

Dick de Zeeuw Lezing 2016



Urgency & Action

Marjan Minnesma

The Hague
20 October 2016

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Marjan Minnesma studied business administration, philosophy and law. She worked for the Dutch government in Central Europe on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects from Albania to Estonia. She has been campaigns director for Greenpeace Netherlands and worked for ten years at different universities. Together with her co-director prof Rotmans at the Institute for Transitions (Drift) at the Erasmus University she founded Urgenda, as an action organization for innovation and sustainability to make the required transitions happen. Urgenda mainly worked on solutions, from organizing the first collective buying initiative for solar panels (citizens buying 50.000 panels at once) to the introduction in the Netherlands of the first electric car produced in series. However, as more speed was necessary, she brought the government to court together with almost 900 citizens to demand more action and won.

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Dick de Zeeuw
Lezing

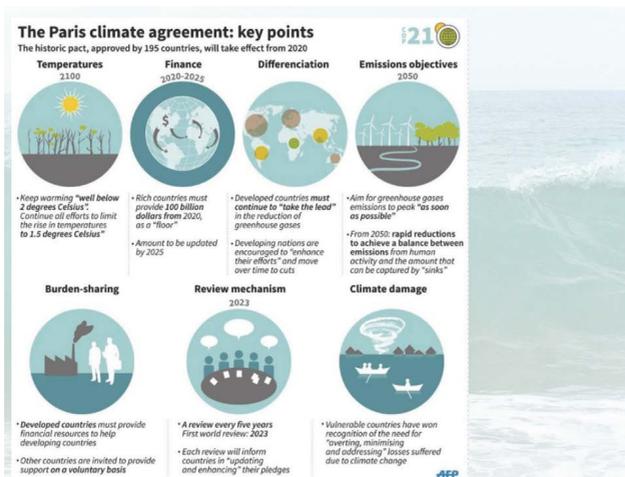
Marjan Minnesma
20 oktober 2016

 **urgenda**
samen sneller duurzaam

Dutch policy continues to promote unsustainable energy options despite commitments made in the December 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change

In the Paris Agreement of December 2015, the Netherlands and 194 other participating countries agreed to reduce their carbon emissions “as soon as possible”, to keep global warming “to well below 2° C”, and “to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1,5° C”. For the sixth Dick de Zeeuw Lecture, Marjan Minnesma argued that the Dutch government is failing to take the measures that would effectively implement the commitments made in Paris. Reducing carbon emissions, she claims, is not ‘rocket-science’. The knowledge is available, the technologies are operational. But with alternative energy options still on the shelf, Dutch carbon emissions are still growing.

The key points of the Paris climate agreement:



Minnesma presented actual examples of policy choices that keep the Netherland on the unsustainable track and highlighted some of the more sustainable policy alternatives.

To achieve results, choices must be made and we need to see that this is urgent. Is it possible to succeed and reach 100% sustainable energy by 2030? Technically, financially, people/work force: Yes, it is possible, if we want it! Will it be easy? No, of course not.

Possible solutions are:

- all houses energy neutral;
- bike, public transport, EV's;
- agriculture and food;
- new economy-transitions.

It is up to the politicians to make these choices, we have to hope that they understand the urgency and look further than four years ahead.

At the end of the lecture Minnesma wonders: what would Dick do?



The slide features a background image of a man with glasses, likely Dick de Zeeuw, looking thoughtful. The text is overlaid on a light blue background with a subtle wave pattern. The title 'What would Dick think?' is in a bold, blue font. Below it is a bulleted list of five points. At the bottom left is the Urgenda logo, which consists of a cluster of colorful dots and the text 'urgenda' in a bold, blue font, with the tagline 'samen sneller duurzamer' in a smaller font below it.

What would Dick think?

- He hoped for less military expenditure in favour of funds for “SDGs”
- Do not believe those in power too easily: we are not on track to stay below 1,5-2C!
- System thinker: much needed!
- Make people aware that they need to contribute themselves (buy, vote, raise your voice)
- Man as bridge to a sustainable future

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Reading some of the articles of Dick de Zeeuw, it is clear that he hoped for less military expenditure in favor of more funds for sustainable development goals. Those goals are currently more widely accepted than ever before. It is no longer a country thing, it is much broader, it is starting to become a movement, supported by big global companies. Climate change is about water, food, and social justice, so in the end it should be a big social movement that is needed to bring about the change. That seems to be much in line with what De Zeeuw also realized. De Zeeuw also said “Don’t believe those in power too easily”, and according to Minnesma that certainly holds true for the current Dutch government. They were so happy last week announcing that they were doing great. But, they are not doing great and surely not doing enough. Minnesma believes that De Zeeuw would agree with her that they are not talking the truth. Dick was a system thinker and that is the perspective that is currently needed, a holistic systems perspective. One should not look at too small solutions because you might end up with a new problem somewhere else. De Zeeuw would probably appreciate the work that Urgenda is doing. One of the things he was saying was that you should make people aware that they need to contribute to society themselves. Don’t wait for the government, don’t wait for anybody else, but start with your own house, eat less meat, start with your own car and so on. If everybody does their part, together we can make the change, nobody can do it alone. De Zeeuw saw men as a bridge to a sustainable future and not as a goal.

We have 15 years to achieve that future, and Minnesma hopes she inspired the public today.

The full Power Point Presentation is available online (www.dickdezeeuw.nl).

Discussion with Marjan Minnesma – October 20, 2016

Q: A very good afternoon to everybody, it was a source of honour listening to you because you are known as one of the leading players in the field, you are creating hopes, winning our hearts and empowering us, and certainly will be able to change the hearts and minds of policy workers as well if you continue your good works. But perhaps you can tell us more about the Himalaya region where ice and glaciers are melting down. We are expecting to face a drought in that area, just like in Africa and many other areas. Himalaya is the source of water for the majority of inhabitants living in that region. So, can you tell us about the facts and impacts in that region and if there is any coordination between your organization and others which are dealing with the troubles in that region?

My second question is a simple one about the Netherlands: would it be possible to motivate the parliamentary legislators? Because there are just a few who speak out about the climate change aggressively, whereas the majority is being silent on this issue. Overall, they seem not to be ready to support your or any other initiatives in the very near future.

A: I think, partly, a lot of politicians do not really know how urgent it is. They do know something about climate change, but if I could get them in a room for one full hour to have a detailed discussion, I would hope that that would open their minds. I occasionally meet politicians, but it is clear that they have no clue, not even on the difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees of temperature rise. Secondly, politicians think only four years ahead and are concerned with being re-elected. Looking at the polls, they then follow what the public mind thinks is important to have on the political agenda. I believe a real leader would put it on the agenda, but it is actually constantly put on everybody's 'reserve agenda'. It is therefore our common duty now to get the topic out from the reserve bench and list it high on the discussion list. The public needs to make sure that this becomes a topic for the politicians to listen to. My organization thinks about how to get well-structured in making this a topic, but at the same time it is important for political party members to push this as far as possible on the agendas of the respective political parties. Then, about the Himalaya region: that is one of the regions that will suffer I am afraid, because there are a lot of parts where the water sources are drying out more and more. We can set up projects to keep the water flow available as long as possible, but still I need to emphasize that the huge issue is the climate change that is taking place, and that it is our joint worldwide responsibility to stay below the 1.5 degrees. If we would move to 2 or 3 degrees, then there definitely will be no more water at a certain point. So, I cannot be too optimistic about that. There

are ways to keep the water available in the short run, but the only thing that can help against the region drying out, is to stop the climate change from developing any further – which will depend on our joint effort in tackling it. For a lot of people it is also a problem manifesting itself very far away, but at a certain point in time, it will catch up on us too. Therefore, our task is to depict climate issues all over the world in pictures, art, movies etc. so that it becomes visible to the people in this area who do not yet have had to deal with climate change in their daily lives.

Q: You won the court case in the first round. Could you say something about the reactions you got from policy-makers? And, what do you think will happen politically in this country when you lose the appeal?

A: Well, there were different reactions from different parties, but in general the reaction was that so long we were in court that they would start implementing new policies to be able to achieve the goals for 2020. There is a change taking place due to the court case, though there are always people trying to delay these processes by arguing how well we are doing already. But for now, we will remain in court for another year and a half, and whoever loses the second round, will appeal to the highest court, which means we will be in court for at least another two to three years. By then we will already be very close to 2020 and the government would have had to have implemented many things.

Furthermore, the fact that we are discussing the closing of the three new coal-fired power plants is influenced by this court case. However, these changes are still not enough to me: we wanted to have a reduction of 40% by 2020, which we were not granted, but which we will try to gain in the next verdict.

Q: Last year I prepared a paper with a student on Dutch renewable energy achievements and policies, and one of the things I found was the statement from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, which is in charge of developing new renewable energy policies, which says: 'hasty deployment of renewable energy leads to unnecessarily high social costs'. I would like you to comment on what kind of actors are behind their making such a statement, because the complex policies that they have created seem to be designed to fail any purpose. I was wondering if you could shed some light on what is going on there.

And related to that, who are the particular parties and politicians who are more resistant to this kind of transition, and who are the parties and politicians who are more aligned with such ideas?

A: From an outsider perspective, I would say that these cost statistics are plugged into some win-lose models, but are no realistic calculation from what the world will look like in the future. I have been working with some housing companies in the north of the Netherlands, who have said to make all their houses energy-neutral by 2030, and that they would make sure that rent and energy cost would not exceed 500,- EUR a month. That would be a plus for the people with the lowest incomes in the Netherlands. These things, however, are never considered in the outdated models used by the conventional statistic bureaus. Therefore, their forecasts are much more negative. If, for example, we would like to make our houses energy-neutral, and we would have pension funds to provide us with the necessary investment(s), and we would be able to pay it off with a constant rate within fifteen years, you would have much less costs afterwards, which means life would get cheaper. But the models used by the governmental agencies are not programmed to make these kinds of calculations. That is why the outcomes from the formal institutions differ quite a lot from what I believe life will look like if we tackle the climate issues correctly.

Concerning the second question, I think the main political problem is the divide between the left and right. The left wants to do something about climate change, whereas the right does not. And that is the biggest mistake that faces our contemporary society, for it does not matter if our children are from left- or right-wing parents, we will face major climate issues in 20 to 30 years' time. So, the VVD and the PVV are not much concerned with climate change, whereas the PvdD, GroenLinks and some other parties actively seek policy changes. I am mostly surprised with the Christian party CDA, which you would think would have some concern about how we deal with our environment, but they have mostly been standing alongside the PVV and VVD in major climate issues votes in the past few years. In my eyes, it is shocking how much they lack to defend policies towards a more sustainable planet. The pope should slap them.

Q: *I am surprised that you say these things about the RIVM, because it is an independent organization which is supposed to be scientifically objective. How can they then just publish a report that would seem so manipulated? If that is really true, then politically the best thing for you would be to take that up.*

A second thing, I have also for a long time been advocating for the use of pasture lands, because there are four times more pasture lands than arable lands in the world. But what will you do with those lands if you are not allowed to keep cattle on it? Do you have any ideas on what to do with those lands and how to reward them? There are possibilities for harvesting carbon for bio-based economies? Anyhow, its economic value should not completely diminish.

A: This report that came out last week was a combined report of two different institutes, ECN and PBL, and there is actually a column now on the ECN-website, wherein one of the scientists is explaining what they have been doing, and why they conclude that we did not make any progress. They are very clear about things not going right, whereas the Dutch government spins it into 'we are doing great'. The discrepancy between the two different positions is a complicated one, but was not reported on in the media. So, I definitely do not want to discredit RIVM and PBL here, since we rely on their body of knowledge in our court case. I am, therefore, not saying that their results are nonsense, but what I am saying is that their results are interpreted by the government in an incorrect way. The task of the journalist is to bring that to the light – that in a relative sense we might do a little better, but in an absolute sense not at all.

Concerning the grass lands, I think you could use grass for many different purposes, one of which is the production of protein, i.e. food. We do not need cattle for that. The protein leftovers we can use for the so-called bio-based economies. The possibilities need to be worked out per region though, because this all depends on the particular soil and what grows best on it. I do believe that in the future we will need our region for the production of food and the harvesting of crops we never used to produce and harvest here before, for in other parts of the world the heat and related drought will cause serious issues. Other pasture areas will be needed for bio-based economies and protein. But there are definitely a lot of opportunities and chances that can be developed in changing our agriculture.

Q: I am Wim van Eekelen and I am from the VVD and I do not like be associated with the PVV. Apart from that I admired your speech, it is thought-provoking and I agree with you, particularly on your systemic approach. You have to look at the possible pluses, but still many people wonder what will happen to the economic growth in certain areas when the world keeps getting warmer and drier? Are there no measures which could be taken to reduce these problems? I recognize the enormous problems, but think that all of us should try to generate a combined approach in creating new policies that also help us reduce old problems. Finally, many people, especially from my generation, in the Netherlands are sceptical about climate change. I still remember my grandparents showing me pictures of the Alps depicting much more snow and ice than there is today. It was long before climate change really came up that these problems became visible. Some people contend that we had ice ages in history that passed; why were those ages manifested? I think all these aspects need attention. So, I wish you success.

A: I do want to react, because yes, the temperatures have been going up and down throughout the ages: we have had an ice age every hundred thousand years, but we are now way out of range, which I depicted in my figures already. My first choice of study was a bachelor in business administration and I finished an MBA in London, so I look at this from a business perspective, and in that sense, I have nothing against the VVD. I am now actually writing a new book on the industry of the future, and I do believe in a new economic system that gives us certain types of growth. So, I think your and mine thoughts are in line with each other, also because the many solutions you just mentioned are described in our first book. But there are also solutions that are certainly not sustainable, and therefore we should make strict choices. In previous time periods, we have often concentrated on creating short-term solutions only, and we did not take into account their negative effects on the larger system. Last week I held a speech in presence of the VNO-NCW front man Mr. De Boer; he also has a NL Next Level Report, and I am going to sit with him next week to see how mine and his report can be combined into one in promotion of a sustainable future. I would believe that the many people working in the business sector also want a sustainable world for their children, but which means that certain methods will have to be put to a stop, for we cannot keep eating the cake and have it too. In short, I have nothing against the business sector, but I do believe that many people working in that sector have the tendency to believe that the contemporary climate issues will be resolved by some kind of miracle. But the only thing that can help, is working actively against it by investing in the right approaches.

Concerning the CO₂, I think it would be possible to store CO₂ under the ground if we would need it for certain industries, but this will cost money. So, the question is if this would be an affordable measure to take. Anyway, we should not capture the CO₂ of coal-fired power plants and keep that under the ground, because we really do need to move to a more sustainable energy system. I am quite nuanced in considering solutions, but I always look at what would be the best thing to do for my children.

Q: *You gave some positive optimistic examples of changing attitudes in the private business sector. I was struck by the fact that you were, in particular, optimistic about the attitude of the big finance. So, if companies would not be interested in changing their investment strategy, they would, as you said, perhaps be forced by investors?*

A: Yes, that is already happening. For example, I went to a big pension fund five years ago to talk about divestment – which was a very new concept at the time.

They were then laughing, saying that they are in dialogue with Shell. Now, just before this summer, I was giving a speech to a pension fund umbrella organization, with 25 different pension funds in the room. Half of them already agreed with me, whereas the other half was debating my concerns. Last week though, this umbrella organization sent out a letter to all companies in the Netherlands with the question to explain their business strategies in tackling climate change, and the chances of them staying in their businesses considering the Paris Agreement. This is a very new phenomenon, to demand from companies to explain how they are dealing with the Paris Agreement. It is a major difference in the mind-set from five years ago.

Q: A small comment to what you just said about the pension funds: PGGM is saying that they will be making these investments on two conditions. One is that they eventually want government support and guarantees for all these huge investments; and the second that they want a higher price on CO2, otherwise it will be too risky for them to make the investments. So, my question earlier would have been what is your view on the most decisive policy measures to be taken to fully achieve the goals that have been set up for 2030?

A: I think that you and I agree that a price on CO2 should be created. But the thing is that our government thinks that they cannot take this decision on their own, although there are many regions in the world where CO2 is priced on a regional level. There is a large lobby going on, as you know, in the world to get a pricing on CO2, and putting that into effect would really make a huge difference. But, in the meantime, I would say, let us not wait for that time to come. In the example of the housing companies investing in making houses 100 per cent energy neutral, pension funds could get 2% on interest a year, and would get their investment back in 15 years' time, while also doing something good for the Netherlands. Therefore, I do not agree that the pricing of CO2 is the only way to create sustainable and profitable projects, for there are clearly many other possibilities and opportunities to make money from.

Q: I am a youth worker and currently also an intern at VNG International, and I was wondering if you and your organization also have a focus to bring more awareness among the youth, because they are not really present here. I know it is difficult because it does not really seem to be a cool thing for children and young people to really get involved with these topics. In their eyes, it is also often seen as a social issue rather than a climate one. I know it is really hard to change their mind-set on

this; I tried it through youth trainings, but with little results. So, I was wondering, do you, and if so, how do you engage local governments and the youth?

A: We support a lot of youth movements; deal quite a lot with students and young people working in the food sector; we also always have interns in our organization; and I give a lot of lectures to students and teenagers.

The thing is that sometimes people who give related speeches tell the young people that it is in their hands to make the future changes, which I do not believe is right. For by the time you, the young people, get into power, it will be too late. Therefore, the younger generation should push the older generation and current politicians to invest in the necessary changes, and raise their voices fiercely, for they are destroying your future. The time of pursuing further dialogue is in my eyes over. We had enough time to discuss these things and now the time has come to get something about it done. In that sense, we are always happy to help youth groups that are involved with these issues in whatever manner possible.

On the other side of the generational spectrum, we have also started a new movement called 'grandparents for climate' in the Netherlands. It is a group consisting of many former politicians from all different political colours, which has to do with the point I made earlier: tackling climate change should not be a matter of left and right, but of all generations working for the common good.

Q: *Thank you for your interesting talk. I will maybe be asking quite a controversial question: there is great research being done by biologists and ecologists, but what really scares me is the fact that they lack funding. For example, I went to an incredible discussion about viruses in oceans and other life forms, but there is just one ship in the Netherlands that does this kind of research, and their funding is being cut. I was wondering in what way does Urgenda also help these kinds of organizations in these kinds of efforts? So, next to the new business strategies and corporate efforts for renewable energy sources etc. how do or can you help these other efforts into increasing biodiversity, helping with agroecology etc.?*

A: I fully agree with you that we should do much more. In my lectures, I often indeed focus on biodiversity, raw materials and climate change, but then again, our organization consists of max 15 people – which is on purpose. If we grow into having several more colleagues, I eventually push that down again to 15. That is why we have to make choices in the issues we focus on. If there are certain concertia applying for EU funds etc., and they need NGO support, I am willing to sign everything, but I do not have the time or capacity to take on another serious project.

Q: I would like to ask a question about cities, because it seems to me that they are more and more becoming the agents of change, when it comes to resilience and adaptation, instead of national governments?

A: Yes, I see that on a local and regional level there is much more ambition. I work a lot with local governments, not necessarily on the resilience or adaptation side, because I do not believe that that is the most important thing to focus on right now. But the tendency seems to be that local governments are much more ambitious in tackling these issues than the Dutch government. Worldwide also, there is a tendency of mayors, for example, who are pushing these issues from underneath on the national agendas. In that sense we need all citizens, companies, corporations etc. to help push the national governments more fiercely and more urgently into taking the right steps against climate change. But indeed, local governments are for now much more concerned with these issues than the national governments are.

Previous Dick de Zeeuw Lectures

2011

Food security and Economic Change: What to do about the food crisis?
Prof. Dr. Joachim von Braun, Director of the Center for Development Research
and Professor for Economic Change at University of Bonn

2012

World 5.0 Globalization and Our Future
Geo-Political and Socio-Economic Perspectives on the Main Processes
Shaping our Future World
Prof. Hans van Ginkel, Emeritus Professor at the Faculty of Geosciences
of Utrecht University

2013

Food is a serious issue
Prof. Dr. IR. Louise O. Fresco, Professor at the University of Amsterdam

2014

Paradigm shift to secure food
Gerda Verburg, Ambassador / Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands to
the UN organizations for Food and Agriculture in Rome (FAO, WFP and IFAD)

2015

The need for an ecosystem restoration industry, based on a holistic approach
of four returns
Willem H. Ferwerda

Dick de Zeeuw Foundation

De Dick de Zeeuw Foundation is opgericht als platform om mensen uit de politiek, wetenschap, overheid en non-gouvernementele organisaties bijeen te brengen voor een gedachtewisseling over onderwerpen rond ontwikkeling en milieu en het belang van landbouw voor een duurzame ontwikkeling. De Foundation is opgericht ter herinnering aan de in 2009 overleden oud-politicus Dick de Zeeuw en organiseert onder meer de jaarlijkse Dick de Zeeuw Lezing.

Dick de Zeeuw

Dick de Zeeuw heeft zich altijd ingezet om mensen een stem te geven in de wereld. Hij deed dat als voorzitter van de International Dialogues Foundation en in zijn werk voor de Wereldbank. In 2007 schreef hij hierover in zijn boek 'Schrijven op Marmer': "Politiek actief zijn betekent voor mij recht doen aan mensen, zorgen dat er geen scheiding komt in heersers en onderdanen, zorgen dat iedereen kan deelnemen aan het proces van besluitvorming. En daarnaast mensen bewust maken dat ze zelf een bijdrage moeten leveren." Dit vormt ook het uitgangspunt voor de Dick de Zeeuw Foundation.

Het bestuur

Het bestuur van de Dick de Zeeuw Foundation bestaat uit: Jan Pronk, Jan Hendrik van Dalen, Reinoud Post, Sandra Rottenberg, Anneke Oosterhuis, Rudy Rabbinge, Michel van Winden, Ati de Zeeuw-Kroesbergen, Helena Uzelac.

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Marjan Minnesma studied business administration, philosophy and law. She worked for the Dutch government in Central Europe on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects from Albania to Estonia. She has been campaigns director for Greenpeace Netherlands and worked for ten years at different universities.

She wrote the report and agenda for the Netherlands, “100% sustainable energy in the Netherlands in 2030; it is possible if we really want to”, including all figures and pathways for the next fifteen years. The report consists of 5 chapters, in which is described what we need to do in different sectors. Urgenda is working on solutions in most of these sectors. Urgenda’s initiative ‘ThuisBaas’ makes houses energy neutral for 35.000 euro (the amount that an average family spends on energy in 15 years, helps people to organize this for them, “guarantees no energy bill at the end of the year”, while looking for new solutions all the time. Urgenda is also working on sustainable mobility. Furthermore Urgenda works together with many companies and other partners on realizing a circular economy in the region Friesland.

Marjan has been named the most influential person working in the field of sustainability in the Netherlands three years in a row. In 2015 she was declared to be a ‘leading global thinker’ by the authoritative American magazine *Foreign Policy*.

