

Keynote speech 2016: The Cleantech concept in a regional setting

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In our region, “De Stedendriehoek” (Cities in the Triangle – Apeldoorn – Deventer - Zutphen) there is a close cooperation between Cleantech organizations: industry, education institutes and local governments in the areas of Natural Resources, Energy Transition, Environment, Biobased Production and Agrofood. Started over 2 years ago it became a close collaboration between 12 educational institutes, 240 students, 115 companies and the local governments in this relative small triangle. “De Stedendriehoek” is an area full of innovation and also bottom-up initiatives from organizations and regional citizens who care about sustainability and take their responsibility. One of these local initiatives is the Deventer Energy Cooperative, driven by local citizens focusing on generating clean energy for their members and of course they participate and drive Cleantech projects as well.

Unlocking the circular economy potential

With up to 50 billion connected devices predicted by 2020, a pervasive digital transformation is reshaping the economy. Will this ‘fourth industrial revolution’ lead to an acceleration of the extractive, ‘linear’ economy of today, or will it enable the transition towards a society in which value creation is increasingly decoupled from finite resource consumption?

A new report, Intelligent Assets: Unlocking the circular economy potential, finds that pairing circular economy principles with the information generated by intelligent devices creates a fertile ground for innovation that could enable this decoupling, and lead to broad social benefits. The report was produced by the World Economic Forum and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation as part of Project MainStream, a global, multi-industry initiative that aims to accelerate business-

driven innovations to help scale the circular economy. In order to accelerate these business-driven innovation we need to come up with “new” clever business models and the usage of exponential technologies and support local industry in implementing these processes.

Engine of our (local) Economy – the right business model

Many existing business models assume vital (non-financial resources) i.e. natural, human and/or social capital are in virtual limitless supply. But we need new business models that contribute to the regeneration & restoration of these resources. Creating a new business model starts with 3 basic questions to be answered:

1. Your WHY (why do you do what you do, WHAT is your purpose)
2. Understand how the environment works. What is it that society (people) really want, what are their “Gains” and “Pains” and how are you going to help them.
3. Make sure that you validate the value proposition assumptions from your new business model. Test the model, again and again.

A few examples of new and successful business model that do things completely different are:

- Uber – offering taxi services, but don’t have drivers and don’t own cars
- Facebook – a huge publishing company, but ... they don’t create any content
- AliExpress – global retailer with zero stock
- Airbnb – a worldwide accommodations leader but ... they do not own property

And besides creating new business models these companies are also masters in implementing these business models based on exponential technologies, technologies where power/speed are doubling annually and cost is dropping in half every year as well.

Like 3D-printing, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, synthetic biology, nanotechnology ... and very often these technologies are disruptive technologies meaning that they can create new markets and disrupt existing ones. Look at the examples for Uber and Facebook etc. Personally I believe this will also happen to the big energy companies, which we don’t need any more in the near future as the cost of solar panels is dropping exponentially, the efficiency increasing exponentially

and as a result most of the energy will be generated where and when it's needed, nearly for free.

We will see similar disruptions in other areas. AI and Big Data offer opportunities where you currently hire lawyers and consultants for and the blockchain has the potential to replace accountants and notaries. And ... banks as well.

“De Gasfabriek”

In “De Stedendriehoek” we launched a new initiative in October 2015, @DEGasfabriek, where we aim to boost local (new) business development by connecting existing companies, start-ups and student entrepreneurs. Our approach is based on the fact that we think existing business is not able to really innovate. Their “innovation” is based on making existing things better/cheaper/faster, incremental innovation based on the same business model they have been using for decades. But start-ups and student entrepreneurs, without any old fashioned business heritage are able to think outside the box creating new (local) business opportunities. The basic idea behind @DEGasfabriek is to connect existing businesses/corporates with the entrepreneurs, where the entrepreneurs are allowed to “use” the resources from the existing business (launching customers, existing channels and other resources) to test their new business ideas and existing business/corporates are able to grow their future local business in close cooperation with the entrepreneurs.

Future business success requires GameChangers, and at @DEGasfabriek we facilitate start-ups and students to cause the change and challenge corporates to join the game. An initiative where we cooperate with local government, Cleantech, educational institutions and existing companies.