

# NEW TRENDS IN THE CREATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES CASE STUDIES

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## Mescladís Case Study: Strategic Management of Diversity in a Non-profit Organisation

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## **Objectives and Audience**

The aims of this case study are as follows:

- Firstly, the case study's main goal is to familiarise students with the concept of social entrepreneurship. This is important because of the growing interest for social companies and organisations, both from the company's and the client's perspective. In addition, the concept of social entrepreneurship is currently undergoing a stage of growth and could serve as a possible future channel for employment in a crisis situation.
- Secondly, the case study aims to improve the students' skills in identifying key factors for success and determining the risks facing organisations, as well as proposing strategic steps that could be taken once the situation of the organisation has been assessed.

This case study is aimed at undergraduate and post-graduate students who are especially interested in issues related with Social Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management. In order to get the most out of this case study, students should at least have an introductory level of the basics of Business and Entrepreneurial Strategy.

## **Introduction**

Mescladís is a non-profit organisation in operation since 2005, whose main goal is to promote social cohesion in Barcelona in support of rights and opportunities for all citizens, as well as to create an enriching experience through working alongside people from different cultures. The initial idea was to set up a project which would have a positive impact in areas relating to the management of migration. This panorama was expanded to include, more generally, social cohesion and multiculturalism, which built upon its main Solidarity Economy initiative entitled Cooking Opportunities Programme. The programme offers

training for waiters and kitchen helpers to private opportunity groups, particularly immigrants, who may or may not be in irregular situations, to enable their subsequent socio-professional integration. The programme looks to enhance people's ability and readiness to integrate in situations in which they have difficulties accessing employment opportunities. The initiative also aims to improve opportunities from its economic positioning, which it does through enabling participants' access to working conditions that do not involve their exploitation or unfair treatment. The Cooking Opportunities programme enjoys the support of the community that contributes financially through the Restaurant-School, *Espai Mescladís*, a local, social and gastronomic space.

In the words of the project's leader, Martín Habiague:

*We base our work on this programme, which is one of socio-professional integration, we train chefs and waiters, and offer comprehensive training. This face-to-face training is complemented by in-company work placements, which may lead to job opportunities. A very important part of this initiative is that we do not work with groups at risk of exclusion, but rather groups who are excluded, people who are in an irregular situation.*

## **Commitment and Values**

The values of Mescladís are connected with helping to promote a new social consensus based on dialogue as a value and the right to migrate as a principle. The project is based on the idea that our treatment of minors, and especially migrants, is a reflection of a society's democratic standards. Barcelona is an open and pluralistic city, but which has a long way to go in developing equality with regards to the rights and opportunities of all its citizens, regardless of their origin.

These values are also based on a commitment to responsible and sustainable consumption, in the knowledge that injustices in north-south relations, and the precarious living conditions in the societies of origin, lead to a dramatic migratory reality. The project, therefore, has an educational and pedagogical focus, but is also based on sustainability and respect for the environment.

*Cooking Opportunities is the project's foundations, because this is where we have most impact, where we see changes in people. The initiative includes two other work areas. There is a first branch of community development, aimed at bringing fresh energy to the neighbourhood, working with children, the elderly, etc., normally using cooking as a tool. We are also present in Barcelona markets at the weekends and our produce is on sale, and we have a programme of workshops which focus on different issues: sustainability, diversity, infancy, learning know-how, etc. We work with issues that require awareness-raising, using art as a social tool. The second focus, which has just been established in Mescladís as a project, is taking a broad approach to the issue of sustainability: the economic sustainability of our project, environmental sustainability, for example, in our selection of providers, and, finally, the social and also emotional sustainability of our team.*

## **Care for the Environment, Local Businesses and Fair Trade**

From the beginning, the initiative has been committed to an approach to life based on sustainability. Their products and connections with suppliers are fundamental as they share values of social cohesion, respect for the environment and human rights with their associated companies, cooperatives and solidarity groups, such as La Fageda, La Kosturica and El Llevat, L'Olivera and Cal Valls, which form the basis of their gastronomic offer.

*Espai Mescladís* promotes the consumption of locally-sourced and sustainable products: yoghurts and ice-cream from La Fageda, ecological fruit and vegetables from Kosturica and El Tros d'Ordal, products from Solidarity Consumer Network, ecological juices from Cal Valls, wines from the L'Olivera cooperative or the craft beers, Les Clandestines, 08 or Almogàvers. They have replaced filtered water for bottles. Filtered water that is free of chemicals, has not been bottled, stored or transported and is respectful with the environment.

Furthermore, many of their students, especially young migrants who lack equal opportunities, come from countries where entire populations are in danger and large food producers are infringing on their rights without consideration for criteria of social justice or environmental or social sustainability. That is why Mescladís'

commitment is closely linked to an awareness of not reproducing practices that exclude or foster greater exclusion anywhere in the world.

## Mescladís' Main Activities

### **Socio-professional Integration: Cooking Opportunities**

As it has been mentioned, the underlying initiative of Mescladís is the Cooking Opportunities Programme, a training programme for people arriving at Mescladís –often after passing through various other social institutions–, with a history of low or no opportunities for entering the job market.

The project offers them specific training and techniques in cooking and catering, on a theoretical basis and hours of practical experience to properly learn the basic knowledge for working in kitchens or serving customers. This training also includes knowledge of gastronomic culture, nutrition, hygiene and food safety, and dealing with customers with specific needs, such as celiacs. The training is complemented with training in social skills given by psychologists, art therapy sessions or theatre.

The aim of the programme is to offer channels through which people can integrate into society, which is why training is continuous and flexible. If there are free places, each month new students join the programme, and, based on their specific knowledge levels, they are placed in the most suitable modules. Cooking Opportunities has grown exponentially in recent years, and currently has approximately 70 graduates each year.

*The employment rate, which is how we measure the programme's success, with a job or contract that offers a lawful situation, is approximately 30% per year (in 2015 it was 35%), although we know that sooner or later most students are able to resolve their situation, in one way or another, as the catering sector in Barcelona, notwithstanding the crisis, is highly dynamic.*

## **Other Social Projects and Initiatives**

### *Workshops*

Mescladís offers a series of workshops that promote intercultural meetings and social reflection, using cuisine as a tool and a language. Mescladís' workshops are designed as a meeting point between cultures, with cooking as a pretext. In the preparation of each workshop there are people from the community who want to share their histories, knowledge and flavours, the conflicts or hopes which brought them to a new city, and often, a new country.

The workshops also allow participants to enter the world of cooking as well as understand its environmental and social implications. At Mescladís, cooking and eating are an excuse for celebrating diversity and promoting a fairer society.

### *Intercultural Workshops*

The workshops are set up for adults and the elderly and are intended to open opportunities for broadening social networks and, from there, opening spaces for reflecting upon the issues of daily life on the public agenda, linked with the idea of multiculturalism as an urban phenomenon, and also as a global issue.

### *Community Development*

From the project arose the need to go further, to increase the impact on the community, opening channels for dialogue, knowledge and accommodation between all the parties involved.

In view of this aim, the Community Development area was created in 2011, which involves different social actors who are most affected by the multicultural and diverse immigrant reality.

Leading this area is the Migrant Dialogues programme, a social art initiative which forms the backbone for the work of the Community Development area. The aim of the programme is to use art as a tool for strengthening a sense of belonging and, therefore, the community network. The initiative combines a range of community-based activities using photography as a documentary and awareness-raising tool.

Based on the knowledge of the community, through the collection of the life stories of its members, urban installations are created which seek a positive impact on public spaces, inviting communities to reflect upon the reality of migration.

## **The Path/Difficulties**

The beginnings of Mescladís are linked with the search for an inclusive, multicultural panorama in Barcelona. Hence, the Cooking Opportunities programme was created as an initiative that would lead to the development of more and better opportunities for excluded populations, mainly immigrants. The path has not always been an easy one, as Martín Habiague narrates:

*I have had a lot of help in the development of Mescladís over the years, which leads me to the conclusion that if you have a real project, you'll find the support you need. That is the experience of Mescladís. On the other hand, there have been a series of difficulties. The public authority has a marked discourse in favour of entrepreneurship, but when it comes to practice, the margin for action and initiatives that enable projects to develop is extremely limited. It is much easier to develop a project elsewhere in Europe; here you face an endless stream of obstacles: from neighbourhood regulations that don't take into account their diverse realities, timetable restrictions and restrictions on activities, the acceptance of diversity, etc. The public authority is a partner that puts up many barriers.*

## **Economic Sustainability**

Mescladís is an economically sustainable project essentially thanks to the contributions of citizens that use its services. The Espai Mescladís, a bar-restaurant and school, along with other economic activities like catering and different workshops, provides approximately 90% of its budget. This self-financing is used to innovate and develop new projects. The rest of its income comes from different social institutions, including the Barcelona Provincial Council, the Barcelona City Council, and the Generalitat de

Catalunya. A large number of social organisations in the city send people to Mescaldís so that they can benefit from its programme. For years it has enjoyed the support of Càritas, which, as well as contributing financially, provides a high percentage of its students. Càritas has been a key actor in supporting the project. The two organisations agree in terms of their non-paternalistic approach to the migrant population, and throughout the years they have developed various modalities of mutual support.

## **Business Model/Competition**

Mescaldís' business model is based on offering its clients a good service, analysing the neighbourhood's needs and using it as efficiently as possible from an economic viewpoint. Their clients are local residents, tourists and people who have found out about the organisation through the media. As regards the competition:

*We never position ourselves in the market, we've never done a market analysis. In our business model we never position Mescladís as a competitor in the catering sector. We are a collaborator in the sector because we collaborate with restaurants serving local produce, who we see as possible partners for offering job opportunities to our students. We are taking the same approach to a new beer we are developing. We're not positioning ourselves as a competitor in the world of craft beers, despite the fact that in practice we end up as such, at least from the viewpoint of certain actors in the sector. We don't see competitors, we see possible partners, where a student could do a work placement or be given a contract. Our outlook is different. With the beer it's the same. We want to be a school for producing and selling beer and to be able to collaborate with the different actors in this world.*

## **Organisational Structure: the People**

Mescladís provides opportunities for people who have difficulties accessing the job market. Many of them are immigrants who are denied the rights of other citizens, which include the right to work. Many of the people responsible for taking Mescladís forward are



former students and current students of the school itself. The rest of the team is composed mostly of people with a first-hand experience of what it is to migrate.

Martín Habiague is the founder and director of Mescladís, and he is accompanied by a management team comprising six members who coordinate the initiative, each with their own responsibility in the Cooking Opportunities programme, the *Espai Mescladís*, and the different workshop and community development proposals. Everyone contributes their multiple experiences in the design and implementation of their initiatives. In addition, the operational team of Mescladís has seven more people that assume different responsibilities in the *Espai Mescladís* and activities linked with the organisation's participation in markets, catering projects and the workshops. They are in charge of the project's day-to-day running, as well as ensuring its resources.

## The Future

In line with its core principle of sustainability, the future of Mescladís is closely linked with the new craft beer production project. The idea is based on increasing the amount of staff the organisation can hire, with the aim of doubling the work team in five years' time, as well as the turnover. The beer project is structured around two areas, firstly, enhancing the training side, and secondly, improving market presence, as the consumption of craft beer is a fast-growing market and allows the training of a diverse range of profiles, including beer technicians, sales and marketing staff, etc. This will enable a broader range of professional profiles that Mecladís can give training to and hire.

As far as Mescladís' strategy is concerned, they are currently working with the consultancy firm 180°, to develop a strategic plan for the next five years, focusing on three central areas for the project: giving the educational area a strategy and a structure; in terms of finances, making the project more self-sufficient, but also working on fund-raising, especially for the beer project and educational area; and, finally, deciding how the beer project fits into the organisation.

*Each year we consider what our economic goals are, those that allow for sustainability. We are a survival project, we have to take a balanced approach to the end of each year, considering the people and different work areas we can have an impact.*

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What do you think are the main factors behind the success of Mescladís?
2. How do you think the organisation has reoriented itself over time?
3. What are the main risks that Mescladís faces?
4. What are the next strategic steps that Mescladís should take?



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### Entitats col·laboradores

