and smarter solutions for the SDGs.
Local action	Focuses on necessary transitions within policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities, and local authorities.
People action	Focuses on the action of youths, civil-society, media, private-sector, unions, academia, and all other stakeholders to generate a strong, unstoppable movement to push for the required transitions

The relationship between these global goals and the local processes they are to be achieved within suggests a strong relationship between the global and the local, lending to the theory of glocalisation. Glocalisation can be described as the interpretation of the global and local which results in unique outcomes depending on the specific geographic setting (Ritzer, 2003). This link between the global and local is what embodies the realisation of the global macro-level SDGs and their micro-level action on the ground, within local areas, by individuals and groups of passionate people, embodying the people action outlined in the UN's DoA.

With the issue of sustainability and sustainable development receiving increasing attention by both governments and private-sector, there is an implication to rethink old, outdated models, and find new ways of living, new methods of production and distribution, and a new way of evaluating and communicating to enable us to reach the sustainable future we need (Mark-Herbert & Rorarius, 2010). Allowing businesses and the economy to operate as before is no longer a viable option as it contradicts the overall idea of sustainability and sustainable development, and hence the SDGs. While international agreements like the SDGs are important in providing a broad context for change, the real change lies within the motivation intrinsic to society, as societies have proved to be anything but passive. Our modern society is an energetic society, consisting of knowledgeable, autonomous citizens and innovative organisations (Hajer, 2011). The innovative power of entrepreneurs, particularly social entrepreneurs may therefore play an important role in ensuring we reach the SDGs, enabling a more sustainable future by pushing against the status-quo. This notion has brought the existence of social enterprises to both the global and local stage. Social entrepreneurs and the social enterprises they create are able to act as change-agents within society, employing entrepreneurial means to provide systemic solutions to the world's social and environmental problems (Partzsch & Zeigler, 2011). As an organisation trading with the core objective to create social value over personal and shareholder value or profit (Zadek & Thake, 1997), this main goal of a social enterprise is the driving force of what they do and why they do it (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006; Peattie & Morley, 2008). This embodiment of the DoA's 'people action' and glocalisation in action is the main focus of this inductive, exploratory research, with the overall objective being to contribute to the relevant literature and gain an insight into the local contributions of a social enterprise, to the global goals of the UN's SDGs and DoA. This will in turn lead to an understanding of how or if, the global and the local speak to each other.

Considering this research was undertaken throughout 2021, reflecting upon the COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on the SDGs is necessary. The pandemic has shown that what began as a health-crisis quickly became a global human and socio-economic crisis. According to the Comprehensive Picture of the Monitor of Well-being & Sustainable Development Goals 2020¹, it's already evident that COVID-19 is and will continue to have considerable side-effects towards the achievement of the SDGs within the Netherlands (Horlings *et al.*, 2020). While the crisis may hinder progress towards achieving the SDGs, it also shows their achievement is all the more necessary and urgent. It's essential that what we've achieved so far within the goals is protected, and that a transformative recovery from COVID-19 is pursued to address the crisis and reduce risks from any potential future crises. The implementation efforts to reach the 2030 Agenda and SDGs is needed now, in this DoA, more than ever. The following research extends on the current SDG literature by presenting a case for social enterprises and their glocal action to achieve macro-level goals on a micro-level, also contributing to the understudied area of understanding how social enterprises are able to contribute to the achievement of these goals.

1.2. Problem statement, research aim, and research questions

The following sections discuss the aim of this research, which stems from the problem statement. This is addressed by a main research question and a series of sub-questions.

1.2.1. Problem statement

The UN's DoA to reach the 2030 deadline of the SDGs, calls for three levels of action; global, local, and people action. This call for a micro-level realisation of macro-level challenges compliments the theory of glocalisation, in which the interconnectedness of the local and global is discussed. This is particularly relevant in regard to the global nature of sustainability issues which are presented differently in local contexts and hence addressed differently depending on their environment. The essence of the SDG framework lays in a cross-sectorial collaboration, requiring global and local partners to unite on a set of shared goals. However, within the Netherlands, it's been indicated that the Dutch government lags behind its peers in many areas, lacking national goals and aims for multiple SDGs, particularly amongst the areas of environment, energy, climate-change and inequalities (Horlings *et al.*, 2020). Many social enterprises within the Netherlands exist in an effort to fill this gap, with their own missions focused on local action against the inequalities caused by processes of political and economic globalisation, fighting to achieve the SDGs themselves in a glocal manner. For social enterprises, the ambitions of the SDG framework require their engagement and contribution of local knowledge, and adaptive, innovative capacities. Additionally, social enterprises can be seen embodying the DoA's 'people' action via the organisation of individual groups, generating a strong movement pushing for social-transformations. While the literature on environmental justice and sustainable development argues that the road to sustainability must involve all people, from all societal groups (Agyeman, 2008), there is currently little research on the glocal role of social enterprises in the contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.

1.2.2. Research aim

The aim of this research is to explore the possible contributions of a social enterprises in the achievement of the SDGs, paying particular attention to how, in reality, the global and local speak to each other, and hence consider the glocal context and theory of glocalisation. This is undertaken in the form of a single case-study within the Netherlands, at Sapient Social and Environmental Enterprises (Sapient), a social enterprise based in Amsterdam. Sapient is a non-profit, democratic, social and environmental enterprise with the overall aim of achieving the global SDGs through its local

¹ The Comprehensive picture of the Monitor of Well-being & Sustainable Development Goals 2020 publication outlines the development of well-being and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Netherlands in 2019. Utilising a structured set of indicators that describe the many aspects of well-being, this report describes the development of the current well-being, the potential well-being of future generations, and the effect of the Netherlands actions on well-being in other countries. These indicators include economy and labour, health, education and the living environment, looking at both developments in the most recent year and trends over the last eight years (and where possible, long-term developments from 1995). (<https://longreads.cbs.nl/monitor-of-well-being-and-sdgs-2020/comprehensive-picture-of-the-monitor-of-well-being-en-sustainable-development-goals-2020/>)

projects and collaborations. Their business practices and company values align with the need for a societal-transformation (Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, 2021), hence why they were chosen for an internship and case-study to achieve the research aim of this project.

1.2.3. Research question(s)

Summarising the aim of this thesis, the following exploratory research question is stated;

To what extent is the interplay between the global United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and the local activities of a social enterprise in Amsterdam, the Netherlands effective in operationalising impactful changes?

To adequately answer this, a series of sub-questions are developed to break-down the research into more detailed and understandable parts. They also help guide the process of the thesis.

- a) *What are the SDGs and how are they communicated and framed in order to be applied at a global, local, and glocal level?*
- b) *What is a social enterprise, what are their intentions and activities, how does this differ to traditional organisations, and why do they exist?*
- c) *What is the relationship between the intentions and activities of a social enterprise and the SDGs?*
- d) *Which factors influence, affect or act as a barrier to the scale/scope of the activities of the social enterprise?*
- e) *What recommendations exist for fostering the support of social enterprises to help achieve the SDGs derive from the research?*

1.3. Relevance of the research

Overall, this thesis serves as a starting point for studying and understanding the connection between the global and local, and if the glocal actions of social enterprises contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs, filling the current knowledge-gap in the literature. Additionally, this thesis aims to open the dialogue on why social enterprises exist, why they need to exist, and why they are not the norm. The scientific and societal relevance of the research is evaluated in the following sections, demonstrating how this research and findings aid comprehension of the current societal debates of this research topic from new perspectives.

1.3.1. Scientific relevance

This is driven by the lack of academic literature on the relationship between social enterprises and their contribution towards the achievement of the SDGs, (Littlewood & Holt, 2018), particularly in relation to the theory of glocalisation. This connect between global and local, and how they speak to each other in reality is currently under-researched. Much of the limited literature on the relationship of organisations and SDGs focuses on engagement between traditional business ventures and multinational corporations (MNCs) (Kolk, 2016; Pisani, Kourula & Kolk, 2017). Existing SDG impact-assessment frameworks are also directed towards these groups (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). While in general, entrepreneurship is accepted as a space to create sustainable products, services or processes that integrate our social and environmental concerns (Bansal *et al.*, 2019), the available literature doesn't extensively discuss the contribution of social entrepreneurs and their social enterprise ventures in working towards a sustainable future (Hall *et al.*, 2010). The findings of Thananusak's (2019) research on knowledge-mapping of sustainable entrepreneurship also suggests the knowledge base of sustainable entrepreneurship is in its early-stages. The influential documents currently focus on foundation concepts and testing of theoretical relations, as well as deriving theoretical insights from case-studies. It can be assumed that this would also translate from entrepreneurship, to the enterprises they create. Additionally, this research may act as an inspiration for further research on this topic, particularly further in-depth case-studies to discover whether the results of this research are an isolated phenomenon, or something occurring globally.

1.3.2. Societal relevance

This is guided by the need for a societal-transformation, and hence achievement of the SDGs, which social enterprises can play an important role in (Social Enterprise UK, 2015). As we move into the last decade of the SDGs, we have but ten years to deliver these 17 ambitious goals, and while progress is being made (United Nations, 2019), overall, the required action is not advancing as needed. To provide the best chance to accomplish these goals, a DoA has been declared, requiring people individually, collectively, locally, and globally to mobilise, creating an unstoppable force (United Nations, n.d.d). This links directly to the understudied glocal action and missions of social enterprises. The location for this research was chosen due convenience, however it's also significant that Amsterdam is a fast-changing, dynamic, international city, quickly becoming globally renowned as one of the most creative cities, with the Netherlands known as the most entrepreneurial country in Europe (Gowling, 2013), while also falling behind its EU counterparts in the achievement of the SDGs (Horlings *et al.*, 2020). Overall, the aim of this research is to contribute to addressing the gaps and imbalances in the literature. It may also serve as inspiration for social enterprises, governments or societies to discover ways to effectively influence themselves and others to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs. The findings of this research could also be utilised by Sapient to assess their projects and progress, enabling them to evaluate their actions and potentially improve upon them.

1.4. Reading Guide

The following chapter addresses the theoretical framework on which this research is built. Chapter three discusses the methodology and research strategy which contributed to answering the main question of this study. Chapter four presents the case-study utilised for the research and accompanying internship. Chapter five provides the results of the research, giving an answer to the central research question and its accompanying sub-questions a) through d). Chapter six provides conclusions to the research and addresses sub-question e) by suggesting recommendations. The final chapter reflects upon the experiences of this research. References and appendices follow.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

To begin the research-process, a literature review was undertaken to understand, introduce, and analyse the different topics essential to this research. Based on this, the research questions and their objectives were discovered. This chapter begins with an insight into sustainability and sustainable development, discussing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Following this, the theory of glocalisation is explored, and expanded upon, focussing on the existence of social enterprises and their relationship to this theory and the SDGs. This is done by comparing, contrasting, assessing and reviewing the available, relevant academic literature establishing a theoretical foundation which guides this research, also reflecting on gaps in the literature, and hence what this research focuses on. Due to the research's inductive nature, this chapter was revisited throughout the research-process, deepening the foundations of the research, effectively linking concepts together as best as possible.

2.1. Sustainability and Sustainable Development

As the essence of this research stems from sustainability and sustainable development, this section begins by explaining these concepts. The term sustainability originates from ecology, signifying an ecosystem's potential for subsisting over time with little to no alteration. Adding 'development', the concept of sustainability is viewed no longer solely from an environmental lens and now comprises of viewpoints of both society and economy (Reboratti, 1999). The concept of sustainable development came into prominence during the 1980's as an extension of the environmental literature from the 1960's to early 1980's in an attempt to close the divide between environmental concerns related to the increased evidence of the ecological consequences of human activities, and the socio-political concerns of human development issues (Robinson, 2004). A multitude of ways to define and conceptualise sustainability and sustainable development have since arisen, however most definitions derive from the tension between the goals of economic development and environmental protection, with definitions often exhibiting a preference towards economic growth (Geisinger, 1999). Perhaps most significant in the history of defining sustainability and sustainable development is the 1987 publication; *Our Common Future* (Brundtland, 1987). As more commonly known, The Brundtland Report, challenged the dominant world view that economic objectives, such as poverty alleviation and economic growth, should take precedence over environmental concerns. It argued instead that environmental health is a precondition of social and economic success. Most notably, the report argued that poverty and environmental degradation are an intertwined global crisis, that we cannot choose between environment or development, but rather the challenge we face as a global society is to find ways of integrating the two, to achieve sustainable development (Dodds, 2000). Sustainable development was thus defined as;

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

Brundtland, 1987

This definition is still the most-used and common definition, stemming from the acknowledgement that while under-development is threatening to the global environment and human welfare, insinuating that more development is required, simultaneously, over-development is equally as threatening to the global environment and human-welfare. The conclusion therefore being more of the same kind of development cannot be the answer, giving rise to the understanding of a new form of 'sustainable' development (Robinson, 2004). According to the theoretical world of sustainability, this integration of environmental, social, and economic concerns in planning and management for sustainable development is essential. In order to achieve ecological integrity (to preserve natural capital stock), there is a requirement of integrative and holistic approaches to management (Jabereen,

2008). Sustainability doesn't occur in isolation, it requires collective action, and cannot occur when unsupported at each level (Hejer, 2011). Sustainability suggests an equilibrium between economic growth and environmental responsibility (Wagner & Svensson, 2010; Holliday *et al.*, 2002), thus, allowing businesses and the economy to operate as before (known as the status-quo) is no longer a viable option as it contradicts the overall idea of sustainability and sustainable development. A shift towards a more sustainable way of operating businesses and running the economy can therefore be seen as inevitable if we wish to commit to sustainability and sustainable development as a society. The discourse surrounding sustainability and sustainable development is still blurry, with different factions of society using different language within the same context. Government and private-sector organisations often utilise 'sustainable development', while academics and NGOs frequently opt for 'sustainability' (Robinson, 2004). This contradictory, dialectical relationship between sustainability and sustainable development also relates to the varied spectrum of ideologies ranging between the two extremities of ethical concepts; 'domination of nature', represented by doctrines of 'light ecology'; and the 'intrinsic right of nature', represented by doctrines of 'deep ecology'. Between these exists many other approaches which attempt to address and harmonise this paradox (Jabereen, 2008). While the literature embraces of a multitude of terms, this research keeps in line with the views and definitions of the UN, the Brundtland Report, and SDGs as they are paramount to this research.

2.2. Global context: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

Since the early 1990s and the globalisation of environmental discourse, sustainability has transcended national boundaries. Sustainability and sustainable development have become central to all levels of environmental policies worldwide. Sustainable development has been used as a political statement on an ethical position with both practical and theoretical implications (Dodds, 2000). This discourse which views the world as one unified society, aims to address global environment and development problems locally, at their root-causes. This operationalisation of sustainability and sustainable development resulted in Agenda 21² in 1992, followed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)³ in 2000, and most recently the SDGs – the central element of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁴. Officially adopted by the UN's 193 member states on January 1, 2016, the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs (fig. 1) are the universal goals which we as a society are obligated to pursue globally over the coming years until their 2030 deadline (United Nations, 2017a).

"Committing to mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind."

Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2019)

Consisting of 169 targets, the SDGs built upon the 8 MDGs, incorporating both social and environmental sustainability, complimenting what the Brundtland report states as key to sustainable development and a sustainable society (United Nations, 2017b). Although the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are not legally binding, the SDGs represent an obligation for each nation to their global community. These nations have committed to translating the 17 global goals into national goals and policies to effectively contribute to justice, peace and security, and well-being for all (Horlings *et al.*, 2020). As such, the SDGs act primarily as a language and framework for environmental activism,

² Agenda 21 was a comprehensive plan of action to build a global partnership for sustainable development in order to improve human lives and protect the environment, adopted in June 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil by more than 178 countries. (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>).

³ The Millennium Declaration was unanimously adopted by over 178 countries in September 2000, at the Millennium Summit held at the UN Headquarters in New York. The Summit led to the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which aimed to reduce extreme poverty by 2015. The MDGs were focused on problems such as extreme poverty and basic needs, access to education, and the elimination of HIV/AIDs, and were narrowly focused on developing countries. (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>).

⁴ Agenda 2030 is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It seeks to strengthen universal peace, recognises that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The 17 SDGs are a part of this agenda, and demonstrate the scale ambition of the universal Agenda, building on what the MDGs did not achieve. (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>).

resistance, advocacy, protection, planning and policy decision-making (Warner, 2005), aiming to provide a blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and planet, both now and into the future. The SDGs hence have a unique ability to be framed in multiple ways. Rather than a prescribed law or regulation, the SDGs are intentionally absent of specific policy options and are instead considered as a set of measuring standards for progress, practical indicators, ethical imperatives, a guide to policy and decision-making, and even stories of the life and well-being of societies across the globe (Adger *et al.*, 2001). This format gives rise to their potential strength of having a broad appeal and ability to be activated in a variety of differing localities, in both developed and developing nations (Warner, 2005). Principally though, the SDGs are an urgent call-to-action for countries to work together locally as a global partnership, recognising that ending social depravations must go hand-in-hand with tackling climate-change to ensure a safe and just future for all (including our natural environment) (United Nations, n.d.d). This combination of being universally applicable, integrated and indivisible, while also representing the aspirational Agenda 21 is what sets the SDGs apart from previous sustainability initiatives.

The SDGs were developed by an Open Working Group (OWG) established by the UN in 2013 which consulted with parties including governments, civil-society, scientific community, and business representatives (UN, 2017a). The OWG focused on *‘the need to function holistically instead of in silos’* (Dodds, 2017, p. 35). This interconnectedness enables the SDGs to act as network, connecting sustainable problems at different levels, in different places, proving the indivisibility of sustainable challenges. While businesses were represented in the creation of the SDGs, this was predominately focussed on large-scale organisations (Kolk, 2016). This has since been critiqued as being narrowly focussed, due to the exclusion of micro-organisations, SMEs and the contribution of responsible trading, social entrepreneurs and enterprises – those of which all have an ability and important part to play in the contribution towards the achievement of the SDGs (Social Enterprise UK, 2015).

Achieving the SDGs by 2030 requires joint efforts of governments, civil-society, and private-sector, often in collaboration, and at specific local levels. While the SDGs express a necessary level of ambiguity for their success, the need for shared global understandings of the possibility of achieving progress on environmental and social development challenges is stressed to all involved parties, (characteristic of dialogue on global environment and development issues seen since the Brundtland report) (Adger *et al.*, 2001). As part of a broader social, political, and institutional mobilisation among states, non-governmental organisations, and private-sector to address global environmental challenges, the SDGs are seen as a discursive frame (set of shared meanings) able to help provide form and content to a global agenda for action (Warner, 2005). However, ultimately in 2019, it became obvious that the SDGs are not advancing at the necessary rate to be achieved by their 2030 deadline. The UN Secretary General subsequently called upon all sectors of society, worldwide, to mobilise for a DoA. This DoA covers three levels of society; the global, the local, and people. Together, these groups are invited to generate an unstoppable movement, pushing forward the required transitions for the achievement of the SDGs within their last decade (United Nations, n.d.b). People action, including youth, civil-society, the private-sector, and academia encompasses the action taken by social enterprises, a group which as mentioned, was not included in the SDGs’ OWG. Research has however shown that the SDGs have the potential to guide these social enterprises and their entrepreneurial ventures to understand their interrelations and focus their efforts in an effective manner (Martí, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2016; von Stechow *et al.*, 2016) which in turn has the opportunity to facilitate their communication, activities, and ambitions (Schaltegger *et al.*, 2018) allowing them to reach both their own goals, and the goals of the SDGs, which are in fact interlinked.

2.3. The link between the local and the global

This section discusses the local interpretation of the global, focussing on the goals and global phenomena presented in the preceding sections. The theory of glocalisation is introduced to elucidate

this connection. Following this, social enterprises are examined with this theory in-mind to further strengthen the argument on the interconnectivity between the global and local. This concentrates on defining what is a social enterprise, why they exist, and why they are needed in society. Finally, how this is communicated and interpreted at this glocal level, specifically within Amsterdam, the Netherlands is discussed.

2.3.1. Glocalisation

While often assumed that outside, external forces determine globalisation, global processes and global networks, this is in fact not the reality. The global is not disconnected from its counterpart; the local (Latour, 1993). Global processes have an origin, a means of distribution, and places or people which materialise the consequences (Ejderyan & Backhaus, 2007), implying that wherever the effects of globalisation occur, the form in which these effects take depends on the specific setting or context. This convergence of global dynamics and local contexts is defined within the literature as the theory of 'glocalisation', a portmanteau of globalisation and localisation (Backhaus, 2003; Robertson, 1992; Swyngedouw, 1997). Glocalisation hence focuses on the agency of local communities and their ability to solve global problems within their own locale, while simultaneously recognising the universality of problems and their embeddedness in power relations (Warner, n.d.). The term '*think global, act local*', a commonly used slogan to encourage people to think about the global consequences of their actions, while making an effort to improve things locally within their own communities, can be used to explain this phenomenon (Reference, 2021). In an attempt to define this theory in simple terms, we can say that glocalisation is the understanding that the expression of global dynamics is reinterpreted locally, which leads to an interpenetration of the local and global scales, in turn creating context-dependant outcomes. These outcomes can thus be referred to as 'glocal' outcomes. Some scholars argue that glocalisation is the way in which globalisation truly operates and exists, and that there exists no real boundary between the global and local at all (Robertson 1992; Swyngedouw, 2004). Overall, this research will consider glocalisation as the interpretation of the global and local which results in unique outcomes depending on the geographic location (Ritzer, 2003).

Glocalisation; governance and institutions

At an institutional level, the processes of glocalisation are visible when local governments (municipalities or regions, e.g. the City of Amsterdam) take action to establish themselves as actors on the global stage. This can be seen in actions like networking with local governments in other countries or developing strategies to attract/retain international investors or entrepreneurs (Ejderyan & Backhaus, 2007). The unique situations and complexities of sustainability in a local context highlights the range of possible problems and solutions that can emerge at this local level when guided by a global framework like the SDGs, further highlighting the complexity of the system of governance. Complexity of this degree requires innovative forms of multi-level adaptive approaches which align with social, political, and economic issues while also considering the ecological perspective. While the SDGs were created for public authorities to initiate, within a neo-liberal governance structure, the public and private, and the collective and individual are no longer separate – these groups are linked by actors and processes. The SDGs hence are reinterpreted and reconstructed in local contexts, in a glocal manner, with actions often led by smaller groups and individuals 'on the ground' (Warner, n.d.). Considering the SDGs have been developed as part of a broader social, political, and institutional mobilisation of environmental and social issues among states, non-governmental organisations, and private-sector, they hence provide a shared set of meanings which enable form and content to a global agenda for the action and direction for such groups (Warner, n.d.).

Glocalisation and society

The aforementioned groups and individuals are provided via the SDGs, a vocabulary for actions without the prescription of any specific functions. This can create a constructive ambiguity able to be used flexibly, allowing interpretation to be made at the local level (Warner, n.d.). The existing

literature however currently lacks an understanding as to what degree this interpretation and communication of the global SDGs enables or obstructs transformative change across multiple levels. It's also currently unknown how effective the SDGs are at this glocal level, particularly the understanding of the strength of ties between this macro-level to micro-level, and importantly, how the global truly speaks to the local to inspire and facilitate universal, indivisible, and impactful changes (Warner, n.d.). It is, however, also important to consider that language and communication can change over time, according to local conditions, and the ever evolving and sometimes diverging global and local circumstances. This in turn creates the possibility of glocal tensions and contradictions which may play out within the interplay between the global and the local (Warner, n.d.). The potential chaos and contradictions of this interplay is little explored. The glocal, and the society which takes glocal action can be interpreted as a bridging function between the global goals, at the local scene. The glocal consequently must and needs to exist. This is not just a fashionable term, or theory with little practical relevance. The coming sections, and research also delve further into this bridging connection, exploring the potential disorder of this interaction.

2.3.2. Social enterprises

Coase (1937, p. 1) stated in his Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science article, 'The Nature of the Firm', that economic theory suffered due to its '*failure to clearly state its assumptions*'. He noted that while economists were busy building their theories, they often didn't examine the foundations which these theories were built upon. To consider the very basics is a necessary step to prevent misunderstanding which can arise due to a lack of knowledge or inaccurate assumptions. Coase (1937) may have stated the obvious when suggesting that the use of the word 'firm' can mean very different things when used in economics compared to the layman, however this basic explanation is actually necessary, especially to ensure that a definition is both tractable and realistic, making it relevant in the real-world. This section therefore examines the glocal, taking into consideration the embodiment of glocalisation, via the existence and action of social entrepreneurs, particularly the social enterprises which they create by providing answers to basic questions about social enterprises.

The forthcoming research focuses on a social enterprise located in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, a developed country. As argued by Macnaghten and Jacobs (1999), Redclift (2005), Boone and Modarres (2006), and Eames (2006), while the rhetoric and practice of sustainability in developed countries exists, it has not eliminated the problems it relates to. The authors suggest that meeting people's basic needs everywhere, is a crucial part of wider sustainable development goals. No perfect blueprint for the sustainable city exists, it's instead a collective journey beginning with the willingness to address problems. Within the Netherlands, this willingness appears to come from people at a local level, from the individuals who create and participate in social enterprises. These people are using their collective resources (such as knowledge, finance, and materials) to make a difference in a glocal manner, in an effort to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs. In 'The Nature of the Firm', Coase (1937) refers to Dobb (1929) and the conception of the capitalist, noting that, '*he is related to the much larger economic specialisation, of which he himself is merely one specialised unit. Here, he plays his part as a single cell in a larger organism, mainly unconscious of the wider role he fills*'. This statement also rings true to the concept of glocalisation, and the actions of social enterprises which function locally, within a global system, or organism, of global goals. The concept and understanding of a social enterprise will now be elaborated upon to put this into context.

Social entrepreneurship and social enterprises in the literature

Entrepreneurship has long been responsible for a large portion of growth within business and social sectors (Austin *et al.*, 2006). Much like the increased mainstream interest and awareness in sustainability over the past decades as discussed in previous sections, since the 1990's, the literature on entrepreneurship has too begun to expand in scope. Academia has taken a broader view of entrepreneurship research, linking entrepreneurial processes with social contexts such as

sustainability, environmental, and social problems (Thananusak, 2019), hence giving rise to interest and subsequent research into the understandings of social entrepreneurs and the social enterprises they create to address global societal issues.

What is a social enterprise?

There are currently debates in social and environmental enterprise research and practice over the exact definition of a social enterprise, which extends even to their name, including terms such as; ecopreneurs, green ecopreneurship, purpose-driven entrepreneurship, social enterprise, environmental enterprise, and so on. However, it's generally agreed that a social enterprise is defined as an organisation which trades for social and/or environmental purposes (Austin *et al.*, 2006). This is the term and definition used within this research. Common across all terms and definitions within literature and society, is the overall ambition to create social value over personal and shareholder value (Zadek & Thake, 1997). This is the main goal and driving force of what a social enterprise does, and why they do it. The achievement of this is hence given precedence over profit (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006; Peattie & Morley, 2008). However, it's not uncommon for a social enterprise to be created with the intent to become a profit-venture, but unlike traditional business ventures, these organisations emphasise social return as well as financial return, with profits being reinvested into the business to fuel their initiatives (Urban, 2015). The literature also asserts the imperativeness for a social enterprise's long-term success, that the managerial mindset be similar to a traditional firm. Therefore, it's still possible, and preferable for a social enterprise to generate income whilst achieving their social missions, enabling themselves to be self-sustainable (Bansal *et al.*, 2019). While many, if not most social enterprises operate within the bounds of corporate social responsibility (CSR), as a social enterprise prioritises social value over economic value, they again can be separated from the values of a traditional business. The generation of income via trading is also used to distinguish a social enterprise from a charity (Langdon & Burkett, 2004; Smallbone *et al.*, 2001). Social enterprises generally follow a democratic nature and structure, and as such, there is an important role of stakeholder participation in their governance (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006; Thompson & Doherty, 2006). Thus, they frequently hold cooperative and democratic origins (Apostolopoulos, Newbery & Gkartzios, 2018). Hybrid-organisation is another common feature of a social enterprise, in which organisational forms are aligned exclusively with neither a private, public, nor non-profit organisation (Billis, 2010). Social enterprises can be considered to be the archetypal form of hybrid-organisation via their quest for the ideal social/environmental objectives (Doherty *et al.*, 2014). Due to their dynamic nature, they're able to take whichever organisational form best suits in order to most effectively mobilise their resources to address the problem they aim to solve. With their interconnectedness of both global and local realities and their interest, missions and values aimed at contributing to addressing global sustainable challenges (such as the SDGs), but in a specific local context, a social enterprise and their actions could hence be described as the embodiment of globalisation.

Why do social enterprises exist?

As the notion of sustainability and being sustainable becomes more widespread and common-place, it's little surprise to scholars and the corporate world that the trend of sustainability is also growing amongst entrepreneurs (Miller, 2010). Social entrepreneurship has become the sustainable solution to traditional business ventures in which individuals can create both social change and a more sustainable society via their services and/or products, blending social, economic and environmental value (the triple bottom line) (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010). Studies have indicated that citizens and businesses presently have more responsibilities than ever, often referred to as a '*participatory society*' (PBL, 2015, p. 30). Individuals are seen more often taking initiative to improve their own surroundings, in what is described as the '*energetic society*' (PBL, 2015, p. 30). According to Partzsch and Ziegler (2011) this innovative nature as seen in social entrepreneurs, enables such individuals to deal with and address commonly perceived problems in the world. While entrepreneurs are traditionally

regarded as being drivers for economic growth, they are now also front-line actors, capable and somewhat responsible for reducing economic, social, and environmental problems within our society, via the creation of social enterprises (fig. 2) (Thananusak, 2019). Fig. 2 is also utilised by this research's case-study organisation, Sapient, to justify their existence. With the initiative of individual entrepreneurs, plus a governmental push for citizens to be participatory in addressing the problems of the world, we see more social entrepreneurs and social enterprises entering the market.

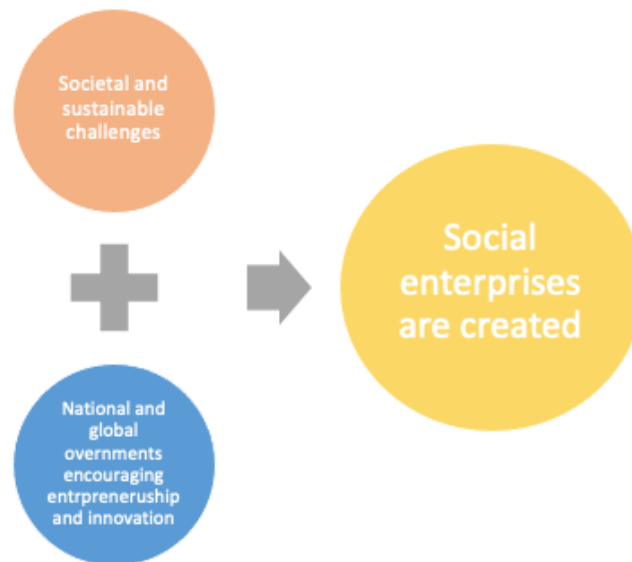


Figure 2. The existence model of a social enterprise. (Adapted from Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, 2021)

The concept of the utopian thought, introduced by Dobson's (2000) book *Green Political Thought*, introduces the importance of the search for an ecologically responsible society. He suggests that a utopian vision provides green activists with a constant pool of inspiration, maintaining that '*Green reformers need a radically alternative picture of post-industrial society, they need deep ecological visionaries, they need the phantom studies of the sustainable society*' (p. 206). Multiple researchers have also shown that visions are able to play an important role in realising sustainable solutions (Quist, 2007; Wiek & Iwaniec, 2014), with positive visions about the future considered as influential stimuli for changes, providing direction for actions and behaviour. These visions are often shaped in a decentralised, bottom-up, social interaction processes among different actors (Quist, 2007). This is evident amongst both social entrepreneurs, and the social enterprises they create. Such individuals are able to prosper on the idea and innovation to change the current systems and patterns of our society (Urban, 2010) as well as recognising market-failures (Austin *et al.*, 2006), with a vision for a better, more sustainable future. The activities of social enterprises can be characterised by this innovation, or creation of something new, rather than replicating existing practices. Social entrepreneurs are a new breed of entrepreneur, who when successful, are able to lead the trend in sustainability by starting their companies from the ground-up, providing them with an immediate competitive advantage within their industries (Gibbs, 2009). A social entrepreneur's alternative approach to business is therefore able to assist them in creating this advantage, unlike traditional businesses who consider profit as their primary goal.

Why do social enterprises need to exist, and why are they not the norm?

Again, turning again to the literary world, let's consider Callenbach's 1975 novel, *Ecotopia*, as we delve into why social enterprises need to exist, and why they and their services are not the norm within our societies. *Ecotopia* portrays a society based on the principle of a completely stable ecological state. While Callenbach's (1975) utopian novel includes some drastic macro-level measures, it also portrays

a society in which the production of more standardised, durable and repairable goods is the norm, and in which only reusable materials are allowed, mirroring today's circular economy mindset, important to many social enterprises and sustainability goals. This way of thinking, guided by social and sustainable intentions and values, can be seen within the values of a social enterprise. Similarly, Bookchin (1980, 1982, 1989) proposed an alternative, ecological society based upon principles such as self-regulation, balance, and harmony. Bookchin's (1980, 1982, 1989) society is based on liberty and participatory democracy. However, this type of society only has the ability to be realised if the hierarchical organisation of society, and the capitalist economy which controls and exploits nature are eliminated. This is not currently a realistic reality in which we live, thus social enterprises are created by innovative, passionate entrepreneurs who aim to bring a small part of this utopia into the capitalist world within the environment of their own organisations. As discussed, within social enterprises this model of reduced hierarchy and democratic value system is frequently observed.

A demand for more involvement of various actors within the spheres of market and civil-society correlates with the general trend that society itself has begun to change over recent decades. As *'citizens and businesses have more responsibilities (as the 'participatory society') and more often take the initiative to improve their surroundings (as the 'energetic society')'* IPBL, 2015, p. 30), we see social entrepreneurs finding themselves in charge of creating institutions in which they are able actualise their mission and goals of social-transformation, carrying out their innovative solutions towards success (Satar & John, 2016). The theories of change and accompanying organisational models of social entrepreneurs and their ventures are created in a bid to meet social needs and market-failure in a more superior way. However, an all-too-common problem regarding their success, is the lack of available resources for their innovations, and it's often seen that the demand for social enterprises and their services far exceed their capacity to serve these needs. Unfortunately, the initial success of a social enterprise can therefore lead to an increased demand for the social enterprise's programs, products, or services, as well as requests to scale up or replicate the organisation, without adequate resources/capacity to do so. For stakeholders such as founders, employees or outside partners, this growth imperative can become paramount. This can also occur due to the existence and growth of an organisation fulfilling the personal needs of those involved as well as building upon their personal business values (Austin *et al.*, 2006). Often a social entrepreneur's strong belief in their theory of change and organisational structure can lead the organisation to pursuing growth as a means to try to achieve greater social impact (Colby, Stone, & Carttar, 2004), running the risk of launching into expansion before adequate planning and thought is put into the model. Social enterprises resources are often confined to personal savings and banks loans (Belz & Binder, 2017), with as little as only 42% attaining profitability, 22% breaking-even and 36% running at a loss (Social Enterprise NL, 2019). Nevertheless, social value creation and concern for sustainability often gives social enterprises a unique opportunity for exposure to unconventional sources of funding such as public-funding, grants, crowdfunding, and innovative prizes. However, the competitive nature of this creates difficulty to utilise this as a sole-source of financing. Unfortunately, this series of issues, combined with the status-quo of the market and current social-paradigm, demonstrates why social enterprises are not the norm, and more often seen as a niche creative space to create sustainable products, services, or processes which integrate our social and environmental concerns (Bansal *et al.*, 2019), with the hope and ambition of 'breaking through'.

2.3.3. How the global is communicated at the local level (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

The SDGs are disseminated at multiple levels, though multiple channels and actors within the Netherlands, having emerged within civil-society and governance as an important role, with the ability to link local and global contexts. Organisations, institutions, and government bodies increasingly refer to the SDGs to intentionally link their actions and actions of those within the community to the goals. Partnerships are envisaged as an innovative feature of the SDGs (Biermann, Kanie, & Kim, 2017), hence a connection between the global goals, local networks, and social enterprises aiming to contribute

towards the achievement of the SDGs is expected to both exist and function well. The role of the SDGs is to act as a discursive and communicative framework, with the power to shape the perceptions of individuals, groups, communities, and governments, affecting their commitment to action, and as such holds the potential of their failure or success (Warner, n.d.). This research focuses on the observations of a local Amsterdam social enterprise aiming to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs, hence the following section discusses the current form and content of the communication of the SDGs and transformative action relevant to social enterprises in this locale.

SDG Nederland

SDG Nederland (originally SDG Charter Foundation) was created in 2016, established to support and facilitate the SDGs within the Netherlands. Since 2019, the foundation has concentrated on the general-public and professional network, as such, SDG Nederland facilitates both an online and offline community aiming to connect those who contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs within the Netherlands, including organisations and individual actors (SDG Nederland, n.d.). The movement comprises of more than one thousand social organisations, youth groups, financial institutions, knowledge institutions, and residents' initiatives. Partners of SDG Nederland can join their online network via the SDG Nederland website, where they can showcase their organisation, what they do, and how they contribute towards the SDGs. They can also meet at SDG Nederland events, creating a strong network and community of change (SDG Nederland, n.d.). The foundation consists of an (unpaid) board of five individuals, six employees, and is located in the Royal Tropical Institute⁵ (KIT) in Amsterdam. The foundation works closely with the Dutch national SDG coordinator, and is financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union (SDG Nederland, n.d.).

SDG House Network (SDG House Amsterdam)

Created in 2017 by KIT, the SDG House network is a diverse community of over 50 experts, social entrepreneurs, NGOs, and organisations working together to achieve the SDGs. SDG House Network is a bottom-up initiative, building on national and local efforts of achieving the SDGs within the Netherlands. It is made up of a diverse group of SDG Houses (a physical regional or municipal location for sustainability events and entrepreneurship) which aim to aid communities with locally minded initiatives that complement the global SDGs and the national agenda, acting in a glocal manner. The network consists of an online platform, matchmaking events, an annual SDG Action Day conference, and other local events which facilitate exchanges of information, create partnerships, and build business opportunities for those involved, with the aim of maximising a collective impact to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs (SDG House Network, 2021a). SDG House Network aligns with the UN's call to action, *'it is now up to all of us, governments, businesses civil-society and the general public to build a better future for everyone'* (The Global Goals, n.d.). Multiple membership options exist; guest membership for individuals, SME memberships, and partnerships for large corporations, NGO's, and knowledge organisations. Membership gives access to services provided by and for members, with the annual fee covering the purchase of services including courses on the SDGs, tailor-made sustainability strategies, and access to meetups (SDG House Network, 2021b).

Social Enterprise NL

Created in 2012, before the formation of the SDGs, Social Enterprise NL is comprised of a member board and working team, with the overall aim to create a favourable ecosystem for social entrepreneurs, and connect, strengthen, and increase the visibility of social enterprises in the Netherlands. This is done by providing support to members, facilitating a constructive business environment, and supporting social entrepreneurial action, aiming to promote social enterprises as an ally to governments in achieving global goals (Social Enterprise NL, n.d.). Social Enterprise NL

⁵ KIT Royal Tropical Institute is an independent centre of expertise and education for sustainable development located in Amsterdam. They assist governments, NGO's, and private corporations globally to build inclusive and sustainable societies by informing best practices and measuring their impact. Their work is guided by the SDGs, focussing on health, gender, economic development, and intercultural cooperation. (<https://www.kit.nl/about-us/>).

recognises that to create societal-change for the better, a broad movement of consumers, citizens, institutions, charities, politics, and governments is needed. They view social enterprises at the forefront of this movement, with their overall goal to improve the world above profit-generation. They have therefore created a national membership body of and for social enterprises in the Netherlands. Together with experts and coaches in areas such as finance, impact measurement, marketing, sales, and legal support, both members and non-members can utilise Social Enterprise NL's resources to provide their organisation with the best possible chance to achieve their mission, helping contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs. Membership follows a pay-as-you-feel-rate (starting at €295 per year). Social Enterprise NL also offers a series of free manuals and tools on financing, legal form, impact measurement and setting up a social enterprise to all social entrepreneurs whether they are a member of the network or not. As Social Enterprise NL also has a strong focus on local governmental institutions and the national government, they aim to improve the business environment for social enterprises by striving for better national legislation and regulation. This is particularly important as the Netherlands currently has no separate legal structure for social enterprises. In 2017, they created the Commission for a Social Enterprises Code, and developed a consultation document outlining the main principles behind social entrepreneurship (Social Enterprise NL, n.d.c.).

City of Amsterdam and Impact Amsterdam

A global frame must consider the agency of local communities, and their ability to solve global problems, while simultaneously understanding the universality of these problems. Local connections can be seen as one of the most common denominators in existence, with the SDGs providing a method for local collaboration with a common global goal (Tataryn, 2017). One of the strengths of the SDGs is their notion that community identities transcend borders (Fox & Stoett, 2016). A recent Dutch governmental publication, 'People and the Earth: International cooperation for the Sustainable Development Goals in 23 infographics', acknowledges that *'For global partnerships to effectively contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, issues on a local level must be linked to the global level, and public and private interests must be aligned.'* (PBL, 2017, p. 45), further stating that such effective partnerships must start with a clear diagnosis of market and governance failures to be addressed, and that partnership activities must be strongly embedded within local situations, ensuring that context-specific knowledge is available, and outcomes are evaluated, inclusive of the contribution of the partnership to the SDGs (PBL, 2017). The City of Amsterdam also acknowledges the necessity to promote the development of innovative solutions to societal challenges, and that to do so, the government indeed must shift their role and become a partner to its residents, businesses, and social organisations (Amsterdam Impact, 2019a). The city recognises its continual rise of social enterprises, and thus embraces this innovative local mindset, aiming to become the number one city for social impact (Iamsterdam, 2021a). With this in mind, in 2015, they created the initiative, Amsterdam Impact, which aims to strengthen the local impact enterprise system⁶. This focuses on providing information to individuals and social enterprises, enabling them to explore the city's entrepreneurship development opportunities, connect with impact-driven financiers to aid in funding, join start-up competitions, gain access to new customers with their Buy Social⁷ events, follow local 'conscious shopping routes', and offer knowledge sharing events and workshops to build business skills. The new Amsterdam Impact 2019 – 2022 programme (fig. 3) is the official document leading the strategic planning and aims to focus on social enterprises able to improve quality of life in Amsterdam's neighbourhoods (Amsterdam Impact, 2019a). The Social Enterprise Monitor however, has shown that collaboration with municipalities is the most frequently cited obstacle to growth, mentioned by 32% of social entrepreneurs included in the research. Additionally, 61% of the respondents suggested that

⁶ The City of Amsterdam refers to the impact enterprise ecosystem as; start-ups, SMEs, large companies, financiers, civil servants, network organisations, and knowledge institutes. <https://www.iamsterdam.com/media/business/industry/amsterdam-impact-social-entrepreneurs/amsterdam-impact-action-programme-20192022-en.pdf?la=en>

⁷ Buy Social is a programme of Social Enterprise NL. Buy Social introduces companies and governments to social enterprises and their offerings by organizing events at which social entrepreneurs pitch for potential customers. Their online marketplace also provides an overview of a range of social enterprises and their products/services. <https://www.buy-social.nl/over-buy-social>

while they would like to, they have no collaboration with their local municipality, highlighting a clear disconnect between the services and opportunities offered by government, and the realistic ability to take advantage of these by local social enterprises (Social Enterprise NL, 2019).



Figure 3. The Amsterdam Impact 2019-2022 programme summary. (Amsterdam Impact, 2019b)

Overall, the information presented in this section shows that while the SDGs and global goals are acknowledged and mentioned by national and local government within policies and publications, much of the actual networking, communication of goals, and connection that is available for social enterprises enabling them to succeed, and giving them the ability to contribute effectively towards the achievement of the SDGs, comes from private, non-governmental networks of interested individuals and groups. These organisations create online and offline networks and communities of like-minded people, providing opportunities for social enterprises to support each other in their missions, stimulating a favourable ecosystem for social enterprises, and assisting in creating a new economy and movement of consumers, citizens, companies, institutions, politics, and governments. This research aims to delve further into this local context, and discover the realities of glocalisation within Amsterdam, focussing specifically on a single social enterprise which aims to contribute towards the SDGs. As the Brundtland Report (1987) states *'the distribution of power and influence within society lies at the heart of most development challenges'* (p. 37). This statement will be very telling as this research unfolds, and the reality of the networks, connections, knowledge, barriers, limitations, and more are discovered.

Chapter 3: Research Strategy and Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology of the research, giving insights into the chosen research strategy used to study the interplay between the global and the local, to effectively answer the research question. It discusses case selection, data sources, data collection, data analysis, and an elaboration on my position within the ontological, epistemological, and methodological landscape.

3.1. Research philosophy

It can be argued that the first-layer and defining factor of research is the underlying philosophy of the researcher (fig. 4), which in turn determines the perspective and handling of the data throughout the research (Saunders & Tosey, 2012). This philosophy explains both the '*basic belief system or worldview*' obtained via the research, and how a researcher defines their nature of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105), thus influencing how research is conducted, how findings are interpreted, and what conclusions are drawn (table 2).

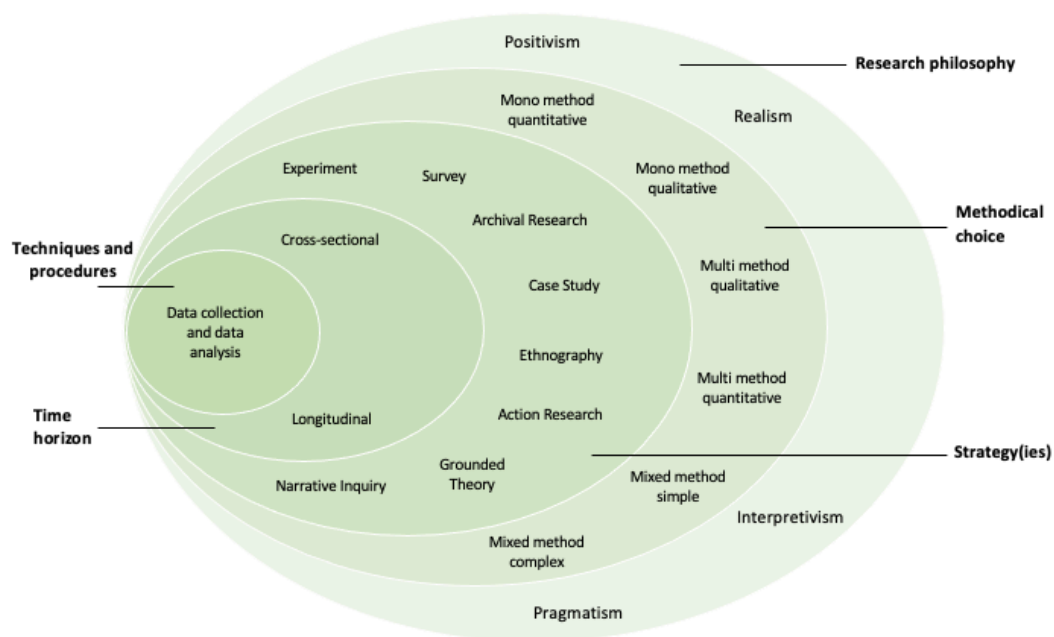


Figure 4. Research onion (adapted from Saunders & Tosey, 2012)

Table 2. Basic beliefs (metaphysics) of alternative inquiry paradigms (adapted from Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

	Positivism	Post-positivism	Critical Theory <i>et al.</i>	Constructivism
Ontology	Naïve realism – ‘real’ reality but apprehendable	Critical realism – ‘real’ reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Historical realism – virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystalised over time	Relativism – local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; findings are true	Modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional / subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional / subjectivist; created findings

Methodology	Experimental/manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Dialogical / dialectical	Hermeneutical / dialectical
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Ontology and epistemology

This research focuses on the concepts of sustainability and glocalisation. Sustainability, a dynamic and ethically driven process defined by ethical dimensions such as political participation and social justice, which is perceived and acted upon differently depending on the person/location (Balas & Strasdas, 2018), showing the subjective perceptions and values dependent on the individual and location. Ethical and sustainable choices are too based on subjective perceptions, thus the values which one attaches to it. They are a social construct with varying interests of many actors. Glocalisation acknowledges how local and global realities are interconnected and communicate to one another, which can be applied to the sustainability problems we are confronted with, implying that these problems while global, manifest differently in different contexts. Within the context of this research, it's not only individuals who create realities, but also groups, organisations, and departments within an organisation, who are also capable of creating these realities in which they operate, and the circumstances surrounding these realities which are constantly subject to change due to the changing perceptions that are induced internally and/or externally. There appears to be no ultimate truth within these concepts, with a social construct built by the varying interests and values of those involved. A constructivist ontology is therefore concluded as best-suited for this research (table 1). Considering epistemology, this implies that the researcher, respondents and findings influence each other through the entire research-process. Knowledge is co-constructed, and I, as the researcher take an active role. I'm not separate to my research; the research and researcher are inherently connected, and those whom I'm studying are not merely my subjects, but participants in my research. Saunders & Tosey (2012, p. 58) suggest that the choice of methodology should support the collection of '*credible, reliable and relevant data*' as to achieve a consensus construction of reality which can be shared among actors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

Positionality

The positionality of a researcher '*reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study*' (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 71), influencing how research is conducted, its outcomes, and results (Rowe, 2014). Positionality is usually identified by establishing the researcher's subject under investigation, research participants, and research context and process (Malterud, 2001; Grix, 2019). Within social sciences, little research is able to be value-free (Carr, 2000), therefore positionality requires the researcher to understand their views, values, and beliefs regarding their research design, conduct, and output. Both self-reflection and reflexivity are required, so the researcher can identify, construct, critique, and articulate their positionality throughout the research. Within this research, I have shown my reflexivity by acknowledging, disclosing, and understanding my part and influence within my research (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). I've been both within and part of my research, positioning myself as an 'insider', embedding myself within the case-study as an intern, considered by the organisation as part of the team, conducting participant-observations during my research-process as a researcher. I have written persuasively throughout this thesis, so that the reader experiences a sense of '*being there*' capturing my thinking, utilising the concept of verisimilitude (Richardson, 1994, p. 521). I aimed to write clearly while also providing a story which realistically displayed my findings, accurately reflecting the complexities existing within my research topic, while also engaging my reader, and interweaving myself into the text. I've therefore intentionally aligned my self-interests with my research, manifesting my worldview by describing my experiences. As a

constructivist researcher, I addressed the processes of interaction among individuals. I recognised my background shapes my interpretation, and as such positioned myself within my research to acknowledge how my interpretation flows from my own personal, cultural, and historical experiences; a student of environment and society studies, with a personal interest in living a sustainable-lifestyle, holding a personal belief that individual practices can affect the current social-paradigm regarding sustainability and sustainable development. Thus, I've been able to make an interpretation of what I found throughout this research, one shaped by my own experiences during my internship as well as my background (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My intent as a qualitative researcher is to make sense of (interpret) the meanings that others have about the world. Adopting this insider position allowed easier access to what was being studied due to being 'one of us' (Sanghera & Thapar-Bjorkert 2008), the ability to ask more meaningful or insightful questions (due to having prior/insider knowledge), building rapport, an equalised position with participants, and the ability to produce more authentic 'thick' descriptions within my results (Geertz, 1973). Despite the potential downfalls, such as the possibility to be unknowingly biased, lack of external perspective or lack of asking obvious questions which an outsider may legitimately ask (Naaek *et al.*, 2010), it's concluded that the positionality held during this research, didn't serve as a limitation. As a new team-member of Sapient, I held an inquisitive nature, questioning with a lack of presumption. The democratic nature of the organisation provided an easy transition to being seen as an equal. The way this research was collected and interpreted, and the way I engaged ultimately enriched the process and my experience, and my ability to remain reflective throughout the process, enabled me to be shaped by the research and those with whom I interacted.

3.2. Methodological choice

Saunders and Tosey (2012, p. 58) consider the researcher's methodological choice as '*a basic, but important one*'. This research employed a multi-method qualitative design (fig. 5). Qualitative data was obtained via participant-observation and interviews, alongside an extensive literature review. Data was collected from different sources for triangulation, adding validity to my findings. There is no single stable sense of reality in a constructivist ontology, as there is no 'ultimate truth'. This research therefore shows the reader what the observations and data have shown while studying the interplay between the global and the local, providing an answer to the research question. If data from similar sources show similar things, then the reader can make a confident choice to agree.

3.3. Research Strategy and research design

The research strategy provides the guidelines that the research was conducted under (Becker *et al.*, 2012). As the topic of this research appears to be understudied and the respective literature provides little theoretical resources in the form of analytical or conceptual frameworks, an explorative in-depth single case-study methodology based on qualitative data was chosen.

Qualitative research

A qualitative research strategy is best-suited when research is focussed on linguistics, aligning with this research (initial desk-research, participant-observation and semi-structured interviews). The aims of qualitative research are generally directed towards finding an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social-world, discovering how people's social and material circumstances influence their experiences, perspectives and histories (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research allowed me to write in a flexible, literary style conveying stories without the restrictions of formal academic structures of writing, well-suited to my personal strengths. It allows research to develop theories in the absence of current fully developed or inadequate theories, or when existing theories don't fully capture the complexity of the problem being observed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interactions among people and situations are difficult to capture with quantitative measures, using qualitative measures allowed a suitable solution to study the interplay between the global and the local (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Single case-study and case selection

A case-study is often employed in the exploration and understanding of complex issues when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required (fig. 5) (Zainal, 2007). This research design is suitable as it facilitates exploration into new topics (Stake, 2010), has the ability to make use of different sources of evidence, including interviews and participant-observation (Yin, 2009), and is well-suited in terms of a constructivist philosophy (Saunders & Tosey, 2012).

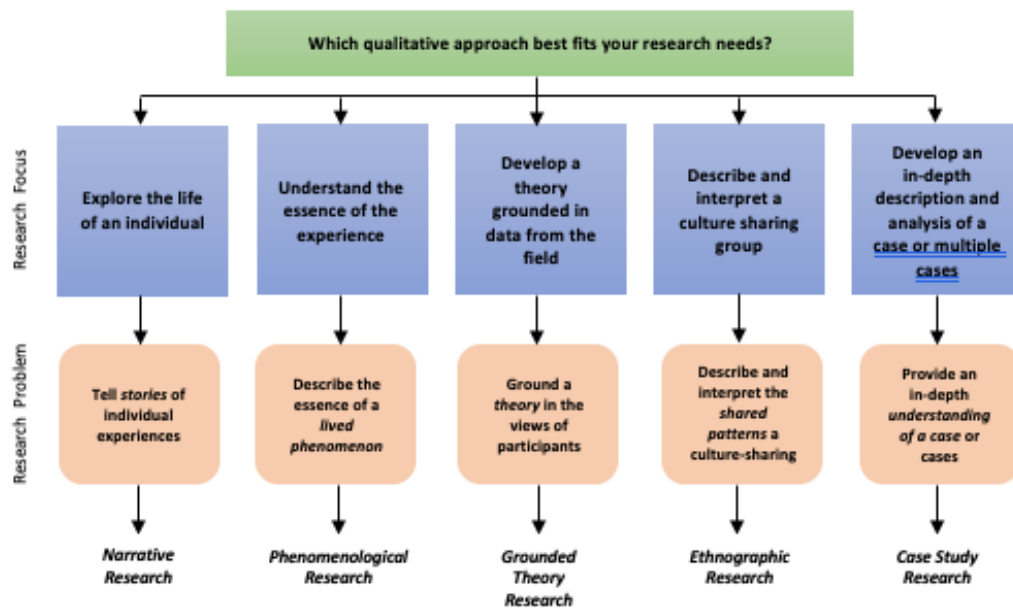


Figure 5. Flowchart for assessing the fit of five qualitative approaches with various research needs (adapted from Creswell & Poth, 2018)

A case-study provided a close collaboration between myself and my participants, enabling respondents to tell their stories and present their views of reality, allowing me to better understand their actions and behaviours. This approach allowed me to cover the contextual conditions I believed relevant to the phenomenon of glocalisation and context of this research. A case-study is also preferable when researched phenomena has social or political implications (Yin, 2003). The rise of social enterprises and the interest in sustainability can be seen as a social trend, with the SDGs as the institutional structures and political implications. In order to study these dynamics, the topic was restricted to one case offering a guiding-frame for the research, allowing for the analysis of a complex issue to be studied more adequately (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007; Yin, 2009). Diving deep into this case provided the ability for new, valued, and detailed insights (Bryman, 2012). The use of a single case-study, however, can imply that findings cannot be generalised easily, as a single case-study is considered to work solely at the micro-level (Zainal, 2007). However, with an intrinsic case-study, the case itself is of interest to the researcher, the main task being to truly understand the case, rather than theory-building. Interpretation must be offered to the reader, with the research sufficiently providing material, such as thick-descriptions, illustrating experiences and scenes, providing interpretations as observed, written as detailed narratives explaining the situation and background context. Thus, providing the reader with the ability to learn from the case, while also drawing their own conclusions. Readers can then make some generalisations, based on personal and vicarious experiences (naturalistic generalisation) (Stake, 2005). Representativeness or generalisation is therefore not the main concern. The sampling strategy of an intrinsic case-study thus involves the researcher looking for specific characteristics, an opportunity to learn and provide the research with thick-descriptions, adding context to observed behaviours. Every researcher must consider the limitations and alternatives to their chosen research study, eventually making a final choice. A case-study has ultimately been chosen for a number of reasons; due to the time horizon (fig. 5) hence scope

of the research; the context of the thesis and accompanying internship; as well as my own personal preference and academic strengths. Sapient was chosen as the case-study because of the ability to become more easily embedded in their organisation in a shorter time-period due to their staff of short-term interns/volunteers, along with their democratic nature, allowing for easier integration, therefore enabling a suitable case-study to provide thick-descriptions of my experience as an insider participant-observer. Their local commitment and contribution as an active network of young people working with other social enterprises in Amsterdam, trying to make a difference in their community, while simultaneously considering the global SDGs provided an opportunity to learn about the interplay between the global and the local. I was additionally attracted to Sapient for their embodiment of the DoA's people action, and strong belief that each individual has the power to change the world. As a project-oriented, democratic social-business striving to achieve the SDGs through their projects, collaborations, and helping other initiatives (Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, 2021), Sapient were an excellent candidate for this research (see Chapter 4 for full case-description).

Inductive and deductive approaches

This research begins deductively, researching general ideas and evaluating the analytical concepts which '*explain the relationships between variables*' (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 591). Information from this stage is then utilised specifically towards the research project, transferring this into a broader context, giving the research inductive elements (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2013). As the relationship between social enterprises and the achievement of the SDGs appears to be understudied, this research undertakes a more inductive nature, with its inquiry into an intersection not yet elaborately researched. The inductive orientation of research allows concepts and theories to emerge from the data (Bryman, 2012).

3.4. Research methods, data collection, and data analysis

A case-study can use different methods to collect data (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007). This research used qualitative-data collected from primary and secondary sources, including an initial literature review of desk-research, extensive participant-observation and fieldnotes (available on request), as well as a small number of interviews, over a period of 6 months (February – July 2021). This use of multiple methods (triangulation) serves as clarification of meaning, benefits validation, and provides a variety of perceptions (Stake, 2005). In keeping with the intentions of qualitative research of this kind, emphasis was placed on depth as opposed to breadth, hence the small sample-size. Utilising a single case-study provided an in-depth experience allowing the opportunity to utilise the multiplicity of methods to study the interplay between the global and the local to answer my research question. Embedding into this environment as a participant provided unique data specific to myself and the situation (Given, 2008), with data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting often conducted in parallel. The results of one activity often affected the direction of others allowing me to effectively collate data to answer my research questions (Bryman, 2004).

3.4.1. The Researcher

Due to the nature of qualitative research, the researcher themselves is seen as an instrument of data collection. According to Harris (2001), the self should be both disclosed in research and used as a legitimate source of knowledge, hence the use of first-person and my experiences being made explicit. According to Rosaldo (1989, p. 19) the researcher is a '*positioned subject*', whose '*life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight*', acknowledging implicitly the role of the researcher within the research-process, and re-establishing the self in social research. Just as the experiences of the participants are framed in social-cultural contexts, the beliefs, political stance, cultural background, and experiences of the researcher are also considered important variables, with the potential to affect the research-process. This concept of the self as a research-instrument reflects on the chances that a researcher's own subjectivity may affect the research and the reporting of findings. The expression and voice a researcher uses to leave their personal mark on the research-process

resulting from using the self as a research-instrument, along with their own subjectivity provides an understanding of a problem via the experiences of individuals and the particulars of their experience. These particulars provide a way to avoid losing experiences in abstraction (Eisner, 1998), serving as a way to produce themes from data. According to Eisner (1998, p. 39), *‘qualitative research becomes believable because of its coherence, insight, and instrument utility’*. The strength of research is therefore relative to the success of the relationship between myself as the researcher, and my participants, and as such it’s crucial for me to acknowledge the importance of understanding my own individuality, fluidity between groups, positionality, reflexivity, and the power relations integral to the research, to ensure a high standard of ethical, reliable research (UKEssays, 2018).

3.4.2. Secondary data collection

A literature review served as the first-step of data collection, providing context, alluding to the current theoretical frame of reference for future research. Data was collected via desk-research employing keywords (table 3) utilising Radboud University Library’s search-engine and GoogleScholar.

Table 3. Key words for literature review

Sustainability	Glocalisation	Glocal
Sustainable Development Goals	SDGs	Social entrepreneurship
Millennium Development Goals	MDGs	Social enterprises
Social sustainability	Sustainable transitions	Environmental sustainability

Publication dates were taken into account, ensuring literature was up-to-date regarding the SDGs (published from 2015). Literature referring to glocalisation, MDGs, social enterprises and entrepreneurship had no minimum-date requirement. The search included journal articles, government publications, policy documents, book chapters, organisation and NGO websites, and news articles to capture a broad spectrum of research. Ecosia search-engine with search entries using the key words from table 3 was hence also used. Additional secondary data via Sapient was utilised using their internal online-library.

3.4.3. Participant observation

“An observer is under the bed. A participant observer is in it.”

John Whiting, anthropologist, 1908 - 1999

In a second stage of data collection, focus turned to the collection of primary data with participant-observation as the main research method. As the foundation of anthropological scientific inquiry, participant-observation is frequently used in social sciences (Given, 2008), being a combination of taking part in *‘daily activities, rituals, interaction and events of a group of people’*, and observing the research population to gain an understanding of their point of view (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, p. 1-3). It can provide detailed insights into day-to-day practices which are hard to capture within an interview setting. Being relatively interactive and unstructured, a discovery via immersion and participation, it can be described as both the most natural and most challenging of qualitative data collection methods. The challenge being, formalising an essentially innate ability, ensuring that one is able to systematise and organise the naturally fluid process of observing. This requires the researcher to be a player within their specific social environment, while also fulfilling their role as a researcher, ensuring they adequately take notes and ask questions, allowing the meaning behind observed behaviours to be uncovered (Given, 2008). Unlike long ethnographic studies, participant-observation studies are usually shorter, less comprehensive in scope, and conducted in more mundane locations, such as this research. However, this data collection technique still has the ability to produce strong insights and highly contextual understanding of the research (Given, 2008). Data was discretely collected during

the course of business within a mundane day-to-day setting, as an ‘insider’, so that while participants were aware of my role as researcher and of my research, this awareness did not affect interactions and data collection, ensuring unobtrusiveness, and minimising disruptions. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) describe participant-observation as fieldwork involving ‘*active looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed fieldnotes, and perhaps most importantly, patience*’, all of which were heavily utilised during this research. Marshall and Rossman (1989) add, participant-observation is ‘*the systematic description of events, behaviours and artifacts in social setting chosen for study*’. Organisations can be viewed as societies of their own, with their own customs and practices, which makes this choice of data collection particularly suitable for this case-study (Evered & Louis, 2001). Within participatory research, there are four roles a researcher can take (table 4) (Bryman, 2012).

Table 4. The four roles of the researcher in participatory research (adapted from Bryman, 2012)

Role of the researcher	Function
Complete participant	The researcher participates fully, functioning as part of the participants
Participant-as-observer	The researcher participates and is a part of the group, but is also known as the researcher
Observer-as-participant	The researcher is required to mainly observe, and not participate
Complete observer	The researcher observes only, and does not participate at all - there are no interactions between participants and the researcher

Complete-participant was employed throughout this research (online-participation due to Covid-19 restrictions). Documentation of this type of data collection is best achieved by making field-descriptions. Saunders *et al.* (2016) describe four types of information to be recorded (table 5), which were utilised throughout this research, paying attention to the interplay noticed between the global and the local. These were documented as fieldnotes, collated into a handwritten fieldnotes book (as previously described) either during or as quickly as possible after the observed event (Bryman, 2012).

Table 5. Four types of information to be recorded during fieldwork (adapted from Saunders *et al.*, 2016)

Type of information	Description
Primary observations	What happened and what was said
Secondary observations	Observers interpretation of what was said
Experiential data	Data about what the researcher is feeling about what is happening, and what the values are that are being transferred
Contextual data	Data about the context, setting, the event, structures, etc.

Participant-observation was undertaken with the purpose of establishing rapport and providing a more elaborate context enabling a critical standpoint of the content of the research. In addition to day-to-day conversations via Discord⁸ and Whatsapp⁹, regular events were attended (table 6).

Table 6. Regular attended events during participant observation

Event	Description
General Assembly (GA)	Weekly organisation wide meeting open to all current and past members of Sapient. These meetings were used to share information about each internal project’s undertakings, what successes and limitations had arisen, as well as any other relevant professional or personal news for each team, ending with a personal Check Out ¹⁰ from each attendee.
Oview team meeting	Internal project specific weekly meeting for all team-members within the project to discuss that project’s current activities. Successes and limitations are discussed in

⁸ Discord is a free group-chat platform originally created for gamers, now used as a communication platform many communities. Discord is divided into servers, each of which has its own rules, members, and channels (sections for specific topics or groups) within it. The platform also allows users to voice calls and video calls. (<https://www.businessinsider.nl/what-is-discord?international=true&r=US>)

⁹ WhatsApp is a free text, voice, video messaging and calling app that can be used on desktop and mobile devices for individual and group-chats or calls via WIFI or cellular data. (<https://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/what-is-whatsapp/>)

¹⁰ A Check Out occurs at end of the meeting, just before participants leave. It can be a general Check Out in which participants share what is on their mind (e.g. weekly highs, lows, ‘to-do lists’ etc), or it may revolve around a specific question such as ‘what is your favourite song, and what is its significance to you?’. The aim being to bring a personal element to the meeting, and connect participants, keeping them engaged and allowing them to get to know their team-members.

	these meetings, as well as any other relevant news for the team, both professional and personal.
Oview Sustainability Consultant team meeting	Within each project, each department ran their own weekly meetings to plan their upcoming week, brainstorm, and ensure they were on track with their plans.
Sapient Day	Once a month, the Sapient Events Department organised a 'Sapient Day'. Activities included events such as games, workshops, and LinkedIn sessions so that the team can get to know each other beyond work. Each Sapient Day, the 'winner' (the person who attended the most sessions) wins a 3D printed trophy.

Additional meetings, team events, and activities

Multiple opt-in meetings to discuss additional projects and business plans (e.g. discussions about SEEDS¹¹ regarding networking and finances) were also presented. Meetings of 'crisis management' nature also occurred a few weeks into my internship, in which interested parties could attend online-brainstorm-sessions, working together to improve the existence of the organisation in an attempt to ensure its survival. Throughout my internship/participant-observations, I took every opportunity to take part in additional events, immersing myself within the environment, providing myself with every chance to understand their journey and the mundane of their day-to-day activities, which present as the local aspect within the interplay between the global and local. Such events provided an opportunity to communicate, debate, produce, and consume different discourses and narratives (Veland *et al.*, 2018). Engaging in the '*working field of the case*' by participating in and observing these events is a suitable way for a researcher to extend the understanding of the broader dynamics of the case-study, and '*is viewed as particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case*' (Bryman, 2012, p. 68). Participant-observation has therefore also been utilised to obtain context-specific information about the mundane goings-on of a social enterprise which aims to contribute towards the SDGs through its projects; gain understanding of project dynamics within a social enterprise, something which may not have been possible from other data collection methods. Valuable insights into past and current operations of the organisation, status of current projects, organisation-wide and project-specific ambitions, and their overall strategic orientation was also able to be understood deeper. The role of the complete participant was well-utilised during all participant-observation, helping to elucidate the broader context within which a social enterprise functions, and provide alternative perspectives on some of the issues and experiences they discuss as to answer my research question as best as possible.

3.4.4. Interviews: semi-structured and conversational

Part of 'insider' participant-observation includes utilising conversational methods of interviewing, where the researcher acts as an observer of participants conversations without interference. Utilising this unstructured format allows an informal feel, resembling a normal conversation, and can be critical in establishing rapport and preferable compared to formal settings when discussing sensitive topics (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). This technique was frequently used, especially when building rapport and relationships and understanding the organisation's dynamics. These unstructured meetings and informal conversations, often of sensitive nature helped elucidate the broader context within which the social enterprise operates and provide alternative perspectives on some of the issues and experiences they face, helping to answer my research question(s). A small number of semi-structured interviews were used to supplement data gained from participant-observation, one within Sapient and one from another social enterprise, both of which were transcribed (available on request). This inductive approach enabled me to '*keep more of an open mind about the contours of what he or she needs to know about, so that concepts and theories can emerge out of the data*' (Bryman, 2012, p. 12). A semi-structured interview-guide containing a list of topics was prepared in advance to create some structure to the interview process while also leaving room for open questions and probing, as well as

¹¹ SEEDS is a digital currency and financial system that serves, rewards and finances people and organisations committed to creating a healthier and more equitable planet. SEEDS are a unit of currency in the SEEDS platform which are able to be used for everyday use like other cryptocurrencies, but which also allow for distribution to initiatives which contribute to environmental and social regeneration. SEEDS is a democratic platform, with all protocols, distributions and initiatives governed and evolved directly by members of the SEEDS platform.

allowing participants to express their own opinions (Appendix III & IV), meaning the structure of the interview and phrasing of questions varied (Bryman, 2012). The purpose of these interviews was to provide additional perceptions and information regarding the research topic from experts both within and outside the case-study to gain more insight into the theoretical foundations of the research, and how they present practically. This gave a broader context within the social enterprise world, to see how other organisations function, and if they face the same or similar experiences, achievements, or barriers as the main case-study regarding the research topic. Interviews were hence based on quality over quantity. Conducting an interview with SapientNRG allowed the understanding of more specific details of this project's limitations and achievements, also providing a better understanding of the entire organisation and its functioning. Efforts were made to contact multiple organisations for semi-structured interviews (Appendix I). Interviewees were chosen based on strategic purpose (purposive sampling) (Bryman, 2012). Potential participants were contacted via email from website contact details, or in the case of Sapient's internal interview, by sending a general message in the Whatsapp DreamTeam chat¹². In this internal case, the selection is attributed to a type of snowballing selection technique. Snowballing is a non-probability selection technique, a type of random-selection, often used when questions address a specific and limited target-group, involving two steps. The first being approaching the initial respondent (e.g. contacting the main group-chat), then asking who a suitable candidate would be to contribute to the research afterwards. Thus, allowing the researcher only to speak to those suggested due to their specific interests or expertise (Lund Research Ltd, 2012). All contact and interviews were conducted in English as the researcher, interviewees, and participants speak sufficient English, hence we assume miscommunication was minimal. Care was however taken to explain any misunderstandings if needed. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes, were conducted via my personal Zoom-link, and audibly-recorded via the Apple iPhone voice-memo app, with participant consent (transcripts available on request). Further details about the keepings of this information are discussed in section 3.7.

3.4.5. Data analysis

The primary task of an intrinsic case-study is to provide the reader with an understanding of the case after the research. Embedding oneself into an environment as a participant inevitably means the information collected is unique to that individual (Given, 2008), therefore my role as the researcher is to sufficiently present the material, resulting in thick-descriptions, providing contextual information to showcase the entire situation to the reader, assisting in an overall understanding of my findings. Data generated from participant-observation is often much freer-flowing than other sources of data, and the analysis more interpretive (Given, 2008). Through these thick-descriptions however, the reader is able to understand the case well, and draw their own conclusions from what is presented (Stake, 1995 cited in Ridder, 2017). Using participant-observation, with some supplementary interviews, an effort was made to understand the research topic and get a sense of the perceptions around glocalisation and the SDGs as experienced through the lens of an Amsterdam-based social enterprise, providing a case-study to experience this interplay. After recording, interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word's dictate function (editing errors, adding in 'umms' 'ahs' etc. manually), working with notes and summaries of the textual data. As data from participant-observation was collected non-systematically via informal personal-communications during the course of business and during meetings, and as informants are essentially colleagues and personal contacts, this holds the possibility to raise an issue of methodological rigour (meaning that formal interviews were not conducted during this time, verbal exchanges were not recorded, and there exists no transcripts). Notes were hence taken, paying attention to emergent issues, analysed and, where appropriate, further explored by probing conversations or additional research. Thus, data collection

¹² The Sapient DreamTeam chat is a space on Whatsapp for all Padawans and Jedis to communicate. This includes both general 'chit chat' and topics relevant to Sapient in regard to work and the functioning of the organisation. Examples of conversations include information about local sustainable events, changes to the office schedule, discussions about participation in thesis studies, introductions and farewells. In addition to this, there is also an Important Announcements Whatsapp group-chat exclusively for work updates in which no conversations are held to ensure that important information is not lost within many conversations.

and analysis often occurred in parallel. Direct interpretations were made utilising an inductive approach. This inductive reasoning began with observations, with conclusions proposed at the end of the research from remarks made throughout the research period (Goddard & Melville, 2004). Such inductive reasoning involves a bottom-up approach to knowing, in which I used my observations to build an abstraction, describing a picture of the studied phenomenon (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtler, 2010). After collecting data from observations and interviews and a second meeting with my supervisor, a first review of the acquired information was evaluated to better comprehend and interpret the data. This general overview allowed me to detect areas requiring further theoretical insights, to better comprehend and interpret my data. Such iterative strategy *‘involves a weaving back and forth between data and theory’*, highlighting research as an ongoing process (Bryman, 2012, p. 26).

3.5. Ethics, validity, and reliability of the research

Ethics

Within qualitative research, there exists a need for researchers to attend to both anticipated and developed ethical issues, as such I continuously planned and dealt with these as they arose during my research and writing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout my internship, I informed participants that I was conducting research based on participant-observation utilising Sapient as a case-study, ensuring participants were aware of my position as a researcher. Details, results, and conclusions of this thesis are of a particularly specific and personal nature, hence utmost care was taken while writing results and conclusions regarding ethics. I have expressed my own experiences, opinions, and feelings, and in no way mean to cause harm or insult any participant of my study and was continuously aware of this throughout the planning and writing of this thesis.

Interviewees were asked for consent to record prior to conducting interviews, ensuring they had adequate time for their decision. Particular attention was given to conduct the research transparently meaning participants were informed of the topic of the thesis, purpose of data collection, and the data's further processing. Participants weren't forced to answer questions, reducing the power imbalance which can sometimes occur between researcher and participant (Creswell, 2013). At the time of writing, all electronic-data (interview recordings, transcripts, and this document) are stored on my personal password-protected laptop, ensuring the veracity of any claims can be verified by a professional academic body if necessary. Within this thesis, names were redacted for anonymity. All fieldnotes were recorded by hand and stored in a notebook in my home (available upon request). Audio recordings, transcripts, and fieldnotes will be deleted immediately after this thesis is graded. Efforts were made to contact anyone pictured in the research, requesting permission to use their faces via the DreamTeam chat. For those unable to be contacted due to no longer having contact with Sapient (as informed by Sapient's founder) faces have been blurred in case they would have requested anonymity. Ethics related to the researcher such as personal values, beliefs, and potential prejudices were also considered throughout the research-process. As this research was based on participant-observation, it's inevitable that these factors may have inadvertently impacted my perspective of how the data was dealt with. This acknowledgement has allowed me to reflect upon this (Chapter 7).

Construct validity

Participant-observation provides a researcher with an intimate knowledge of the area of their study, greatly reducing this type of validity-error. As someone whose directly experienced the social phenomena of interest, I'm capable of taking a position on the meaning of my data, confidently able to assert I am 'getting it right' (Bernard, 2006). Efforts were made to pay attention to the preliminary considerations with regards to case selection and sampling methods to test construct validity according to Yin's (2009) suggestions.

Internal validity

As this relates to how far the data reflects reality, it was ensured that information gained was scientific but also acknowledged that individual biases may alter results (so that other realities may exist). The act of examining the research-process in the context of my positionality (reflexivity), involves self-scrutiny, and a self-conscious awareness of the relationship between the researcher and others, hence understanding bias or constraints (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Pillow, 2003). As Creswell (2014) recommends the use of triangulation, data was collected from different sources.

External validity

To comply with external validity or generalisability, '*rich and verbatim descriptions*' of the research-process and the obtained results have been recorded (Noble & Smith, 2015, p. 2). Due to the qualitative nature of the data, and deriving from a small sample, this aspect can be problematic. To recognise this limitation, the research focuses on analytical exploration rather than statistical generalisation, aiming to find a better understanding of a specific phenomenon, made possible by utilising thick-descriptions – a detailed account of my personal field-experiences in which I make explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships, putting them into context (Holloway, 1997).

Reliability

A research must be repeatable, replicable, and traceable to demonstrate external reliability (Bryman, 2012), as '*the goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and bias in a study*' Yin (2003, p. 37). Hence, the line of argumentation throughout this thesis was kept as transparent as possible, with comprehensive decisions made so that others could conduct a similar study, coming to similar results. Interviews were recorded, and a fieldnotes book used to collect and reflect on observational fieldnotes (available on request). When researching within a constructivist view, a researcher must be aware of their role within the research-process, with reflexivity on the validity of the data being of greatest importance due to close linkages between the observer and the observed, thus making this research value-bound (Dieronitou, 2014). Within this research, this required me acknowledging that the generalisability of my research may be limited due to the interpersonal nature and descriptive methods taken in presenting the case. Due to the inductive nature of this research, the validity of the findings should be confirmed by future research.

Chapter 4: Case study and context

“I founded Sapien with the idea of creating the organisation I had always dreamed to work at.”

Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises’ founder

The case-study was selected on the basis of my personal interest in the organisation’s values and activities (see section 3.3.) to prevent food-waste, encourage and connect organisations tackling food-waste challenges, promote sustainable energy, and empower other social businesses, and hence my accompanying internship. Additionally, I align with the core-commitments of Sapien and value the work they do locally in these areas. I discovered Sapien via social-media, while researching local food-waste solutions in the Netherlands. Undertaking an internship with a social enterprise which exists to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs (fig. 6) provided me with the opportunity to take a deep-dive into my research topic, to look behind-the-scenes, and understand the associated entanglements.



Figure 6. Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises logo and company motto (Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises, 2021)

This created the perfect platform to utilise thick-descriptions, describing the social interactions and their context as I experienced them during my participant-observations, providing a detailed account of my experience, and addressing my research questions. I was able to immerse myself within the world of social enterprises, deepen my understanding of glocalisation in action, the realisation of the SDGs, and the DoA’s ‘people action’ first-hand. It could be argued that a role as an intern may have created a bias, and affected the objectivity needed as a researcher, however, becoming part of this social enterprise, who consider team-members as Padawans¹³ and family, gifted me the opportunity to be on-the-ground with the activities of a social enterprise, becoming deeply embedded within the world of participant-observation. Being an intern, rather than creating bias, eventuated in my ability to develop my understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, barriers, and opportunities related to the research topic.

4.1. Introduction

Based in Amsterdam, a global-hub for start-ups and social enterprises, and one of the most innovative, international cities in Europe, Sapien exists to help make its local environment more sustainable, while providing internship opportunities for young professionals with a sustainability mindset.

4.2. Organisation profile: Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises

“We are here to change the world, not compromise.”

Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises

¹³ A Padawan is a learner or apprentice. The term comes from the Star Wars universe, where a Jedi apprentice is referred to as a Padawan. Padawans, belong to the order of the Jedi (a peacekeeping organisation known for a monastic lifestyle and ability to harness the energy of the Force). The term is also used more generally to refer to a trainee, a beginner, or an inexperienced person. <https://www.dictionary.com/e/fictional-character> By considering and paying attention to the interactions/padawan/

Sapient aims to address the SDGs both within their own projects and practices, as well as offering services and products to enable others to also do so. Their hands-on action encapsulates the ‘people action’ of the UN’s DoA, and they boast a strong workforce representing gender equality and passionate youths from across the globe. Sapient is project-oriented (table 7), and like many social enterprises, are a democratic, non-hierarchical social business, meaning that everyone has the same rights each other, enabling all members to express their opinions on how the organisation and its projects should run.

Table 7. Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises projects

Project	Committed to	Description
	Encourage and connect organisations that tackle food-waste challenges	Food Circle (FC) is a first-of-its-kind network, reuniting Amsterdam’s food-waste organisations, helping create a bigger difference, together. As such, FC coordinates the needs and strengths of each member organisation, to create the best mutual benefits while ensuring each individual organisation maintains its own distinctive input and character. FC also focuses on each organisation’s goal by offering professional help in different fields and giving access to workshops and events focussing on solving problems and overcoming challenges. FC is currently crowdfunding the ‘Zero Waste Chef’ (ZWC) card-game which promotes zero waste eating and purchasing habits, in order to generate income to help push the project forward.
	Prevent food from being wasted	Healthy & Affordable (H&A) aims to reduce the amount of food wasted in both Amsterdam, and the Netherlands as a whole. As such, it aspires to become a its own social business by scaling up and creating more impact (H&A is currently developing new products from saved chocolate, a new pricing strategy, packaging, and providing the nutritional value of products). H&A team-members collect food which is no longer sellable from food outlets due to it being perceived as unwanted by consumers (due to shape, defects, wrinkles, etc.) but is still nutritious and safe to eat. This food is processed by drying, freezing, or pickling, so it can be stored and sold, preventing it from being wasted, and reviving it as a consumable product in a different form.
	Empower social businesses	Oview ¹⁴ is the newly created consultancy project. Oview supports companies in three areas; knowledge coordination, environmental sustainability, and democratisation. This project is in its initial stage of defining itself, creating a business strategy, increasing outreach, and taking on pro-bono clients.
	Promote sustainable energy	SapientNRG is the engineering project of Sapient. SapientNRG is currently working on the MagneticGen, a power bank which can harness the vibrations deflected onto it to transform mechanical energy into electrical energy. The team are presently working on creating circular power bank prototypes, in order to test how much power, they can harness to charge batteries. Business developers at SapientNRG are also working on clearly defining their mission and project and securing funding for the project in order to accelerate it further.

Sapient is a non-profit organisation, whose existence also stems from their interest in supporting young professionals with internships and an outlet to contribute to society in a meaningful way, enabling space for individuals to express their environmental and social views, alongside like-minded people, while contributing to local change and the SDGs.

A brief history of Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises

Sapient has a turbulent past, when conflict between Oview’s co-founders occurred, their paths split, leaving the future of Sapient in the balance, and many Padawans without internships. This triggered Sapient’s founder to create a whole new legal entity in 2016 (fig. 7), saving the organisation and

¹⁴Much of the participant-observation of this research comes from the Oview project as it was within this project that I completed my internship, specifically within the Sustainability Consultancy department.

situation of many Padawans. Makesense¹⁵ was also involved in the creation of Sapien, as the founder brought the concept of this organisation from Berlin to the Netherlands.

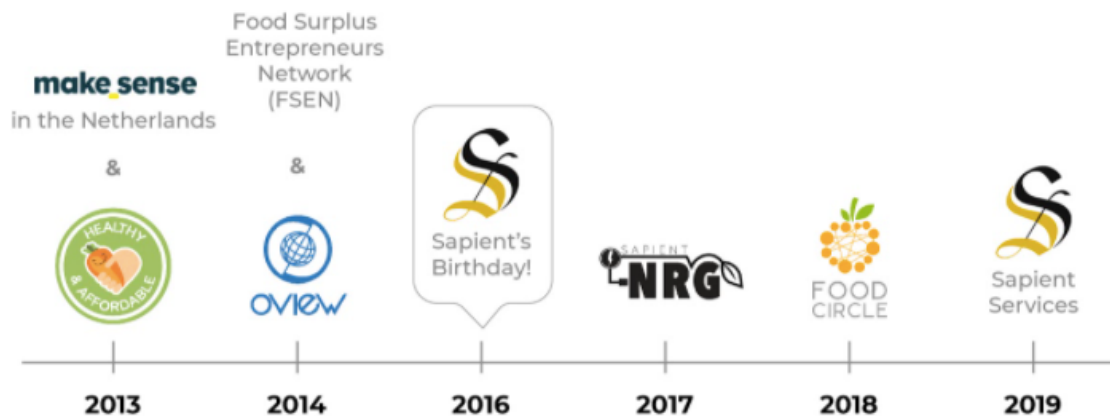


Figure 7. Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises timeline of existence and projects (adapted from Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises, n.d.a).

In 2019, the introduction of services (e.g. design, recruitment) was added to Sapien's repertoire, increasing profit generation, helping fund internal projects, enabling the organisation to continue its mission (fig. 8).



Figure 8. Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises existence model (Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises, 2021).

Sapien's founder and CEO (or 'GLUE' – Genuine Love Unifying Everything, as referred to by Sapien), is also a board member of Taste Before You Waste (TBYW)¹⁶, a passionate advocate against food-waste, and a believer that individuals and society have the ability to change the current economic-paradigm through supporting local social businesses. Sapien has an informal culture, Padawans are seen not only as colleagues, but also friends and a family of sorts. There is a strong social connection, and support, with many team-members moving to Amsterdam from abroad and missing the network of friends and family one has at home.

¹⁵ Makesense is a non-profit organisation which empowers creative entrepreneurs in social fields and social business. It is an open community comprised of people who are passionate about social entrepreneurship and innovation. Nine hotspots for Makesense have been created, including Amsterdam, Utrecht, Arnhem, Den Haag, Amersfoort, Oslo, Malmö, and Malaga. (<https://makesense.org/en/>)

¹⁶ Taste Before You Waste (TBYW) is a foundation with the mission to reduce consumer food-waste. This is achieved by providing people with the inspiration, knowledge and opportunity for responsible, waste-free consumption. TBYW creates an international community of food lovers by hosting donation-based events such as food cycle markets, wasteless Wednesday dinners, educational workshops, event caterings and presentations, to promote that 'food-waste' is actually tasty and valuable. By raising awareness and empowering citizens, TBYW contributes to a social movement which advocates for a fair and sustainable food system, and a socially and environmentally just society. (<https://tastebeforeyouwaste.wixsite.com/mysite-1/who-we-are>)

Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises mission, values and inspiration

Sapient strives to achieve the SDGs through their projects, collaborations, and helping other initiatives run a social business consciously and sustainably. They have created a strong network and partnerships with local social enterprises and SMEs to help spread their message and make a difference within their community. Sapient values respect, freedom, compassion, honesty, and the ability to adapt to changes and new situations, believing that every individual is unique and talented with the potential to make a positive change for the earth. In their day-to-day running, Sapient are inspired by the philosophies of three figures (image 1, table 8) (Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, 2021).



Image 1. Founder and GLUE of Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises with Muhammad Yunus (OFoundation, n.d.)

Table 8. Social & Environmental Enterprises' inspiration (adapted from Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, 2021, The Office of his Holiness, the Dalai Lama, n.d., and ricardosemler.com, 2021)

Inspiration	Philosophy	Description
Muhammad Yunus	Social business	Muhammad Yunus (image 1) is a Nobel Peace Prize winning Bangladeshi social entrepreneur, banker, economist, and civil-society leader. Yunus was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for founding the Grameen Bank and pioneering the concepts of microcredit and microfinance. By providing loans to those who were too poor to qualify for normal banks, he has helped many people to become entrepreneurs. He provided Sapient with the idea to found the organisation as a social business.
Dalai Lama	Compassion	His Holiness, the Dalai Lama is primarily concerned with encouraging the happiness of people. The Dalai Lama advocates for the cultivation of human values such as compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment and self-discipline, believing that all human beings are the same. According to his Holiness, such human values are secular ethics or universal values, and he is committed to talking about the importance of such values and sharing them with all he encounters.
Ricardo Semler	No rules company	Ricardo Semler is a best-selling author and professor, most well-known for advocating an employee-friendly radical corporate democracy. He gained international recognition for this ground-breaking alternative approach to management and organisation within his own company (Semco). He believes that by transferring power to employees, organisations are able to create wiser, more productive companies, which create a happier workforce.

Chapter 5: Research results

“Where to begin looking depends on the research question, but where to focus or stop action cannot be determined ahead of time,”

Sharan B Merriam, 1998

This chapter reveals the research findings, making up the content of this thesis. This series of thick-descriptions integrates my interpretations of this research’s subjects of interest by providing vignettes from fieldnotes, explaining situations and background context, both confirming and disproving evidence provided thus far. I aim to explain the significant and complex cultural meanings which I was part of during my time with Sapient, to provide an understanding of the relevance, meanings and intentions which underpinned these interactions. The acquisition of knowledge and findings from this case-study was found via functioning from within the organisation, known as enquiry from the inside, and by ‘being there’, becoming immersed in and part of the phenomenon of my research (Evered & Louis, 2001). Through participant-observation I captured knowledge from within a social enterprise, introducing the viewpoint of these people, as well as mine as a participant observer by describing and interpreting observed social action and behaviour within a specific context. All efforts were made to present this data in a clear, unbiased manner. As such, I have reported the case-study and lessons learned using case assertions in the written form, analysing and discussing the data enabling a link to prior academic research as well as new discoveries. Care was taken to fully display the case-study evidence and analyse this evidence objectively via within-case analysis, comparing with the literature, triangulation of data sources and of theories to satisfy methodological rigour, eliminate alternative interpretations and produce a compelling case on the research topic, enabling the reader to follow my argument as the researcher and assess the validity of the findings, while ultimately forming their own opinion. Within this chapter the self is explicitly acknowledged, utilising the researcher (myself) as a research-instrument and important source of knowledge. My experiences are hence treated as data itself. As often seen within qualitative research, the professional and personal experiences of the researcher (myself), which are held prior to and during this research, have influenced the research-process, method, presentation, and interpretation of the findings. This academic work has consequently been enriched by my experiences, and reliability increased due to the credibility of my role as a researcher as an insider. The use of the self furthermore enables the reader to understand how knowledge was constructed, allowing them to better evaluate my findings.

This research was ultimately guided by the exploratory research question(s);

To what extent is the interplay between the global United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals and the local activities of a social enterprise in Amsterdam, the Netherlands effective in operationalising impactful changes?

- a) *What are the SDGS and how are they communicated and framed in order to be applied at a global, local, and glocal level?*
- b) *What is a social enterprise, what are their intentions and activities, how does this differ to traditional organisations, and why do they exist?*
- c) *What is the relationship between the intentions and activities of a social enterprise and the SDGs?*
- d) *Which factors influence, affect or act as a barrier to the scale/scope of the activities of the social enterprise?*
- e) *What recommendations exist for fostering the support of social enterprises to help achieve the SDGS derive from the research?*

By considering and paying attention to the interactions which occurred in practical real-life settings, including who talks to whom and how, whose opinions were respected, and how decisions were made, effective data was collected to address all questions (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Listening carefully to

conversations, making an effort to remember as many verbatim conversations as possible (noting and recording them in fieldnotes), and noticing non-verbal expressions, and gestures is vital to good data collection while utilising participant-observation, enabling the ability to seek out new insights, is also discussed (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Sub question a) and b) were introduced in the theoretical framework. Within this chapter, they are reflected upon again, through the lens of first-hand experience as a participant observer within a social enterprise. This includes samples of real-life situations, vignettes of practice, quotes, and images to illustrate concepts and substantiate arguments. Sub questions c) through d) are also delved into, while sub-question e) relating to recommendations, is discussed in section 6.1.

5.1. Setting the scene

As a researcher conducting participant-observation, my internship began with familiarising myself with the environment, social organisation, and unique culture of Sapient. This involved mapping out their projects and structure in my fieldnotes navigating intricate social-networks, and understanding how the organisation functions as an entire entity, and required constant consideration of the ethics of my research, while communicating and building rapport with my fellow Padawan's, beginning with my training.

Mighty Quests for Mighty Knights

To complete my '*Mighty Quests for Mighty Knights*' (fig. 9), my interactive training-quest, I needed to familiarise myself with my Oview teammates and Sapient Padawans, learn about the company culture, and integrate as a Padawan myself.

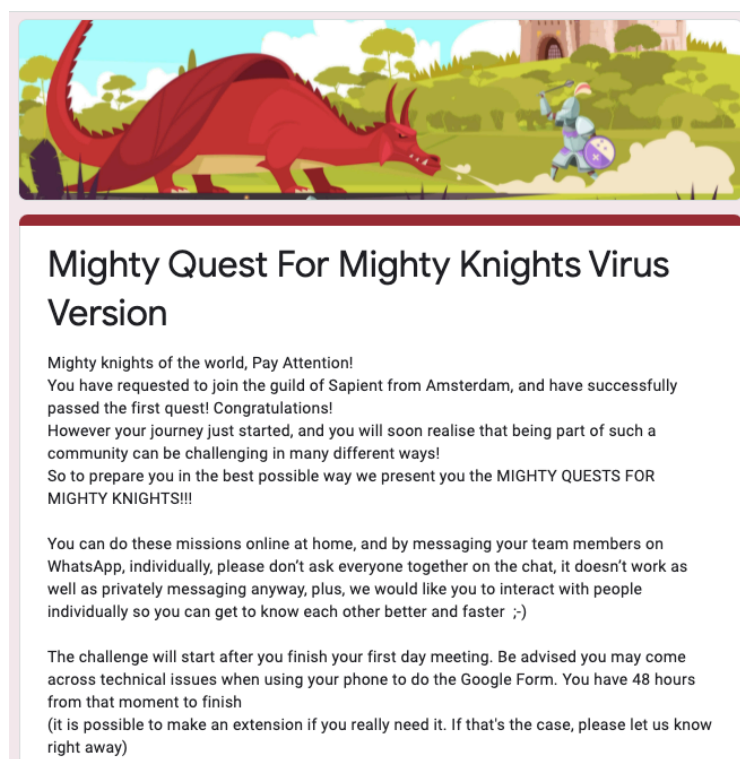


Figure 9. Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises' Mighty Quest for Mighty Knights (Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises. (n.d.a))

This initial participatory experience provided an opportunity to cement myself as both an insider researcher conducting participant-observation, and as a Sapient Padawan, thus assisting in both my understanding of the organisation and of my role, from both perspectives. This *Mighty Quest* required me, the *Mighty Knight*, to contact Padawans, explaining who I was and my new role, to facilitate the creation of personal bonds. This was achieved by asking obscure, personal questions, reaching out to

Padawans and Jedi¹⁷ in our DreamTeam chat, continuing the conversation privately. While a somewhat nerve-wracking and confronting initial act, this immersive experience provided immediate sense of connection and belonging, which proved essential to my role as participant observer over the coming period, assisting my ability to build a strong rapport with my fellow Padawans. I soon learned that within this multi-cultural social enterprise, nothing was taboo, everything was discussed and debated intelligently and respectfully. My initial conversations with one Padawan led to building a strong connection which wouldn't have been made without these personal connections via the Mighty Quest (prompted by; 'which languages do you speak?'). Through this, we discovered our shared ethnic backgrounds, opening conversations to familiar situations and feelings in our personal lives, leading to us feeling more open with each other, enabling a sense of comfortability. This in turn created an environment where I felt free to openly ask questions about the strategic direction of the organisation, its barriers to success, as well as being provided with helpful advice on who to contact for further insight into my research. Such acts, known within participatory research as 'hanging-out', can be described as the process through which a researcher gains trust and establishes rapport with their participants (Bernard, 1994).

Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises' 5 Year Anniversary Sapient Day

The next opportunity to participate in 'hanging-out', strengthening my positionality as an insider and collecting data, was my attendance of Sapient's 5 Year Anniversary on 16/02/2021. This included a variety of online workshops and a special event, where all Padawan's and Jedi's were invited to an online-drinks celebrating Sapient's journey thus far. As a new Padawan with little experience or knowledge within the organisation, this event provided a first 'real-life' view of a social enterprise, revealing the lasting bonds created by being a part of such an organisation. The pure joy and excitement spreading over the face of Sapient's founder, as the little squares of each Jedi's face from their differing global location materialised in the Zoom call, was utterly mesmerising. It was impossible not to feel the powerful connections this social enterprise creates through meaningful social acts shared between international passionate individuals in this local Amsterdam setting, and how these bonds continue to strengthen the global ties of the local organisation and its work. De Munk and Sobo (1998, p. 41) state '*only through hanging-out do a majority of villagers get an opportunity to watch, meet, and get to know you outside your 'professional' role*'. Here, the villagers were my new teammates who represent the culture and community of Sapient. This intimate milestone event richly provided me with this opportunity from the get-go. Throughout my internship, this process of hanging-out involved meeting and conversing with my 'villagers' via online/phone calls and messages, as well as monthly Sapient Days, and even online yoga classes, allowing the development of relationships over an extended period of time.

Learning the language

Three stages are associated with the process of hanging-out. As time progresses, this moves from formal, ignorant intruder, to welcomed, knowledgeable intimate (De Munk & Sobo, 1998). I conclude however, that due to the democratic culture of Sapient (which many social enterprises adopt – see section 2.3.2.), this first stage of hanging-out felt less 'intruder' than expected. I ascribe my feelings during this initial period to being a stranger only in the sense that I was learning the language and social norms of the organisation. I didn't truly feel like an intruder during this time, nor any other. Making myself known to my new community (introductions and going out of my way to be involved in voluntary meetings) so that I was able to behave appropriately within the culture of this social enterprise was an important aspect of this initial phase.

¹⁷ The term Jedi comes from the fictional universe of Star Wars. A Jedi is a member of an order of mystic warriors who are able to manipulate a spiritual energy known as 'the force' in order to undertake supernatural acts. In everyday use, the term Jedi is now used to describe a person who shows extraordinary skill or expertise in a specific field or endeavour. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Jedi>

“The most important thing you can do to stop being a freak is to speak the language of the people you are studying – and speak it well.”

Harvey Russell Brand, 1994

By learning Sapien’s language (table 9), and embracing their values, I demonstrated my interest in their community, proving that while transient within my time with the organisation, my interest in Sapien was not transient. I had, and still have, a vested interest in both Sapien and the social enterprise community. This personal and professional connection helped me understand and want to understand the nuances of conversation during participant-observations. The transition, or perhaps lack of distinct transition, from intruder to intimate was more casual and consisted of less barriers compared to experiences in my professional career in more traditionally run, for-profit organisations.

Table 9. Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises’ language (adapted from Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises. (n.d.a))

Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises terminology	Usual terminology/definition
Padawan	Intern
Jedi	Alumni
GLUE (Genuine Love Unifying Everything)	CEO
Specialized Team/Department GLUE	Head chief of Teams
Coordinator	Manager
Head Coordinator	Head member of the team
Department/Teams	Eg. Social-Media, Talent, Fundraising etc.
Project	Food Circle, Healthy & Affordable etc.
Project	Internal project within a project, eg. Zero Waste Chef
Target Time	Deadline
Challenge	Problem

The second stage of hanging-out, the ‘acquaintance’ stage, occurs when a researcher can merge with the crowd, standing out less as an intruder, involving familiarity of the native-language, while not yet being fluent (De Munk & Sobo, 1998). I recall a specific occasion, when a new Padawan referenced an encountered problem during our weekly Oview team-meeting, our founder was quick to interject, raising his hand, pointing his finger in the air, and with a cheeky smile reminding us that, ‘at Sapien we don’t have a problem – we have a challenge!’

Problem:

“A matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome.” If one state an issue as a problem, that implies a sense of negativity, whereas an issue that is a challenge suggests it is solvable in spite of the difficulty.

Challenge:

“A call to someone to participate in a competitive situation; something new, stimulating and difficult which requires a great effort and determination.” A challenge is therefore an opportunity for success and growth.

After initially stumbling on this language barrier during what I consider my first stage of participant-observation, I found myself quickly changing my own language, embracing the positive ‘can do’ attitude that Sapien and its Padawans exude regardless of the ‘challenges’ they face.

Experiencing tumultuous times

The third stage of hanging-out, the final, ‘intimate’ stage, is when a researcher effectively establishes relationships with their participants to the extent that they no longer think about what they say, and are comfortable with their interactions, with participants feeling comfortable with their presence. As

with the second stage, I found it particularly easy to reach this ultimate stage of intimacy. My opinions and interests were valued from the moment I joined Sapient. I was constantly reminded that Sapient is guided and created by us Padawans, inciting mixed feelings, eagerness at the prospect of being a part of creating something for the greater good, and feelings of concern at the organisation's lack of structure and planning. However, being around like-minded, similarly aged Padawans, with somewhat non-traditional views on our current social-paradigm, allowed for an easy transition into the social enterprise and participant-observation world, something I believe may not have occurred if I undertook this research within a more traditional setting, like a corporate business environment, even if they too were focussed on addressing the SDGs via their actions or services. This lack of formality and high-level of acceptance made the process of participant-observation all the more successful and enriching for this research topic and case-study. Rapport was quickly built with my strong work-ethic, and desire and willingness to help drive the project. I was able to establish valued and trusting relationships with my fellow Padawans leading to all the better data collection, as well being viewed as a valued team-member, able to contribute to accelerating Oview and its success during my time as a Padawan. I can pinpoint the exact moment I felt I reached my 'intimate stage' of participant-observation. On 20/03/2021, feelings of trepidation hit hard. An extensive message from a departing Padawan lingered in our DreamTeam chat, this message was lengthy, taking time to laboriously scroll through. As my finger continually swiped my tiny iPhone screen, I saw an essay of a message describe this Padawan's enjoyment and passion for the organisation while simultaneously highlighting a series of negative aspects including lack of mentorship, never-ending workload, and the view of a pressure to overcommit to Sapient, ultimately culminating in this individual being behind in their university work and paid work. This extensive message alluded to their view of the stagnant, non-professional stance taken by Sapient. In this moment, my personal feelings were of dread. This felt like an explosion of pent-up frustration and negativity, emotions which I'd yet to experience within this optimistic organisation. Prior to this, everything seemed energetic and full of hope. This soon came crashing down with the harsh reality of how hard keeping afloat a social enterprise can be, and that it cannot effectively be run off passion alone. This shock to the system, with many unfortunate truths encased within the frustration of a single Padawan, resulted in an immediate emergency situation for Sapient. I watched with a sense of anxiety and concern, as the tell-tale little dots of the constant stopping and starting of messages being typed appeared in our DreamTeam chat, accompanied by an unusual lack of comment from our founder. All the while, I felt building confusion and stress while receiving personal messages from other Padawans, expressing their fear for the coming reactions, and what this could mean for our internships, our kind-hearted, passionate leader who has given so much to the continuation of this organisation, as well as for Sapient in general. In the following days, this solitary message resulted in an eruption of thoughts, opinions, and damning truths about the reality of a social enterprise trying its best to make a difference with a relatively small suite of resources. This was dealt with in a number of ways. Understanding and accepting, yet firm responses from long-standing Padawans, with vested interest in Sapient on one side, with criticism of the organisation being expressed by a few vocal Padawans on the other. Finally, an extensive, heartfelt message from our founder expressed both their profound concern along with feelings of being victimised, combined with an incredibly humble understanding of their shortcomings – expressing that they only ever want to do good, and spread positivity and change for the better, for both people and the planet, and all they can do is try their best with their resources and skillset. This honest reply, stating their exhaustion, anxiety, and confusion for the future of Sapient, and their role within it, led to concern from the aforementioned long-standing Padawans, along with a number of others who held a strong connection to the organisation and its mission. I was promptly added to a private Whatsapp group-chat to discuss how to support both our founder and Sapient upon what seemed like a disassociation and feeling of defeat from our GLUE, and constant source of inspiration. Having only been a part of Sapient for a few weeks, while deeply concerned for the state of my internship, I was also pleased upon feeling like a true 'insider', and knew I was no longer an 'acquaintance', but an intimate member of Sapient, whose views and input were valid and important. Initially, viewing this seemingly

catastrophic event as a dampener to my experience and negative impact on my research, the results of this chaotic situation led to a rich account of life within a social enterprise, the good and the bad, providing insights which are discussed in the following sections, helping answer my research questions. This time also made me reflect on my research's ethics, ensuring I respected the identities of those affected, ensuring they remained anonymous, and that I didn't unintentionally defame or make anyone feel uncomfortable or vulnerable.

5.2. Sub question a) What are the SDGs and how are they communicated and framed in order to be applied at a global, local, glocal level?

This sub-question was already discussed in the theoretical framework (section 2.3.3). However, after having taken part in extensive participant-observation, I conclude that discussing this sub-question at such an early stage of the research, while certainly providing sound theoretical framework, also presented a somewhat static, disconnected view of the topic, taken purely from the perspective of the literature, with a lack of practical 'on the ground' connection. In his influential work on firms, Coase (1937) asserts that to effectively define a firm, the definition must also stand true in practice. The somewhat impersonal viewpoint of the initial desk-research of this sub-question is thus revised, bringing an element of interpretation based upon my personal experiences in practice, as an active member of a social enterprise focussed on contributing towards the achievement of the SDGs. Regarding the UN's SDGs from an embedded participatory stance, it became clear that these goals have the potential to become lost in translation and may lack the potentially necessary support and structure needed to be achieved in the most effective manner, even by those who try their hardest and make it their mission to help achieve them (image 2). This point of view is considered when looking at the SDGs and their communication and framing in the subsequent sections.



Image 2. Founder and GLUE of Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises joined by past Padawans (faces blurred for privacy) showing their commitment to the SDGs (Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, n.d.a.)

The SDGs: Lost in Translation?

While there exists extensive literature, catchy infographics and posters describing the SDGs and their targets, my participatory-observation showed that putting into writing and expressing how an organisation actively contributes to the SDGs can prove difficult in practice. Considering the SDGs were created as a blueprint, helping guide actions, this seems like it shouldn't be the case. Leading to an interpretation, that the SDGs have the capacity to become lost in translation, and that organisations like social enterprises, who some may argue are doing the most to contribute to our society, can find this difficult and disheartening in practice. While undertaking an internship at a social enterprise shows an individual has a strong social-environmental conscience, my observations at Sapient demonstrated that even those most informed and interested can find it difficult to verbalise the contributions of a social enterprise to the SDGs, further highlighting miscommunication and being lost in translation. In March 2021, the Oview Social-Media team was creating content about our contribution towards the achievement of the SDGs through our day-to-day practices and services. This proved somewhat confusing and unclear. While the team were aware that a project which improves democracy, knowledge coordination, and sustainability of organisations is contributing to many of the goals outlined in the SDGs, it can be difficult to connect the dots. Initially, a link to all 17 SDGs was attempted, which was eventually deemed ineffective and impossible. Following this, after much discussion, a focus on less goals was decided. However, even this became unclear, for example, we wondered – does Oview working with SME's on democracy, knowledge coordination, and sustainable improvements, hence enabling their organisation to thrive really contribute to Goal 1: No Poverty? It proved difficult to decide whether such acts contribute to better income distribution and in turn contribute towards Goal 1 or not – while we certainly understood these actions were 'doing good'. In this sense, it can become blurry whether the language used, and lack of specificity of the SDGs truly speaks from the global to the local in a practical, supportive sense, and hence allow for glocal contributions to the SDGs.

The SDGs: A Disconnect from Reality?

Looking outside the case-study organisation, I interviewed Think Big Act Now (TBAN)¹⁸ as market-research for Oview. The initial purpose of this interview was to gain insight into how TBAN charge their consulting services to help with creating a pricing structure for Oview's sustainability consultancy (as Oview had little practical knowledge of such financial matters). With permission, I utilised the knowledge discovered from this interview as part of my data collection to highlight the potential disconnect of the SDGs to the reality of social enterprises, adding further insight on the research topic from another perspective. This led to some interesting discoveries regarding how the SDGs are viewed and utilised by other social enterprises that also exist to address local sustainability, while considering the overarching global goals and society.

"I still recognise the effort that went into the SDGs, and I mean, to have to come up with something like that on such a major scale, with so many players, I mean from a policy perspective."

Think Big, Act Now interviewee

TBAN made a conscious decision not to consider the SDGs in their day-to-day actions and overall mission, even though their work can certainly be seen as contributing towards many of the goals. According to the interviewee, *'They're still a bit...there's some things to say about them...That's good that they are there, but umm...'* (personal communication, TBAN employee). From both the body

¹⁸ Think Big Act Now is an organisation that believes that in order to have an intact ecosystem and sustainable future for all, we must start with the individual. The organisation consists of a core team of passionate professionals, as well as a group of trainers and experts who provide lectures and training sessions on how individuals and organisations can ensure a sustainable future in the most effective way possible, showing them that it is both easy and enjoyable. TBAN was created by Babette Porcelijn, who studied Industrial Design at Delft University of Technology in 2014. In 2016 her first book 'The Hidden Impact' was published, which defines much of what Think Big Act Now is all about.

language noted during this slightly awkward, stunted statement, which included small moments of laughter, pauses, and what seemed like the deliberate desire to want to omit negative language towards the SDGs, it was clear that while they didn't want to completely dismiss the importance of these goals, and that there is indeed a level of appreciation of the SDGs felt by the organisation, at the same time, there was a clear level of scepticism towards the SDGs felt by both the interviewee and their organisation. This body language and verbal statement expressed just as much in its lack of succinct words and directness, as if something more direct and concrete had been stated. However, it was evident they understood the value of the SDGs in their being widely publicised, well-known goals with the ability to spread awareness;

"...there's so many different levels where you hear people talking about the SDGs...I think that actually does something."

Think Big, Act Now interviewee

TBAN find the SDGs to be *'a good guideline'*, however believe the work they focus on is *'a bit more niche'*, hence finding the SDGs unsuitable and ineffective for their organisation to achieve success in improving their clients sustainable practices at a local level. TBAN found the lack of priorities and specificity of the SDGs, prevents them from employing them in their overall mission, while at the same time they are still able to work towards them indirectly. Introducing the notion that perhaps the SDGs are more useful as a mechanism to raise awareness, rather than a solid framework for social enterprises to actually utilise at a global level for action, further highlighting a disconnect between the goals and the reality at the local level.

"...they seem to cover the biggest part of it but there's no priorities, there's no, ah, consequences, you know?"

Think Big, Act Now interviewee

The SDGs: The reality of communication to social enterprises within Amsterdam

As discussed in section 2.3.3., the SDGs are disseminated at multiple levels, though multiple channels and actors in the Netherlands, including not only social enterprises, but institutions, government bodies, and networking organisations. Considering partnerships are a goal of the SDGs (fig. 1), it was assumed these would function well, being an important connection between global goals and local actors in Amsterdam, providing a social enterprise like Sapient access to a strong SDG community network supporting its global action. My participatory-observations unfortunately did not see this as the reality.

Communication with institutions and organisations

As both a researcher and member of a social enterprise, I contacted the organisations discussed in the theoretical framework (section 2.3.3) to understand more about the reality of the communication and support for a social enterprise in Amsterdam. Unfortunately, none of these organisations contributed to my research due to a lack of response, being too busy, or finding my research irrelevant (Appendix I). While I cannot confirm this lack of communication and willingness to be a part of this research, talking to me as either a researcher and/or member of a local social enterprise means they don't effectively support social enterprises in general, it did express a lack of communication and commitment to the 'people action' of the UN's DoA, including the social enterprises they supposedly exist to support and work with. It left me feeling dejected and disappointed. Some of these organisations were unavailable to take part in an interview due to organising a special SDG/DoA event held around the time of this research's completion. This instance of a local event being held to promote and support the 'people action' of the SDGs, while at the same time creating an inability to provide time for someone who represents such action seemed somewhat hypocritical, and further suggested a disconnect from the global goals and those who aim to actively contribute towards their

achievement locally. The (lack of) communication felt dismissive and left me feeling a lack of community spirit and support to the local achievement of the SDGs from these organisations. It further cemented the feeling of frustration and exhaustion that Sapient's founder feels with society, having spent years of relentless fighting to change the status-quo and contribute towards the the SDGs, with an inability to upscale the actions of their social enterprise. It was interesting to learn via participation at Sapient, although at this point perhaps not surprising, that much collaboration and networking of social enterprises and entrepreneurs, and citizens who aim to solve sustainable challenges comes from the action of these people themselves, rather than ongoing support or facilitation via the government policies, institutions, or organisations from the theoretical framework.

"I have the capacities to change and improve things and to help others with that, from my nature I have to do something with that."

Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises' founder

To illustrate this strong commitment, a sort of 'day-in-the-life' of a social entrepreneur is introduced. As an Oview Sustainability Consultant, I often needed to book meetings with our founder. To do this, I'd open our organisation-wide GoogleCalendar, which listed every project's meetings and events, as well as our founder's personal calendar, to assess a suitable meeting time. At my first attempt, I was met with utter confusion. Surely there was some mistake, I unchecked and rechecked each calendar, trying to figure out the issue. Yet each time, I'd see meetings and events booked as early as 4am, and as late as 1am. This was not a case of miscommunication or errors, but the reality of a passionate social entrepreneur. As a dedicated member of not only their own social enterprise, but a board member and contributor to many others, their calendar is constantly filled with a plethora of meetings, events, and workshops aimed at creating change and improvements to society, by connecting and communicating with other social entrepreneurs and innovators. As founder and facilitator of the Dutch Makesense community, they along with many other committed local actors, are a catalyst within the local Dutch society aiming at creating a positive impact with their social enterprises and entrepreneurial activities. From my experience, it appears this is where the most effective communication and ties to the SDGs lie, with the people on the ground, those who truly encapsulate the people action of the DoA.

Media

The more monitoring and promotion of local actors like social enterprises, the more chance others on the ground will have the opportunity to be exposed to and be a part of the DoA. This is especially true for H&A which builds success from being able to sell food-waste produce to the public. During my time with Sapient, I witnessed the continual hardwork and dedication of a single Padawan involved in H&A, and the overall business development of Sapient. This Padawan single-handedly created a positive relationship and channel of communication to the public about the glocal action of H&A, achieved specifically via the publication of an article with the local chapter of Tedx, Tedx Amsterdam.

"Healthy & Affordable is a project geared towards making a change in the food system – specifically to save it from being wasted – which is a major problem in our society both from a humanitarian and envirobmeanl perspective. Our main driver is the ambition to make a difference by spreading awareness on this topic, and to save food surplus by producing new goods."

Project Coordinator Jedi, Healthy & Affordable

The article (fig. 10) was kept secret amongst Sapient, adding to the excitement and pride experienced when announced. On 18/05/21, a link appeared in our DreamTeam chat, followed by a stream of congratulatory messages, and announcements of sharing of the article on platforms like LinkedIn (myself included). While the article doesn't explicitly mention the SDGs, it does refer to the UN's

concern with food-waste (part of the SDGs). It also communicates H&A as one of the innovative projects supported by City of Amsterdam's Donut Coalition¹⁹, highlighting the importance of local actors and their connection to the achievement of global goals through such networks/frameworks (even though little connection of such networks were observed during my research).



Figure 10. Healthy & Affordable article in TEDx Amsterdam (Holbrook, 2021)

While the connection from the SDGs to the SDG community within Amsterdam, was observed to be not so strong and obvious, it does exist. I often witnessed a lack of awareness from Padawans about which alliances/organisations Sapient was a member of, and what this even meant, highlighting the disconnect from such official institutions and organisations. I hence witnessed firsthand the lack of practical support these groups provided Sapient, wondering what the point of them was if not to make it easier for them to achieve goals? However, the existence of these organisations, and the continued existence of social enterprises fighting to stay afloat, along with an interest of the local media and community indicates a weak tie to the SDGs and local action. The use of media and other frameworks within the City of Amsterdam show the ability for global goals to be expressed locally, showing the global outcomes of the SDGs and practical actions of those 'on the ground' who make up the 'people action' of the DoA, thus at the very least, keeping the discourse open.

5.3. Sub question b) what is a social enterprise, what are their intentions and activities, how does this differ to traditional organisations, and why do they exist?

"It is said that things go the way they do. I totally disagree with that."

Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises founder

A social enterprise as defined in the theoretical framework (section 2.3.2) is; an organisation which trades for social and/or environmental purposes (Austin *et al.*, 2006) with the underlying drive to create social value over personal and shareholder value (Zadek & Thake, 1997). This being the main goal and driving force of what a social enterprise does, the achievement of which is given precedence over profit (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006; Peattie & Morley, 2008). Prior to joining Sapient, I had my own

¹⁹ The Amsterdam Donut Coalition (Amsterdam Donut Coalitie) represents the recent adoption of the city of Amsterdam of the 'doughnut economics goal', in which everyone has a fair social basis living within safe ecological limits, based on Kate Raworth's (2018) Doughnut Economics. The coalition is based on the strength and motivation of a network of people working together to bring Amsterdam 'into the donut' by putting this theory into practice. This includes a diverse set of stakeholders such as government, companies, knowledge institutions, urban dwellers (organised and individuals), NGOs, SMEs and start-ups. The leadership of the coalition monitors the goals and principles, providing meetings and an (online) platform, promoting that together self-organisation and co-creation is possible. The coalition views itself as connecting and serving the local ecosystem of people, networks and organisations who share the same goals of creating a sustainable and socially just world. (<https://amsterdamdonutcoalitie.nl/overons>)

assumptions on what a social enterprise is, how they function, what their strengths and weaknesses are, as well as assumptions specifically about Sapient. However, collecting data from observing as an insider, especially during an interesting transition period of the organisation, much of this understanding has changed, ultimately, enhanced by my interpretations, something which I could never have understood without first-hand experiences, proving the richness that participant-observation and an insider positionality brought to my research.

What is a social enterprise?

Building on the definition of a social enterprise (section 2.3.2), I interpret my experiences to provide you, the reader, an emotive encapsulation of what it's like to be part of a social enterprise and hence understand what makes a social enterprise, a social enterprise. Understanding the deep connection and bond that team-members of a social enterprise feel is certainly something that could be utilised to redefine a social enterprise. To include this personal level of a social enterprise could add value to the current definition, suggesting that working towards a new definition/redefining the current definition may be apt. After partaking in four months of participant-observation, I can conclude that incorporating this aspect into a new definition has the potential to make it approximate more closely as it's considered in the real world, hence make it more realistic (Coase, 1937).

The culture of a social enterprise

To truly express what a social enterprise is, I'll expand on table 10, describing the culture of a social enterprise, explained through personal interpretations from having existed within a social enterprise.

Table 10. Self-description of Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises (adapted from Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, 2021).

A Democratic organisation
Well connected to many social and environmental projects
Provides opportunities to interns to find a more fulfilling start of their career
Provides sustainability education to interns through experience and experimentation
Helps achieve the SDGs through its own projects, collaborations, and helping others
Provides help for individuals to become social entrepreneurs
Helps already existing projects with skills and knowledge for a reduced price than the market
Is a non-profit social business
Changes the world, one day and one person at a time

Being part of Sapient, one soon realises their training documents are not meaningless words. What may come across as 'start-up vibe positivity' is truly how this social enterprise operates.

"Success means when people come here, they are happy doing what they do, when they grow both personally and professionally, when there's an added value to them and to society."

Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises

Sapient values the individual, providing them with a unique culture. Their training documents explain their '*very vibrant and communicative*' culture, and that they make an effort to share and promote personal projects and skills, especially during Sapient Days (Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises, n.d.b). I was immersed in this vibrant, communicative culture, hosting a Sapient Day session on 25/03/2021 for my cooking-skills. I nervously agreed to live-baking homemade-granola and held an in-depth conversation about healthy eating-habits, which soon transitioned to personal topics such as diet-culture and veganism with a group of Padawans. To build upon this vignette of social connection within the culture of a social enterprise, it was certainly visible that the level of interaction between team-members is high, professionally and personally. There is a strong bond and connection between the well-being of Padawans, to the organisation itself. Taking part in a 'sports session' during another GA (16/02/2021) in which I discussed starting daily yoga for my mental and physical health,

led to the invitation to join a Padawan's weekly yoga session. This next-level of interest and sense of friendship and connection really encapsulates the culture of a social enterprise as I experienced it. Additionally, multiple times throughout the week, information was shared on the Sapient Discord server providing job and apartment opportunities found by Padawans, further highlighting their importance of community. There was never a message unanswered, regardless of the time, or question. To conclude on the culture of a social enterprise, I must comment that I never truly felt like an outsider, from the beginning, I felt like a valued team-member and person.

The hierarchy of a social enterprise

I began truly understanding the literature on social enterprise hierarchy via first-hand experiences of this dynamic working environment. My first-day began messily, a last-minute change to an 8:00am introductory-call a week later than planned with no explanation. Nervous for my first working experience in the Netherlands and with much first-hand experience of meetings with CEO's who make you feel like you must be on your 'best behaviour', inciting nerves and often not letting you feel like you can be totally 'you' – I was surprised by my first meeting with my new GLUE. It was laid back and easy, while I was dressed formally, in my go-to 'job-interview shirt', Sapient's founder was incredibly relaxed, leaning back in their office chair, dressed casually, sitting comfortably in a well-used and eclectic office-space, with people walking behind them from time to time, going about their daily tasks. After a few video calls with other Padawans, I soon released the formal wear of a traditional office-job, was not expected at Sapient. As a social enterprise, believing in the uniqueness of individuals, and capacity for individuals to be the change needed in the world – one's individual style is encouraged. During this first interaction with Sapient's founder, we watched YouTube videos about alternative working styles, and even completed a brain-teaser together. I was stressed about not understanding the concept of this brain-teaser, but soon realised with some gentle guidance, that this was a free-flowing experience, aimed at thinking of things from different angles – something certainly required when working with a social enterprise, or are a social entrepreneur figuring things out as you go, trying to come up with solutions to the dynamic challenges and wicked problems²⁰ of society, with little structure and support, amongst a chaotic system aimed at changing the social paradigm of our society one day at a time.

What are their intentions and activities and how does this differ to traditional organisations?

Sapient's founder moved to the Netherlands 20 years ago to study International Business Management and escape the strict mentality and way-of-life in their home country, Israel. In an early GA Check-Out, our founder shared their personal story, explaining who they are today, and why they do what they do. Ten years ago, after having watched the documentary 'Zeitgeist', they made the decision to do something with the abilities gained from their business studies. So affected by this film, they decided then and there to become a changemaker and peacemaker. They describe themselves as passionate about people, positive change, and honesty. I felt these attributes deeply throughout my internship. In each observed moment, I experienced a sense of connection, whether during a personal meeting, a message on a screen, or a video on our Discord server explaining what they were up to (complete with quirky pop-culture references and always smiles in the face of adversity). While often difficult to get a hold of, their communication in any form was always brutally honest, compassionate, and empathetic. They never held back regarding their strengths and weaknesses as a GLUE, even when admitting what they view as failures of the organisation, led in part by their own (in)actions over the years, their sadness for the actions of their home-country, or their disappointment at the words of disgruntled Padawans or the inactive general-public (regarding the current status-quo). This is something not often seen from traditional organisations doing their best to provide the greatest public-image of their organisation both internally and externally, often with a lack of real

²⁰ A wicked problem refers to many modern social problems which are identified as being 'ill-defined', interlinked, and rely on political judgments rather than scientific certitudes. Many major public policy problems are deemed as wicked problems, including climate-change and sustainability issues. A wicked problem has no clear statement of the problem, and no clear and agreed upon solution. Additionally, science is unable to resolve these issues by filling the gaps in empirical knowledge (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

personality or expression from those in charge. It's certainly not something which I have experienced in the ten plus years of my professional career working in more traditional roles in the public and private-sector.

Why do social enterprises exist?

Through countless observations, I began recognising the honesty and compassion of Sapient's founder as the reason for the existence of this social enterprise, in line with the theoretical framework (section 2.3.2), where we see individuals acting as an energetic society, taking initiative to improve their own surroundings and society (PBL, 2015), and the nature of a social entrepreneur which sees them addressing and dealing with problems of the world (Partzsch and Ziegler, 2011). Sapient's founder's passion and drive to make positive societal-changes, and their attitude of never giving up motivates interns to apply, extend their internships, and fuels their desire to stay connected to the organisation long after becoming a Jedi, further contributing to the existence and resources of the organisation. This compassion and can-do attitude are the essence of a social enterprise and its people. According to Sapient's founder, social entrepreneurs are people who care, and social entrepreneurship is doing something due to an intrinsic motivation and passion for people, nature, and earth.

"To me, a social enterprise is also a business that is financially stable and where the profit is invested in the growth of the business to keep it going. Extra profits should not be pocketed but invested in new projects for positive progress."

Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises' founder

To further illustrate the necessity of social enterprises, images (image 3, 4, 5) taken from a video recording, received from our founder, via our DreamTeam chat on 29/05/2021 are discussed.



Image 3 and **image 5**, Food-waste from Amsterdam fruit and vegetable stores collected by Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises founder on weekends to be made available at makeshift markets in local parks in Amsterdam. **Image 4**, Food-waste collected from Amsterdam fruit and vegetable stores by the Healthy & Affordable team to turn into products for sale. (Images sourced from the DreamTeam chat)

To my fellow Padawans and I, these were disturbing images, while unlike shocking images of starving polar bears clinging to melting ice, they don't show blazingly obvious examples of climate-change and the need for a shift in our social-paradigm, yet they do present a grim picture of reality, a reality likely to continue without social enterprises. These images are a stark reminder of the current food-system, corporate greed, and lack of global goals making a big enough impact within society to incite a

paradigmatic shift. On the other hand, they show the passion and commitment of social enterprises and those who are a part of them. While this video filled me with sadness as I opened my phone to what is usually a positive alert from Sapien, alarming me with the sight of perfectly good food-waste, it equally provided a sense of pride. This video expressed the thin yet relevant tie of the global goals reaching down to a local Amsterdam neighbourhood, showing the glocal action of passionate social enterprises that acknowledge and act upon these goals. It's not yet changing an entire food-system, nor eliminating food-poverty, it is however, creating opportunities for those locally who cannot afford the premium price of fresh produce. It's educating locals about the ability to save and eat food-waste. It's giving a second life to food which otherwise would've been wasted, contributing to global emissions. Furthermore, it provides reselling opportunities for Sapien, creating profit, enabling them to continue their projects while contributing to the SDGs. According to Sapien's founder, social entrepreneurship and social enterprises must become the norm, they must continue to exist. The time for big money earners, with no commitment to sustainability needs to stop. Social entrepreneurs must become the heroes of our time, working together, achieving positive results in partnership.

5.4. Sub-question c) What is the relationship between the intentions and activities of a social enterprise and the SDGs?

Here we consider previous sub-questions, also asking; to what degree have the SDGs been effective in communicating a universal, indivisible, and aspirational agenda with the potential to inspire impactful changes on social and individual behaviours and practices at the glocal level, and to what degree are these supported and facilitated? The SDGs were created as a global social project, to incite change in practices and paradigms worldwide, in a joint goal of creating a safe, sustainable future for all. First and foremost, the SDGs act as a language for social and environmental change. This positive spin on problem-framing, describes processes through which problems become a central focus for collective action, stemming first from identification of issues, followed by advocacy and finally a new social paradigm – the exact intentions of a social enterprise (Warner, n.d.). In this section, the intentions of Sapien and its projects are presented (table 11, 12, 13, 14, 15), followed by their actions and activities in relation to the SDGs as witnessed, illustrated with thick-descriptions of specific experienced participant-observations.

Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises

Table 11. Intentions of Social & Environmental Enterprises

Name	Intentions
Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises	Overall, Sapien's intentions are driven by the passion of its founder, and its Padawans.
	As an organisation created in the same year as the SDGs, the framework of the SDGs and its goals and targets help guide the intentions of Sapien, providing a much-needed structure for a somewhat chaotic social enterprise run by a group of short-term passionate individuals.

Actions and activities

The chaos highlighted in 'tumultuous times', caused many of the actions and activities of Sapien's services to take a backseat during my participant-observations, focussing attention on the improvement of its projects. This scale-back took precedence to strengthen their operation and effectiveness so they could continue to exist and contribute towards the SDGs. Many Padawans working on Sapien's services were redirected, assisting its projects during this turbulent time. Within my own project, this allowed Oview to receive additional social-media support, helping promote and drive its public-awareness. This redirection and dynamism showed the strength of those who strive to contribute towards the SDGs regardless of obstacles, with Padawans banding together to focus on challenges, always finding a way to focus their energy on the collective, joint action of the SDGs.

Healthy & Affordable

Table 12. Intentions of Healthy and Affordable

Name	Intentions
Healthy & Affordable	Contribute towards the SDGs by reducing the amount of food being wasted in Amsterdam and the Netherlands.
	By selling products, the project both can both promote; responsible consumption, and repurposing food-waste, and provide revenue to keep Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises.
	Rebrand and redefine in order to become more profitable, and eventually its own entity.

Observed actions and activities

I observed H&A slowly become a stronger, more effective project with concrete goals and a solid business plan, which it previously lacked. The issue of food-waste is a huge driver of Sapien, and while it's only a small aspect of the SDGs, it's been very effective in communicating an aspirational agenda both within Sapien, and their local neighbourhood, pushing this project forward. Much of their activities during my observation focussed on administration, planning, and promotion due to their intention to become their own entity.

Sapien NRG

Table 13. Intentions of SapienNRG

Name	Intentions
SapienNRG	With a frequently changing team, the current goal of SapienNRG is to ensure retention of knowledge as to not lose momentum and valuable progress they are making on their responsible, clean, and affordable energy solution of the MagneticGEN (fig. 11).
	Contribute to the SDGs and the Dutch energy transition.

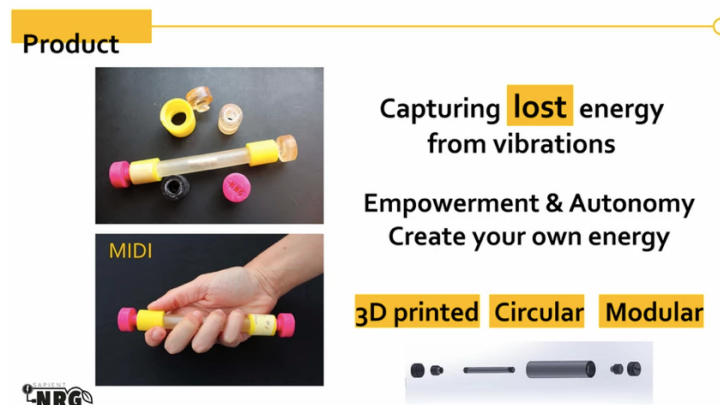


Figure 11. SapienNRG's MagneticGEN (SapienNRG, 2021)

Observed actions and activities

At each GA, I observed eager, enthusiastic engineers excitedly share SapienNRG's activities, experiencing both joy and despair. While I observed their hardwork, achieving the successful creation of a renewable energy source (fig. 11) and gaining 3rd place in the 2020 Climate Launch Awards²¹, they also experienced serious lows. In a GA towards the end of my internship, the existence a patent on magnetic energy, in a product almost identical to the MagneticGen was announced. Upon hearing this, I was shocked and sad. SapienNRG has great potential to be a profitable project, change society's behaviour providing a renewable energy option (SDG 7), and contribute to a circular economy (SDG 12). Looking at the tiny faces during this Zoom call, countless Padawans seemed to express my

²¹ ClimateLaunchpad is the world's largest green business ideas competition, run by a central team located in the Netherlands and supported by national teams supporting the competition domestically. ClimateLaunchpad are determined to address the negative impacts of climate-change through innovation, invention, and entrepreneurship, with the mission unlock the world's cleantech potential to address climate-change. ClimateLaunchpad is also a part of the Entrepreneurship offerings of EIT Climate-KIC. ClimateLaunch assists in training, supporting, and mentoring to make ideas a reality. (<https://climatlanchpad.org/>)

emotions. These same emotions were also expressed when sharing this knowledge with a SapientNRG Jedi, who recalled another Jedi who'd spent much time researching patents '*...did quite a bit of research about that and we realised that there was actually nobody who had worked on it. But there were people who had patented the same concept but using the railway tracks*', (personal communication, SapientNRG Jedi). However, despite such a roadblock, the energy of SapientNRG remained positive throughout my participant-observations. Rather than focussing on the negatives, they were genuinely excited by the discovery that others had successfully created the product they had been working so tirelessly to create themselves, giving them confidence in knowing that it was possible. Through this positivity and willingness to push through barriers, they successfully contacted the other organisation to discuss their product (which they'd abandoned due to its unaffordability). This resilience in the face of adversity is a strong theme observed throughout Sapient. So, while policies and decision-making of the government and supporting bodies have not effectively supported or facilitated this project financially, the existence of the SDGs themselves, and the publicity of the Dutch energy transition has certainly incited enough inspiration for this team to continue to their mission with intense perseverance.

Food Circle

Table 14. Intentions of Food Circle

Name	Intentions
Food Circle	The overall intention of FC is to keep the fight against food-waste alive.
	Unite active food-waste organisations throughout the Netherlands, particularly Amsterdam, by creating and orchestrating a network to make a bigger difference as a group.

Observed actions and activities

Much of FC's activities were halted due to the inability of food-waste organisations to run during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to focusing on other money-making and communicative strategies. The ZWC card-game (image 6) is a current project of FC. With this game FC aims 'bring the value back to food', creating food-waste scenarios allowing players to gain/lose points, educating people on the challenge of food-waste in a fun, engaging way. The product is currently in a crowdfunding development stage in an effort to become as sustainable and affordable as possible. I witnessed much conversation about the practicalities of this. Messages streamed into our DreamTeam chat, offering services to translate instructions to multiple language, dice were created in the EU sustainably hand-made from a family-member of a Padawan, while suggestions of the paper aspects of the physical game to be made from local 'blooming paper' is currently being explored from suggestions of an Oview Padawan. Despite the challenges faced, FC continued to work towards creating change in practices and contributing towards environmental activism throughout my data collection at Sapient.



Image 6. Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises Padawans practicing playing the Zero Waste Chef card-game at the Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises office in Amsterdam (Food Circle, 2021).

Oview**Table 15.** Intentions of Oview

Name	Intentions
Oview	To practically change behaviours and practices of organisations relating to sustainability, democracy, and knowledge retention in order to improve the resiliency and efficiency of a new generation of social enterprises, enabling more conscious organisations to exist and flourish. Target market: organisations which may not be able to afford the traditional consulting services of larger organisations.

Observed actions and activities

As per the theoretical framework (section 2.3.2), a social entrepreneur's theory of change can lead to growth before viable in an attempt to achieve greater social impact (Colby, Stone, & Carttar, 2004). This was observed with Oview, which began from a conversation a few months prior to my internship, suggesting the creation of a consultancy to create revenue. I assumed I was joining a new project as a Sustainability Consultant, learning how to create sustainability strategies from professionals, however, the reality was that, as common with Sapient, I was bringing my expertise to lead this project and its direction with my fellow Padawans. My time was often spent as a participant observing Sapient through the eyes of a sort of social entrepreneur myself, scouring the internet for 'how-to' guides and creating practical guidelines for future Padawans. I was pushed out of my comfort zone, forced to learn about SWOT-analysis and business-charters in an attempt to find direction and structure for Oview so that my time didn't go to waste. I can say with certainty, my experiences with Sapient were truly encapsulating of the mundane day-to-day activities of a social enterprise, highlighting the challenges they face.

The main take away from my participant-observations of intentions and activities, is the collection of data which provided the first-hand ability to begin to understand the collective action set out in the SDGs in reality. That being, the formation of a language for environmental activism, resistance, advocacy, and protection as seen through the lens of glocal action, building on the premise that discursive change can indeed be an integral part of wider societal change. Overall, the intentions verse the actualised activities of each project, and Sapient as a whole, is undoubtedly affected by the team at the time, the internal circumstances of the organisation (e.g. dynamics and interests of current Padawans) and the external environment (e.g. a global pandemic, available funding, public-interest in specific causes). The following section hence delves further into barriers which affect why the intentions of a social enterprise such as Sapient don't always translate into actions, and how the actions of a social enterprise don't always produce the intentions they desire.

5.5. Sub-question d) Which factors influence, affect, or act as a barrier to the scale/scope of the activities of the social enterprise?

Under the guidance of DeWalt & Dewalt (2002), I observed and studied what was happening within this social enterprise, and why. I paid close attention to sort out regular from irregular, seeking out negative cases and exceptions, while pursuing similar opportunities for observation, planning systematic observations. Whilst conducting observations involves *'fitting in, active seeing, short-term memory, informal interviewing, recording detailed fieldnotes, and, perhaps most importantly, patience'* (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 17), it can also include resisting impulsiveness, the interruption of others, and attachment to particular groups or individuals (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Researching this sub-question, I needed to continually refer to this, so I was not deluded by my role of vested, passionate Padawan, listening to and understanding the potential problems and limitations of this social enterprise as a researcher, even if that meant putting myself in an uncomfortable situation, resisting the impulse to record certain (positive) information and omit others (negative). I also needed to continually consider ethics, ensuring participants were treated and presented ethically, and that I was not bias. Undertaking inductive research in this intimate manner, my support for social enterprises and bottom-up people action in solving societal issues is surely evident. Prior to this

research, I hoped a country I view as supportive of a green-transition, and global goals like the SDGs, would help facilitate this. However, often as illustrated below with examples of participant-observation and shared information, this is not reality. In practice, the situation is chaotic, with the ever evolving global and local knowledge combined with circumstances of the local, creating tensions and contradictions which play out within the interchange of the global and the local.

5.5.1. Internal factors

Each Padawan, a volunteer or unpaid intern, is dedicated to Sapien's mission, guided by their personal desire to contribute towards the SDGs and create a sustainable society. However, it was witnessed that only so much can be achieved with limited resources.

5.5.1.2. Internal positive influences

"Another important point is success and how we measure it. For us, success means when people come here, they are happy doing what they do, when they grow both personally and professionally, when there's an added value to them and to society."

Sapien Social & Environmental Enterprises

Participating in Sapien's 5 Year Anniversary, I was blown away by the connection between Jedi's and Sapien. Providing a setting to witness first-hand this incredible bond, and continuous stream of knowledge-sharing between Padawans, Jedi's, and Sapien, the events concluding session invited everyone to celebrate this milestone together. After a short, but energetic, passionate introduction from our founder, one Jedi, calling from Sweden with his partner and infant-child, expressed amazement at the longevity of the organisation, based almost solely off the passion and commitment of its founder. They exuded an obvious sense of pride and excitement for Sapien's future, with its continued ability to survive despite the odds due to its culture of dedicated individuals. This Jedi honestly expressed the hardships the organisation experienced while they were a Padawan, back when Sapien almost ceased to exist, alongside the respect and admiration they have for its founder, who ensures the organisation powers through continual hurdles and chaos to survive. This heartfelt moment displayed the endurance of a constant battle to exist and contribute locally towards the SDGs. It revealed the existence of a connection between local action and global goals. It may be somewhat difficult or weak at times, for example relying on the commitment of a single passionate individual, creating this culture and continuous stream of eager Padawans, but it does exist.

The stream of knowledge presented via the perpetual influx of Padawans joining Sapien with the intention of making positive societal impacts, is an important attribute of this social enterprise. Through my observations, I began to understand the dynamics of Sapien, realising unlike a traditional organisation, it consists of 3 – 12 month interns and passionate young professionals searching for an outlet to fulfil their desire to promote sustainable values. Joining strategy and business meetings, I was bombarded with an endless pool of knowledge from young, relatively inexperienced individuals. These Padawans, through their passion for contributing towards the SDGs rapidly ingested information, sharing this knowledge, improving Sapien and its output. Sapien's founder was always open to suggestions, willing to learn from the next generation, and adapt the organisation to facilitate new information, improving what they had haphazardly created in 2016. The flat hierarchy of a social enterprise allows for such knowledge to flow, without impediment of barriers of higher management – no Padawan is afraid to share their thoughts, ensuring there is never a silent moment in meetings, as all members understand and value that the organisation being directed by their actions. On several occasions, I made suggestions in our DreamTeam chat or during meetings, for potential collaborations or funding to follow up. Thus, experiencing a strong feeling of connection and significance of my own position within Sapien, cementing my value and importance. Reflecting on the constant turn-over of Padawans is reminiscent of DeWalt & DeWalt's (2002) suggestion that events can change, illustrated

by the example of changing seasons. This changing of seasons, with each new Padawan provides new dynamics, connections, communication styles and interests. With this, the intentions and activities of Sapient often changes. While goals and actions are not always realised to their potential, these weak ties between the people action of the DoA and the SDGs do exist, and the formation of Sapient gives rise to a place to do so, with like-minded people able to connect in a formal setting, making exchanges to incite global changes within their local setting. Many ideas occur, sometimes lost amongst a sea of documents in Sapient's shared GoogleDrive or forgotten with the passing of a Padawan to a Jedi, yet these seeds of change are sown. These creations have potential to be swept up by the next Padawan, who may have the ability to breathe life into it, and eventually, perhaps with an increase of resources, the possibility to bear the fruition of strong global change. My time with Sapient proved people move quickly through this social enterprise, my team changed completely throughout my internship. However, I also witnessed the slow ripening of Oview, from the basic skeleton of an idea, to a project with a solid business plan. Perhaps with the next season of Padawans, the chaos of this project will give birth to a successful endeavour. This free-flowing structure creates an ownership of making real, actionable changes, promoting the continuation of the DoA's people action, inciting the notion that every action counts, which also reiterates Sapient's values that every individual is important and able to make a difference, again showing the interplay between the global goals of the SDGs, and the values of this local social enterprise pushing against the status-quo.

5.5.1.3. Internal barriers

Sapient's culture is highlighted in section 5.3, redefining a social enterprise. However, it was also observed that this culture and hierarchy has the potential to act as a barrier. This culture is understanding and easy going – perhaps too much. While Sapient understands most Padawans are busy students, I regrettably witnessed this compassionate culture being taken advantage of, something which probably wouldn't occur within a traditional business setting. With little to no guidance from a superior (and perhaps also due to lack of monetary compensation) Padawans are essentially able to do as they wish. Observing inexperienced Padawans learning 'on-the-job', I often noticed an element of chaos and confusion within projects, with a lack of long-term direction/leadership, negatively influencing the strategic-planning vital to increasing the scope and scale of Sapient on its local community (and hence SDGs). The reality of an organisation run primarily by interns/volunteers, with a flexible working style, means the motivation and drive of these people relies purely on their intrinsic values and work-ethic. I witnessed this negative effect on the speed and progress of projects, with Padawans doing little to nothing for long periods, riding through the experience, the potential momentum of the project going to waste. During my participant-observation, I noticed a theme running through Sapient – a lack of knowledge-transfer which created a barrier to their scale and scope. Observing Padawans flowing in and out, I witnessed the reality of valuable information and hard work disappearing with them. The result often being repetition of research, wasted energy and time of individuals and essentially the organisation as a whole, restricting long-term progress and success. During an interview with a passionate SapientNRG Project Coordinator and Specialised GLUE Jedi, I felt the turmoil of a mix of pride and appreciation of the continued dedication of Padawans contributing to the success of projects, combined with the frustration of this lack of knowledge-transfer. Calling from London, after finishing their time with Sapient, this dedicated Jedi, like a true social enterprise member, took time to share their personal experiences with me. Surrounded by boxes, they shifted their belongings around them, settling in for an informative, passionate conversation about innovation and social enterprises, having recently relocated from the Netherlands. Expressing their frustration, yet wearing a constant smile, showing appreciation for Sapient, they explained in simple terms, the intricacies of working on an engineering product like MagneticGEN under the working style of Sapient;

“Because let’s say, one set up of engineers have worked on it, they have come from point A to B, and there is no overlap of the engineers with the new ones, so again the new engineers have to start from ground zero. So, they can’t start from because they don’t know, how did they arrive there?! So, that was once of the major drawbacks (...) because we don’t have anyone who stays for a long time, it becomes difficult to carry on with a project, especially something like NRG which is a very practical one.”

Project Coordinator & Specialised GLUE Jedi, Sapient NRG (personal communication)

Overall, while I observed the exuberance and positivity of Padawans in the face of constant challenges, I also witnessed an overriding sense of struggle and disappointment due to barriers faced by a continuing loss of knowledge.

“Because we struggled and struggled, and things didn’t move forward. And ah, what do you call it? ...disappointing.”

Project Coordinator & Specialised GLUE Jedi, Sapient NRG (personal communication)

Throughout my observations, I also witnessed the reality of individuals prioritising a social-transition, resulting in an almost obsession of driving the success of a Sapient with little return, leading to potentially disastrous results for their lifestyle. The first observation; the Padawan who expressed their feelings in our DreamTeam chat. The second; the intense drive and passion of Sapient’s founder, essentially becoming homeless (living in Sapient’s headquarters), living and breathing the organisation (pooling all their resources and finances) to keep it afloat. Due to their kind-nature and desire to do as much as possible for society and the environment, our founder became worn out, forced mentally, spiritually, and financially to step-back from Sapient’s operations, in order to focus on rejuvenating themselves and their assets. This selfless, relentless attitude, however, fortunately results in the empathy of those one becomes close to, who in the spirit of connections held at social enterprises, are willing to pick-up the slack, ensuring the survival of this organisation. However, along with this, there simultaneously exists a lack of business acumen and real-world knowledge from such interns and volunteers, leading to potentially unsuccessful projects taking months (or years) to eventuate, or worse – fail before beginning. The knowledge-barrier, due to an inability to keep long-term paid employees unfortunately greatly reduces the potential scope and scale of project, reducing Sapient’s ability to contribute towards the SDGs. According to Social Enterprise NL (2019), just 42% of social enterprises indicate profitability, also ringing true for Sapient. As discussed in section 4.2., due to disagreements and the disbanding of former projects and multiple founders, Sapient as it is today, was created in a whirlwind moment as a legal entity in 2016. This quick process left sole-responsibility with Sapient’s founder, leading them to quickly investing everything they had, with little long-term planning. An overarching barrier to progress within Sapient hence revolves around a lack of stable internal financing. With little-to-no profit, morale can run low. I observed the confusion of new Padawans who didn’t understand how projects were able to run, unable to comprehend how or why an organisation exists without effective financing to achieve its goals. However, this is the harsh reality of social enterprises as observed during my participant-observations. The creation of a social enterprise exists due to a market-gap, which a social entrepreneur due to their intense commitment to create a better world, fills. Yet, as observed, this market-gap is not necessarily followed by a stable profit. When joining Sapient I was unaware staff were not employed conventionally. I was under the impression that the organisation relied heavily on internships, but also had a some paid staff. Through participant-observation, delving further into this world, discussing the issue with fellow Padawans, I learned that it’s actually not uncommon for social enterprises to compensate team-members in non-traditional ways like cryptocurrency (as seen with Sapient). This provides a way to maneuver around internal financing issues, yet still results in barriers to the scope and scale of the organisation and its people. In particular, the regenerative cryptocurrency used by Sapient (SEEDS), is in fact a social enterprise itself, dealing with its own challenges, and hence is not yet a live currency.

5.5.2. External factors

Whilst Sapient has a (relatively) linear and simple program logic (fig. 8), in reality, they're functioning in a multitude of complex operating environments, with many challenges. Building a capacity for continual internship positions, running under the guidance of a sole-constant, and understanding how to influence public and private-sectors as to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs is an intricate operation with many external factors. Being seen as an equal during my participant-observation, exposed me to all of Sapient's triumphs and hardships. Thus, I was often included in conversations about the future of the organisation and its ventures, giving me a strong insider perspective on these factors.

5.5.2.1. External positive influences

From the reviewed literature (section 2.3.3.) and my participant-observation (section 5.2), I discovered the characteristics of a social enterprise are heavily based around strong networking/social skills, allowing the promotion of an alternate way of thinking, contributing to the traction of a paradigmatic shift towards a more sustainable society. The biggest strength witnessed within Sapient, is its ability to forge strong, collaborative bonds, both locally and globally. Table 16 displays Sapient's network of partners (including many social enterprises).

Table 16. Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises' Partners (Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises (n.d.b)).

Erasmus+	Taste Before You Waste	Love Foundation
7 Billion Presidents	Knowmads	Boeren & Buren
Logic Locks	Klothberg	So Nick
Dago Design	Makesense	Technologia
Nightwatch Bar	Projecttogether	Incognita
Triodis Bank	Delitelabs	Landtong Niewemeer
Team Academy International School of Entrepreneurship	Green Office VU University Amsterdam	Enactis VU University Amsterdam
Universal Love Foundation	Crowdocracy	Socioneers
Project Together	Pocket Stories	De Kaskantine
Sandberg Instituut Amsterda	Piraten Partij	Café de Ceuvel
Impact Hub Amsterdam	De Verrekijker	Heroes and Friends

While organisations like SDG Nederland or Amsterdam Donut Coalition claim to provide social enterprises with networks to achieve greater results, I observed this being done on the ground by social enterprises themselves, with their own networks. I observed the local bond built between Sapient and TBYW enable Oview to gain pro-bono experience, utilising TBYW as its first client. By offering themselves as a 'trial-client' for the Democracy Consultants of Oview, TBYW provided a valuable experience, with the mutual benefit of providing them with improvements to their organisation. Global bonds, blurring the lines between where global and local projects start and end, and allowing for cross-border collaboration was also observed between Sapient and SEEDS. Being an active part of the SEEDS community, Sapient can promote its projects on this platform, and contribute towards those it aligns with. As part of my participant-observation, I too delved into the regenerative cryptocurrency world, creating my own account, gaining an insider experience. The abundance of projects, and kindness of people within this community was overwhelming. Utilising their Discord server (created by Sapient Padawans), provided me with hundreds of daily alerts of the sustainable commitments of individuals worldwide, contributing globally to projects in accordance with the SDGs, facilitated by the connection to other social enterprises, entrepreneurs, and individuals.

With the global goals of the SDGs acting as a broad context for change, Sapient can exploit their local 'energetic society' (PBL, 2015), by suggesting practical tips and spreading information via social-media, using the SDGs as a basis. Sapient have created an online-community, influencing public choices and pushing against the status-quo. With a lack of marketing budget, and an inexperienced marketing-

team, utilising this free outlet enables effective promotion of Sapient. Many posts focus on Sapient's Padawans, sharing their personal stories, evoking connections and reflecting on the importance of the individual and sense of community that social enterprises embrace (fig. 12 shows my participation).

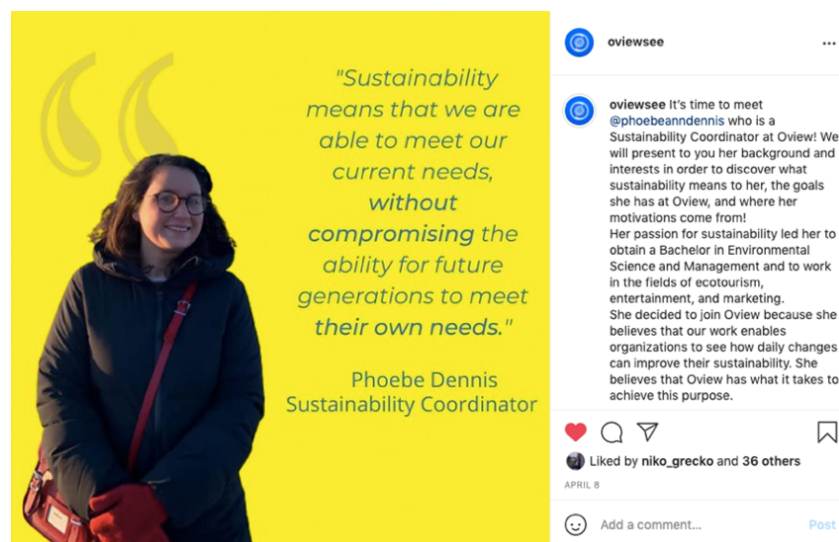


Figure 12. Oview Instagram social-media post interviewing Padawans. (Oview instagram @oviewsee, 2021).

The ability for a social enterprise to utilise the general-public's investment enables it to keep its projects afloat, by taking away financial burdens, this public-system enables what little profit the organisation makes, to flow back into it. The passion poured into FC's ZWC, heavily supported by crowdfunding²² was a joy to observe. Photos of the physical product and Padawans playing were often sent in our DreamTeam chat (image 6), always inciting messages of excitement and support. To know this was made possible due to the interest of the general-public, as engaged citizens contributing to the DoA's people action via their financial support to the realisation of such projects, shows a connect between the global SDGs and the local community Sapient is a part of.

5.5.2.2. External barriers

After the 'tumultuous times', I noticed a transition within Sapient, resulting in the founder stepping back from their active role, realising to effectively improve Sapient's scale and scope, they must focus on opportunities to increase the organisation's financial security. As a student of sustainability and societal-transitions in the Netherlands, I've been exposed to the Dutch government's interest in supporting local innovative projects, hence had a personal interest in driving Sapient to apply for grants and competitions. I spent hours trawling LinkedIn, government, and social enterprise websites desperately searching for financial support. However, as confirmed via TBAN and personal communication with a SapientNRG Jedi, I came to the solemn realisation that majority of these opportunities are focused on specific innovation and technologies, additionally, only providing ongoing and financial support when an organisation is a final winner.

"And there would be people who would actually help us materialise our concept and our project. They, we, would receive funds. We would receive a workshop to go ahead and create it. And also, a, ah, a mentor would actually help us see it through."

Project Coordinator & Specialised GLUE Jedi, Sapient NRG (personal communication)

²² Crowdfunding utilises small amounts of capital from a large number of individuals to finance new business ventures or products. This is often achieved with vast networks of people, via social-media or specific crowdfunding websites, bringing together entrepreneurs and investors. (<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/crowdfunding.asp>)

This results in but a small handful of social enterprises utilising such opportunities annually. Even SapientNRG, based on innovation and renewable energy, coming 3rd in the ClimateLaunch Awards and placing in others, received no financial support from their involvement in such competitions.

“It was just the pride of having it. Because if we won anything in the finals, any place, then we receive a prize.”

Project Coordinator & Specialised GLUE Jedi, Sapient NRG (personal communication)

This realisation is the stark reality of the barriers faced by social enterprises in the Netherlands. Even with a push from policy, there exists disconnect and a lack of support for social enterprises to work towards the achievement of the SDGs, contributing towards Amsterdam’s goals of a more innovative, sustainable city. Multiple references have been made throughout the research results that Sapient is a part of networks such as Amsterdam Impact and the Amsterdam Donut Coalition, however my observations showed these memberships provide little to no practical support/benefit.

5.6. Concluding remarks

These observations of the interplay between the global and the local have indicated that while this social enterprise makes every effort to contribute towards the achievement of the global SDGs and a better society, despite the odds frequently stacked against them, they often lack support and communication from macro-levels to do so effectively. The nature of the SDGs, a framework and language to speak from the global to the local (Warner, 2005) has shown to result in a strong presence and acceptance from the public, seen via Sapient’s passionate founder and many dedicated Padawans who are ready and willing to contribute to the SDGs. However, my observations also indicate that overall, the operationalisation of impactful changes is obstructed when there exists a lack of effective communication flowing between the global and local, a lack of support from the global to the local, and a societal-paradigm which doesn’t match the language of the SDGs. Internal and external factors hence impede the ability of those wanting to contribute towards the SDGs. The direction of the SDGs seems to get lost as it moves between the global to the local, with a lack of sufficient guidance and support to effectively achieve what they set out to. This further supports the notion of section 5.2 that perhaps the SDGs are more useful as a mechanism to raise awareness, rather than a solid framework for social enterprises to utilise at a glocal level for action, highlighting a disconnect between the goals and the reality at the local level.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This research's participant-observation opened areas of inquiry enabling me to collect a wide range of data, allowing me the privilege to observe events and learn from people who may have been otherwise unwilling to discuss if I were an outsider. Participating as an insider therefore also enabled me to witness and experience moments I may never have considering asking about, opening my eyes to the world of social enterprises first-hand; the good and the bad. Another strength of utilising a single case-study and immersing myself within participant-observation was the ability for me to have joined the ranks of anthropologists and researchers before me, experiencing the seemingly mundane, the nothingness, and everydayness of a social enterprise from the inside. This deep-dive gave flesh to the bones of this inductive qualitative study, it gave an in-depth, real-world experience of what life in the trenches of a social enterprise run by passionate volunteers and interns is like in reality – something which could never have been achieved via other research methods. With the ultimate objective of this research being to gain insight into the local contributions of a social enterprise in Amsterdam, the Netherlands to the global goals of the UN's SDGs, and the DoA, I aimed to gain an understanding of the interplay between the global and the local, uncovering how they speak to each other in practice. In doing so, this research contributed to the current limited literature on social enterprises and the SDGs, with the main goal to understand glocalisation in action via participant-observation in a single case-study. Ultimately this was guided by the research question;

To what extent is the interplay between the global United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and the local activities of a social enterprise in Amsterdam, the Netherlands effective in operationalising impactful changes?

Although somewhat limited in the conclusions that can be made, this experience and research demonstrates at least one way in which the SDGs have manifested at the glocal level and hence can inform our understanding of the SDGs and the glocal action they represent. The knowledge acquired via 'inquiry from the inside' through practice and immersion during this case-study has proved to be inherently more valid and relevant than that of the initial desk-research from my preliminary research and literature review. As suggested in section 5.3, this research indicated a possibility to work towards a new definition of the social enterprise, building on existing theory of social enterprises and entrepreneurs, adding an element of personal connections, bonds, and networking seen within a social enterprise. Additionally, it's been highlighted (section 5.5) that while in theory, there is much support from government and institutions, in reality the global does not speak to the local to the extent of providing the necessary level of practical support to effectively assist the many social enterprises which exist, in-turn limiting their ability to provide the impactful change they could if communication was more supportive and facilitating.

While the interpretation of qualitative data can be seen as a somewhat subjective activity (Given, 2008), participant-observation enabled me to gain an intimate knowledge of the area of my study, greatly reducing validity-error. It ensured I didn't misunderstand information obvious to knowledgeable insiders or members of the studied group. While embedding into an environment as a participant inevitably meant that the information collected was unique to me (Given, 2008), having been the one directly experiencing the social phenomena of interest, I can confidently say I'm capable of taking a position on the meaning of my data, and have as such 'got it right'. According to Bernard & Bernard (2013), the search for a pattern from observation and the development of explanations, or theories, is involved in the use of inductive analysis. You may have noticed reading my research results, a sense of chaos and disorder present itself within Sapient, with some things working well, while others displayed disjointedness, difficulty, and even a constant struggle to survive. With further research, this may be representative of the social enterprise domain as a whole, especially those smaller and less financially stable organisations run off the passion and resources of those who it's

made up of, similar to Sapien. As such, I have specifically used this description of ‘chaos’ on multiple occasions throughout my results to describe my observations. Chaos is often associated with mess and disorder. However, we mustn’t always consider chaos as a negative. According to Greek mythology, chaos was the very first of all, the origin of everything. It was the state preceding the creation of the universe (Greekmythology.com, 2021). Chaos can therefore be the confused unorganised state preceding the creation of something new, something bigger and better than before. My observations have shown that this weak tie of the micro-level action of social enterprises inciting and existing within chaos and change, while perhaps not enough now to incite impactful change, certainly has the potential to increase its strength, and create strong lasting bonds between the global SDGs and the local. This glocal action may then perhaps be strong enough to bring upon a paradigmatic shift in our societies to a more sustainable society, achieving the SDGs.

Throughout my research, I considered referring to my experience as negative, provoked by facing the harsh reality of the challenges and difficulties encountered by a social enterprise, and the contradictory information I experienced compared to my theoretical framework, citing the immense support and networks available to facilitate social enterprises and their practices. However, in conclusion, after having taken part in this immersive case-study, I do still believe that we as a local community have the capacity to build a better society, and perhaps faster than we think possible. I believe this partly due my experience with Sapien occurring over a tumultuous, defining time for the organisation. During my four months as a Padawan, I witnessed the founder experience what could be described as a burnout, feeling forced to step back from their leadership role due to their inability to continue at the incredible pace they had for so many years. Yet simultaneously, I observed a group of passionate individuals step up, bringing their unique skills, experiences, networks, and resources to the table, ensuring that Sapien continued to exist and contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs. I saw them ‘think outside the box’ when things got difficult, and I saw them achieve regardless of the lack of external support. This diversity and local ‘people action’ continue to be a strength of the SDGs regardless of their, at times, inability to practically guide and support organisations like Sapien, effectively ‘speaking’ to them as discussed in the research results. There are many pieces to the puzzle that is the creation of a sustainable society, they all matter, and we need all of them to complete it, social enterprises included. In fact, perhaps the social enterprises mentality is one of the most important pieces.

6.1. Sub-question e) What recommendations exist for fostering the support of social enterprises to help achieve the SDGs derive from the research?

While Stake (1995) suggests there comes a point in research when we ask, ‘*Did we (I) get the story ‘right’?*’, he also acknowledges there are no right stories, only multiple stories. In addition, Wolcott (1994) questions whether qualitative studies even have an end, and perhaps only questions which arise from them. So, to conclude this research, the final sub-question is addressed, broken into relevant topics, suggesting recommendations for fostering the support of social enterprises to assist them in contributing to the SDGs in the best manner possible.

6.1.2. Recommendations for policy and policy debate

While social enterprises can help the cause of sustainable development, governments have an obligation to support them by removing hindrances from their path via policy-making, fostering their opportunity for success. My research discovered weak ties between the SDGs and Dutch government and policy trickling down to social enterprises, however there’s not a strong push or connection enforcing/promoting the SDGs as a framework for business and practice, nor is there much support for those already doing so. For successful glocal partnerships, a strong drive to ensure no one is left behind is required, meaning policies should focus on the most marginalised (Warner, n.d.). While perhaps a somewhat strong word, social enterprises can be considered marginalised groups in comparison to MNCs and large organisations with more access to resources. Considering the SDGs are

global goals, applicable to all countries, there should also be a shift in the policy debate to consider all countries as ‘developing’, as we are all working towards a shift to a more sustainable society together (Biermann *et al.*, 2017).

Political structure and accessibility

While the city of Amsterdam has a number of programs in place with the intent to contribute towards reaching a more sustainable society and supporting innovative entrepreneurs and organisations which also aim to do so, this research indicated that complications can arise amongst this plethora of networks. There are different tasks being pursued at different levels, different systems and guidelines being referred to (e.g. Doughnut Economy, SDGs, Amsterdam Impact), yet there still seems to be a low-level of political debate over the SDGs. They are being addressed, however there is still a sense of irrelevancy, and most importantly a lack of fit with existing local ideologies. If Amsterdam wants to reach its sustainable goals, suggesting this should be achieved by working together (Donut Coalitie, n.d.), then they must practically stimulate this collaboration. There should be an accessible platform with a similar mindset to the nurturing trust of a social enterprise, available for anyone wanting to contribute. The city must create the necessary conditions, focusing their resources on making policy-decisions that foster social enterprises, most importantly with effective financing. As Hajer (2011) suggests, the government can contribute with knowledge, skills and rules into facilitating new initiatives. The case here is, making sure they do so to strengthen the ties of the global to the local, and achieve these goals glocally.

Refining policy and indicators

While the SDGs have been internationally agreed, there is little translation into specific Dutch policy (De Ree, 2021). Considering the research results, I support the notion suggested by the collaboration between Statistics Nederland (CBS) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which linking policies more directly to the SDGs is suggested, as well as paying attention to the specifics.

6.1.3. Recommendations for societal debate

This research discussed the existence of the social enterprise, what they are, and how they differ to a traditional business. The main conclusions being that due to the existence of the current corporate paradigm which aims to first make profit and meet customer needs, and secondly to consider sustainability, social enterprises exist to fill the social and sustainable market-gaps which appear. A social enterprise essentially acts in the reverse to a traditional corporate venture, considering their cause above all. For the SDGs to be met at a large scale, they must be communicated by all businesses, not just the small social enterprise fighting at the glocal level to make societal changes. There needs to be a shift in the corporate-paradigm. The assumption of ‘business as usual’ is unsustainable, new ways of living must be developed, making way for strong glocal partnerships (Warner, n.d.). A suitable way for such a transition, is to consider changes at a generational level, especially educating the younger generation. Indeed, the UN has also placed a focus on youth being a key partner in the achievement of the SDGs (UN News, 2017).

Education

A UN proposal suggests entrepreneurship should be integrated into the educational curriculum, recommending that universities should stimulate their students to consider the possibilities of entrepreneurship as a solution and valid career prospect, and educate them on the demands of communities worldwide, as to promote sustainable business ventures with the ability to lead towards a transition to a more sustainable society (Rountree & Koernig, 2015).

“We wanted to get to the moon, so we got there. We achieve what we want to achieve. If we are not achieving something, it is because we have not put our minds to it.”

Muhammad Yunus

This same point of view is held by Sapient’s founder, a former business student, who believes there needs to be an effort in stimulating the interest of students for thinking in a sustainable entrepreneurial manner by teaching these programmes at universities (De Bruijn, 2016).

6.1.4. Recommendations for academic debate

Sustainability issues transcend time and space. The problems we face within this issue is felt across many generations, possibly more to come, including those who will not have contributed to the problem. The effects of our (lack of) sustainability efforts will be felt worldwide, regardless of borders. The academic debate of globalisation, the SDGs, and social enterprises which aim to contribute towards the achievement of these goals should hence take on an interdisciplinary approach to address this wide-reaching topic, considering disciplines such as communication, economics, and political science.

6.1.5. Recommendations for further research

Due to the time and scope of this thesis, it’s not possible to research the variety of thought-provoking aspects highlighted throughout the research. This section therefore briefly discusses some topics that may be interesting starting points for further research.

Scope

This research was narrow, focussing intently on a single case-study, which can result in limitations. However, it may be found from doing further in-depth research on the same topic in other cities, that the findings of this research are a common theme. Further research needs to occur to determine this. Although there exists some empirical research on the topic of social entrepreneurship and enterprises in relation to the SDGs and their global nature, more empirical studies could add to our understanding of the important outcomes of social enterprises and their place within shifting socio-economic-paradigms to create a more sustainable future. Since social entrepreneurship has largely been practiced in developing countries, focussing on the developed world could be interesting to reduce this imbalance, and gap within the literature.

New legislation and agreements

Amsterdam’s recent City Deal Impact Entrepreneurship may prove interesting for further research. In March 2020, this deal was signed by Mona Keijzer, State Secretary for Economic Affairs & Climate Policy. Together with 79 partners, it will run until 2024, aiming to reduce obstacles and strengthen the Dutch impact entrepreneurship ecosystem, accelerating the transition to a sustainable, inclusive economy.

“The choices that municipalities, companies and individuals make can also have a major impact on the world.”

Mona Keijzer, 2020

The Deal includes increasing the flow of capital available to social enterprises, as well as boosting collaborations, and raising awareness of social enterprises to larger companies, promoting innovative partnerships, building a network with entrepreneurs and policymakers, increasing support to professionalise organisations, and create better policy for social entrepreneurs (Iamsterdam, 2021b). Ellen Oetelmans, Programme Manager of Amsterdam Impact, the organisation responsible for coordinating the deal within Amsterdam stated *‘The City Deal Impact Entrepreneurship is special because different levels of government, including national authorities, are collaborating with*

ecosystem partners on systemic change and concrete actions to remove the barriers faced by impact entrepreneurs' (Iamsterdam, 2021b), making the deal a first of its kind worldwide, inciting interest into how this diverse alliance which includes impact enterprises, national government, provinces, mid-sized and large Dutch municipalities, knowledge institutes, network organisations, finance providers, and consulting firms, may impact the future success of social enterprises to successfully achieve global goals like the SDGs at a local scale (Iamsterdam, 2021b). It would be interesting to consider how this programme operates and if it improves the ability of social enterprises to achieve their goals and contribute further towards the achievement of the SDGs.

6.2. Concluding remarks

"I like to close on an experimental note, reminding the reader that the report is just one persons encounter with a complex case."

Robert Stake, 1995

I want to reiterate that the value of this study lies in the lessons learned in regard to glocalisation in action, through participant-observation, specifically through my own thought-provoking experiences. Warner (n.d.) states *'a fuller picture of the discursive and communicative role of the SDGs should go beyond the textual analysis to incorporate the ways in which the Goals are cycling through local contexts'* (p. 9). This research therefore undertook a deeper analysis in order to explore the ways in which those on the ground act, develop, and articulate their own meanings of achieving the SDGs to their best ability. While the example of a single case-study in Amsterdam may be somewhat limited in the conclusions that can be made, it is however one way to demonstrate the ties that manifest at a glocal level in regard to the SDGs and social enterprises, hence can inform my, your, and ours as a society's understanding of this topic.

Chapter 7: Reflections

“Research is a process, not a product.”

Kim England, 1994

As an ongoing process, research doesn't end once data is collected and analysed, and findings discussed. For research to be valuable, its value must lie beyond its completion. Reflection upon our research, from the development of our ideas, to the data collection and findings, to the implications of the results, thus allows our research to continue beyond its so-called completion. Looking back on this research and thesis process, several reflective thoughts come to mind. From the beginning of my Advanced Research Methods course, learning how to conduct research, to my first discussions with my supervisor about my research-direction, as well as throughout the entire process discussing with classmates, I have continually reflected on my choices.

7.1. Theory

Initially the theory of my research was lacking. While I've always had a strong interest in activism and bottom-up approaches, I struggled to find relevant theories to fit my research topic. This resulted in the decision to conduct an inductive research, rather than my initial plan of deductive research utilising a conceptual model. However, I still struggled with relevant theoretical frameworks. Delving further into my initial question of 'what is a social enterprise?' led to considering Coase (1937) and his simple questions surrounding 'what is a firm?'. This basic understanding was in fact a deep and relevant question, supplying me with more detail to thicken up my theoretical foundations. However, taking part in an Honours Lab on Accelerating the Transition to Animal-Free Medical Science, I reflect on my thesis, and consider utilising Geels' (2011) MLP model (fig. 13) from transition theory, if I had more time and confidence in this theory. This would have created very different research with differing outcomes but may have provided interesting insights.

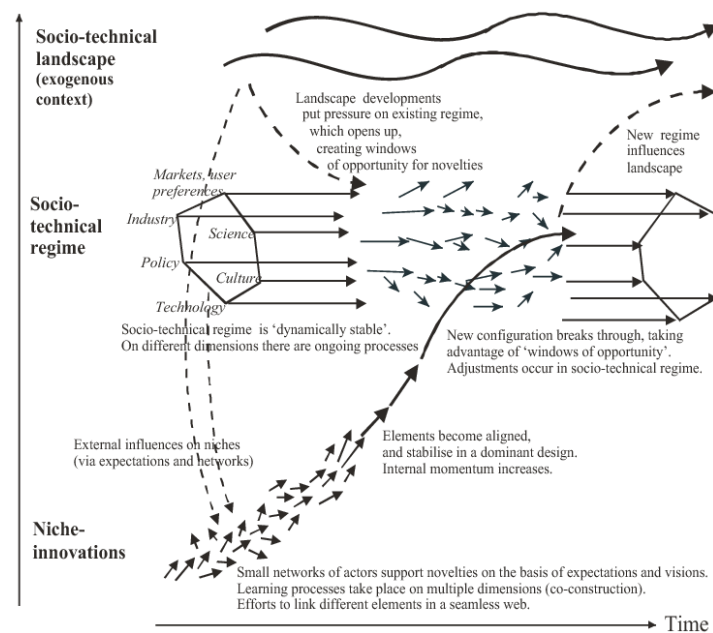


Figure 13. Multi-level perspective (MLP) model for analysing socio-technical transitions to sustainability (Geels, 2011).

7.2. Methods

The research-process for qualitative researchers is emergent, and as such the initial plan set out by a qualitative researcher is often not as tightly prescribed compared to the quantitative researcher, with

phases of the process having the tendency to change once the researcher enters their field and begins to collect data. This is certainly true for this research. However, I learned to embrace this and understand that the key to qualitative research is to learn about a problem or issue from participants, and to then engage in the best-practices to extract this information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My initial plan included utilising semi-structured interviews with organisations outside of Sapient, improving triangulation and providing additional viewpoints for comparison. Unfortunately, these organisations were unable/unwilling to take part in interviews (Appendix I). However, upon discussion with my supervisor, I learned the value of other qualitative research methodologies, and embraced the inductive nature of my research, relying heavily on participant-observation and thick-descriptions to delve into my topic on a more personal level. This methodology allowed me to research inductively, discovering emerging trends, shaped by my first-hand experience in collecting and analysing data., further permitting me to make discoveries from the ground-up, rather than handed-down entirely from theory. This also meant my research questions changed from my original thesis-proposal, better reflecting the types of questions needed to understand the research problem. This is something which I was unaware of prior to conducting my research, yet is actually not uncommon in qualitative studies like mine (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, if more time, knowledge, and resources were available, questionnaires/interviews could have provided further insight and proved valuable.

7.3. Role of the researcher

As a researcher, I faced the challenge of reconciling my personal experience with the need for detachment expected from a researcher, ensuring my work could still be regarded as scientific. According to England (1994), research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants, thus, both can impact the research-process. Our own biases shape the research-process, and through recognition of these biases we presume we are able to gain insights into how we may approach and engage in a research setting. Malterud (2001) suggests reflexivity begins with the identification of any preconceptions that a researcher may bring to their research which represent their personal and professional experiences, pre-study beliefs of how things are or what is to be investigated, their motivation and qualifications for exploration in the field of study, as well as their own perspectives and theoretical foundations (Rowe, 2014). Prior to the thesis, and before meeting my supervisor, I felt I needed to be purely objective, and distance myself from my research. This was felt particularly from returning to study after 10 years, having never written a thesis, along with content from my Advanced Research Methods course which stressed this as a desired approach for a researcher. However, upon meeting my supervisor and reading more about inductive studies and participant-observation, I embraced the fluidity of my own identity, views, and experiences. I changed my static scientific writing style to permit my personal strength and preference of being emotive and descriptive, changed my voice to first-person, and took ownership of my experiences. While positionality can be described as the space in which objectivism and subjectivism meet, I learned to understand through this thesis process that to achieve true objectivism is simply not possible. It's difficult to ever truly separate oneself from subjectivity, therefore, we are able to only strive to remain objective, and be mindful of our subjectivities. The same can be said for positionality. We must acknowledge who we are as individuals, members of groups, and our (often moving) social positions (Freire, 2000). With this in mind, I learned to embrace my positionality. While although I felt like I shared much in common with my participants, I did still feel at times like an outsider conducting research and writing about them, and worried how this may affect our relationship, or my research. However, I was able to use this position as an opportunity to ask participants questions they assumed I may already know. This also came from the notion that while all Padawans are considered as knowledgeable as each other, I often felt a knowledge-gap due to only having been a part of Sapient for a short while yet needed to make big decisions on the direction of the project I was working on, and also to discover information for my research. However, as I had a vested interest both for my research and the organisation, I was able to ask questions as both an insider and outsider. Upon discussions with my supervisor and personal reflection, I stand by the stance I held in regard to my

positionality during this research – an involved insider. I was privileged to be a participant and observe events that outsiders simply are unable to see, know, or experience, enabling me to collect invaluable data for my research. As stated by Hall (1990), *'there's no enunciation without positionality. You have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all'*. Thus, it can be confirmed to be an enrichment to my research-process and my learning experience, rather than a hinderance.

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Appendix I. List of outside organisations contacted for interviews

Organisation	Response	Additional details
SDG House	No response	
SDG House Amsterdam	No response	
We Make Change	No response	
SDG Nederland	Responded	Unable to take part in interview but offered to provide contact details of other social entrepreneurs and social enterprises, however after multiple follow ups did not provide this information
Social Enterprise NL	Responded	Uninterested in taking part in an interview due to decision that they would not have relevant information, but gave some general information about their organisation via email
Think Big Act Now	Responded	Successfully interviewed

Appendix II. List of interviewees

Interviewee	Organisation	Function	Date
Current employee (anonymous)	Think Big Act Now	Project Manager & PA	12/05/2021
Jedi (anonymous)	Sapient Social & Environmental Enterprises (Sapient NRG)	Project Coordinator & Specialised GLUE	01/06/2021

Appendix III. Interview guide: Think Big Act Now

Interview Guide – Think Big Act Now

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Information will be used for academic purposes only. Due to the design of this research (explorative, iterative), specific questions will vary, or be elaborated upon. Additional questions and conversations may also arise. This interview will be undertaken in an unstructured, informal setting.

Date: 12/05/2021 **Location:** Zoom **Start/end times:** 11:00 – 11:31

Position of interviewee: Project Manager & PA

Contact details: Info@thinkbigactnow.com

Recording: audio only, via Apple iPhone voice memo recording app

Introduction*:

Greetings

Topic and frame of the research

Confirmation of permission to record

Organisation based discussion

Introduction of Think Big Act Now, how they came about, who they are etc.

Description of services offered and price structure for the services.

What kind of clients Think Big Act Now work with.

Limitations/barriers

For Think Big Act Now.

For clients.

Subsidies, grants, financing etc.

Questions about the SDGs

Does Think Big Act Now consider the SDGs in their day-to-day business, or reference them in any way.

What are Think Big Act Now's views on the SDGs.

**Additionally, email correspondence previously discussed the topic of the research and thesis, permission to record, and use of names in the research hence not much detail being used in the interview itself. This correspondence can be provided upon request.*

Appendix IV. Interview guide: SapientNRG

Interview Guide – SapientNRG

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Information will be used for academic purposes only. Due to the design of this research (explorative, iterative), specific questions will vary, or be elaborated upon. Additional questions and conversations may also arise. This interview will be undertaken in an unstructured, informal setting.

Date: 01/06/2021 **Location:** Zoom **Start/end times:** 15:30 - 14:06

Position of interviewee: Former Project coordinator and Specialized GLUE

Contact details: +44 7497 703118

Recording: audio only, via Apple iPhone voice memo recording app

Greetings*

Climate Launch Awards

How did you find out about the competition?

What did it involve you doing?

What did you achieve, or how did you benefit from winning third prize?

Are you still in contact with the Climate Launch Awards team?

**Additionally, Whatsapp correspondence previously discussed the topic of the research and thesis, permission to record, and use of names in the research hence not much detail being used in the interview itself. This correspondence can be provided upon request.*