

Regional office: Rikolto Belgium

Title evaluation report: SROI – Kortom Leuven

Date of the Management Response: 30th of March 2021

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Management response

Although *Kort'om leuven* wasn't the "perfect case" for an efficiency evaluation, since it's a relatively *new* project with still limited data on outcome level, we found both the process of the SROI evaluation, as well as the findings very interesting for our team to reflect upon.

Firstly, this was for our team a first acquaintance with the SROI methodology and it taught us how to approach an assessment in a new way, from a value creation perspective. This approach is possibly more in line with the way (impact) investors or financial donors look at societal projects, which means it can be more appealing for them to support projects that are already presented through the lens of (social) value creation. Hopefully, learning and applying more (aspects of) this way of evaluating will result in broader financial interest and support.

Secondly, this value-creation lens is not only appealing to outsiders, but offers also interesting insights for the program team. We experienced that, on the one hand, the results of the SROI evaluation confirmed our expectations, but on the other hand revealed unintended or unexpected benefits for certain stakeholders. For example, we received confirmation that retailers appreciate the quality of produce, the local profiling, the exclusiveness of some of the products, as well as the (recently introduced) attractive packaging and marketing. Farmers and buyers stressed the importance they attach to the 'community' aspect, that is establishing

linkages between actors in the short chain, promoting information, ... Rikolto staff didn't identify this benefit as a direct result from the project *so far*, which was more focused on the establishment of a viable business model. These unexpected or unintended benefits can offer new strategical opportunities for further value creation.

Thirdly, an SROI evaluation examines which activities are lacking or underdeveloped in the current project and can have a positive effect on the social return on investment. In the case of Kort'om Leuven, it is clear that the ecological dimension has been given less attention so far. Yet, research states that investing in more sustainable farming systems, integrating valorisation of food waste, reduce packaging, ... can create considerable benefits for the environment and therefore have a substantial positive effect on the SROI. It shows where Rikolto can make a difference and where we should invest in, in the coming years, when developing other short chain models. Here as well, this evaluation method offers interesting insights to guide internal strategical reflections, and may result in a shift priorities in the future (shift from primary focus on "viable business model" in the first stages of Kort'om Leuven to a more ecologically sustainable model in a follow-up phase).

The timing of this SROI evaluation matches well with our program planning and management cycle, since we are in the middle of planning and writing a new 5-year-plan for DGD. Our ambition is to continue working on local embedding of retailers and models as Kort'om Leuven, based on our learnings and apply them in other cities. However, it is not a part of our DGD program, which means we will be in search for extra financial means. This SROI evaluation can serve to obtain extra financial input, as well as it can help to finetune our project objectives and benefits in terms of monetised value.

Key action(s) - How will you integrate the findings in your work?	Time frame	Responsible	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
1.1 Rikolto isn't involved anymore in <i>Kort'om Leuven</i> as a leading partner. We will, however, organize a workshop, together with the coordinator, to present the insights of this evaluation to different partners that were involved during the start-up phase of Kortom Leuven, and still are important stakeholders (e.g. the city of Leuven, Innovatiesteunpunt, actors of City Food Strategy of	May 2021	Liesbeth & Michael		[Tracking is for updates to be presented at the bi-annual presential IMT meetings]

Leuven). They can integrate the learnings in the further implementation and growth model of Kortom Leuven. The one-year-anniversary (May 2021) is the perfect occasion to do so.				
1.2 Presentation of lessons learnt on SROI internally during a briefing.	May 2021	Liesbeth		
1.3 Our objective is to continue developing models for local embedding of retailers and sustainable supply chain models in Belgium. The lessons of this evaluation will help us to further explore new business models or to deepen short chain models in order to improve value creation (for example on the ecological aspect).	2022	?		
1.4 We will explore how these insights can be integrated in the “short chain discussion group” of the Food Strategy of Leuven by contacting the coordinator of Leuven 2030. Moreover, there might be a link with Fork2Farmdialogues, that will be organized later in 2021 in Leuven.	June 2022	Liesbeth (contacts) – Gert (Fork2Farmdialogues) – Caroline (Leuven 2030)		
1.5 More insights and knowledge on ‘how to measure efficiency’ through this SROI, will impact indirectly the way we measure outcomes of our interventions and develop indicators for impact in our new program. To formally integrate principles of SROI in our renewed PLA system, we will wait however on international guidelines, that are exploring this.	2022	International PLA team		