

CASE

Grey Suits on a Bike

Tabitha takes a sip of her drink at her favorite bar. She just had a very interesting discussion with David, an experienced businessman who works at corporate. David is passionate about sustainable solutions. But, so he complained, it is difficult to translate ideas into action.

Nature, David said, reacts to what we are doing. If there is no salmon in the river, it is because the river is probably intoxicated. If there is no sparrow in your garden, it means that the sparrow cannot find food there. So, are we aware on what we are doing? As long as people keep on living like they always did, continue making products the same way, this will not change. How can we involve the new generation in sustainable decision-making?

Background information

OK, we all know. If we keep on exhausting raw materials and keep on blowing harmful gases into the air, the environment will keep on getting worse. Greenhouse effect, smog and flooding, for example. It looks like we're adjusting to it. Clean Tech Delta likes to change all this, though. They connect government (municipalities, hoogheemraadschap), knowledge institutions (universities, TNO) and companies (a.o. AkzoNobel, Grontmij, GoodFuels and Blue Battery). They hope that new and multidisciplinary combinations will lead to new and clean technologies. Clean Tech Delta has four main areas of interest, among which water and energy efficiency. They aim at Rotterdam, Delft and the Drechtsteden.

Very good!, one might think, Keep up the good work! Clean Tech Delta will do so, no doubt. But behavioral change is very difficult. Is awareness of the issues important? If someone is aware of the issues and what to change in his or her own behavior, would (s)he change accordingly? If not so, what can Clean Tech Delta and their partners do about it? Should changes start from the bottom (i.e. young professionals, startups) or from the corporates (the proverbial man in a grey suit)? Or from both?

Changing the world starts with the individual. How would you get people to change their behavior? If you tell them they should drive a cleaner car, they will do so if there is a fiscal or financial benefit. If you tell them it would be better to use the bike to go to work, they will do so if they receive groceries for free at the end of the month. So the experiments tell us. Is that the whole story? Sometimes they say, there is more between heaven and earth. So, is religion part of the solution? Ethics? Is capitalism the root of all evil?

Tabitha contemplates: "Maybe it is just conviction. I do not own a car, I go to my work by bike. I prefer to buy my clothes second hand, fair trade or sustainably produced." But where does that conviction comes from? And more importantly, how can we convince others to make a decision on all different kind of levels that are sustainable?

Can we only get people to change their behavior if they directly benefit from it? And if so, what does that mean for the products and services to be developed? How could Clean Tech Delta organize this from their position? Clean Tech Delta has as its mission to strengthen the cleantech sector in the region. Therefore, it needs to build a cleantech community with entrepreneurs, seasoned managers and young ambitious professionals.

David made a joke this afternoon. His dream, he said, was that everyone would take a bike to go to work. "Imagine", he said, "all these guys in a grey suit sitting on a bike! That would make it very visual something is changing!" Tabitha thinks that may be a bit far-fetched. But she believes that such changes are necessary. Who feels the need to change? Whose problem is it to think of the next economy, a sustainable economy? Who feels responsible? Is the problem not simply not too big to tackle? How can companies contribute? Would they want to do so? How could you urge them to? So many questions, so few answers.

Tabitha likes her work at Clean Tech Delta, but need some help to figure out what is needed to involve the new generation with young ambition professionals. A disruptive or groundbreaking idea, that incorporates all practical factors like organization, finance, stakeholders, etcetera. This could be the start of a serious opportunity to make a difference in the next economy of Rotterdam.

Information

- [The cultural economy of cleantech by Federico Capprotti](#)
- [NL: Erasmus+](#), een Europees subsidieprogramma / [EN: Erasmus+](#)
- [CNN bericht: World at tipping point renewable energy](#)
- [Cleantech - the youth perspective](#)
 - [Bio based economy](#) - blog by Fred van Beuningen, director Clean Tech Delta
 - [Expert Consensus on the Economics of Climate Change](#)
 - [Climate Change report 2015](#) by Mercer
 - [Renewable Energy Opportunities](#) by Goldman Sachs
 - [Energy Darwinisme II](#) by Citibank



This case is used in the business competition [Rotterdam 100](#) 2016.

Vor privacy reasons, the names of the companies and characters are changed. The occurrences and circumstances described in this case are based on reality.

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