

Keynote speech 2016: Cleantech Region Stedendriehoek

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Here we are, at the third Regional Innovation & Entrepreneur Conference at Saxion. I was asked if I would like to contribute in some way. As decisions go, this was an easy one to make! Aside from the obvious honour of presenting this kick-off, I quickly spotted various reasons to answer this request with a resounding YES.

It just so happens that innovation and entrepreneurship are the very elements that make our Cleantech Stedendriehoek Region so successful. This is where government, industry, education & research have joined forces. A place of reinforcing each other, with a common goal and challenge. I invite you to journey with me to and around the Cleantech Region. A journey we embarked on some three years ago. And who knows, maybe you will stay on board. I'd like that.

The Stedendriehoek is what we Dutch call the area including and between the cities of Apeldoorn, Deventer and Zutphen. Beautiful cities, green fields, De IJssel river, Veluwe, Salland, there's too much to list. But lacking one dominant identity, there was not a single distinctive feature. We also lacked a strong economic profile. In fact, we only excelled at being average. This wasn't all bad though, as it also meant that the economy was less prone to cyclical fluctuations. We were, and still are, quite resilient. But that does little to help profile yourself as a region. We steadily continued our search. We all felt that we needed to make our strong and promising connection visible.

We intensified this search by collaborating within the Strategic Board Stedendriehoek. The Board partners from industry, government and knowledge institutes together made every effort to advance the social-economic development of our region. And this collaboration taught us that we had to view our region

Conference proceedings 2nd and 3rd Regional Innovation & Entrepreneurship Conference differently. No more looking towards a specific sector, but look across all of them, to find that one element that proved to unite us all. Cleantech!

Cleantech is deeply rooted in our region. Our region has an above average number of citizen initiatives when it comes to sustainability, such as energy corporations. Companies here stand out by making economical use of raw resources and energy. There is also plenty of attention for product lifecycles and making production processes more sustainable. As for government, we agreed several years ago that we aim to be energy neutral by 2030 at the latest. So, in our search for our own identity, everything suddenly just clicked. We are the Cleantech Region, and this focus sets us apart from other regions that tend to focus more on a single industry (food, health care, HTSM...).

The triple helix collaboration in the Cleantech Region is crucial to realise our Cleantech ambitions. And the great thing is... this isn't a closed collaboration. We actively try to connect with local citizen initiatives in the innovation regions around us.

To us, as Stedendriehoek, cleantech means doing more with less! And this has a clear benefit for the various partners in the region.

We achieve greater revenues and create more jobs with less environmental impact. Our foundation is a circular economy. Inside this circular economy, products and materials get re-used and raw resources retain their value. This creates opportunities for entrepreneurs: more cooperation across the chain, innovation, less resource consumption and less waste. And as a result, less costs. We need more knowledge to make this all happen. And if we're lacking that knowledge, we have to find ways to attain it. That's where knowledge & research institutes like Saxion come into the picture. Aside from practical objections, rules often get in the way of innovative concepts. Government bodies like cities and provinces can play a part in how these rules are applied. In short, in the Stedendriehoek we took the initiative to join forces and collaborate with Cleantech as our uniting theme.

Everyone contributes. Districts and provinces create the opportunities and assist wherever they can. Universities and colleges perform research for one or more interested companies and train the right people. The companies apply circular principles as best they can. This combining of forces truly enables the entrepreneurs. They get to do more with less. And in turn that's what draws new companies to settle in the region: both existing companies and startups. They choose to work in a region with an appealing business climate and a beautiful living environment. In other words, the Cleantech Region.

And Cleantech proves to be a fine choice. We recently investigated public support for cleantech in the region. Research showed that after explaining what it is, some 70% of Cleantech Region inhabitants found it to be a fitting profile. In other words, we're on the right track!

And that's hardly a surprise, as we have some of the most amazing Cleantech companies here. For example, one eye-catching, famous company is Auping. They opened new production facilities in Deventer last year that fully use the cradle-to-cradle design. And in Zutphen we now have the Cleantech Center, the leading knowledge institute in the eastern part of the Netherlands when it comes to Cleantech. It's a shining example of connecting entrepreneurs to young talent, finding ways to make their products and company processes even more sustainable.

Another example, a very recent one at that, is the grand opening of AREA055 in the former Zwitsal building in Apeldoorn. It's an open innovation centre where the Apeldoorn Cleantech companies, education institutes, Platform Techniek, healthcare players (labour participation), government and citizens work together under one roof. We're also looking into setting up an open innovation centre in Deventer on the AkzoNobel terrain. Again this will involve exciting partnerships. In this case, between the Overijssel province, the city of Amsterdam, Restructuring Company Overijssel and Oost NV.

And there are countless more examples. I'd like to tell you about all of them, as I am delighted with all the energy and drive we have in our Cleantech Region. Citizens and businesses, education institutes and governments. We're moving at full speed!

If you are interested in learning more about this, then please attend the Cleantech Tomorrow congress in Almen on April 5th. We are organising excursions to Cleantech companies and Cleantech 'battles' where entrepreneurs and students work together to create environmental-friendly solutions to relevant challenges. And we host international speakers with expert knowledge about circular economy. I am happy to invite you!

Let me conclude by stating our specific ambitions: by 2020, our Cleantech Region will have:

- 4000 new, clean-tech related jobs and a corresponding revenue/GRP growth (+50%)
- 200,000 tonnes less CO2 emissions (-10%)
- 20,000 tonnes less household waste per year (-33%).

In other words: *more with less!*