

# Engagement around the corner

Hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein

**I**n January 2019, the municipality of Rheden won the prize for the most inspiring Global Goals municipality in the Netherlands. Rheden translates these Global Goals (or SDGs) to its inhabitants, entrepreneurs and education, to encourage them to make a contribution to sustainable development within the municipality. For example, by aiming to reduce inequality, to contribute to a liveable and safe environment, sustainable production and consumption and by combating climate change. Van Hall Larenstein Velp is located in the municipality of Rheden and many interactions between the two partners have been established over the last years. One such good practice was realised between November 2019 and January 2020 by engaging first year students with local entrepreneurs.

The research aims to create a clear understanding of how entrepreneurs and non-profit organisations in the municipality of Rheden contribute to the 17 Global Goals, to serve as a starting point for an organisational analysis to identify strategies for strengthening the contribution to these Global Goals.

The main research question was: What is the contribution of local entrepreneurs and non-profit organisations in the municipality of Rheden to the 17 Global Goals?

The sub-research question was: To what Global Goal(s) do the local entrepreneurs and non-profit organisations aim to contribute, and why?

19 entrepreneurs agreed to participate in this 9-weeks research project. The learning objectives for students were to get to know how to do research, to enjoy the fun of it and to

learn to work with a local commissioner around the corner – literally. Doing interviews after interview workshops, doing role-play to experience how difficult it is to ask the right questions: these were all preparatory exercises to enable students to work together and to make them experience that research is a not paper-based exercise. The outcomes of this project show that students could process mainly qualitative data from different angles, desk research data interviews and SDG analysis specific for the company or organisation involved. It provided the entrepreneurs tools to rank their priorities and urgencies for sustainable development. Students were equipped with an interview design that needed consent previous to the interview, which was not always feasible for staff. It is sometimes risky to send out first-year students into the open: expectations are then not always met. Managing the process and product outcomes between the two partners requires a close understanding of the opportunities and challenges.

Meeting the entrepreneurs during the final poster presentation in the municipality's main hall was a great experience for students. They were surprised to be able to contribute to the sustainability profile of the companies and organisations. Entrepreneurs were happy to find confirmation that their efforts to work more sustainably, and their motives to do so, can be expressed with the help of the SDG framework.

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