

**TEN TIPS FOR  
CLEVER CHANGE**  
Caroline van Leenders

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Competence Centre for  
Transition Management  
AgencyNL

ISBN 978-90-810555-3-6

2011 Nieuw Akademia

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## Preface

This is a remarkable booklet, written by a remarkable person. It is aimed at a, gradually less remarkable, type of civil servant. The traditional civil servant, following the footsteps of Max Weber, is an expert in a specific field. He initials so that it legally stands up to scrutiny. Or he applies his own knowledge of engineering to develop a solid plan for controlling peak load in the municipal sewer system. The Civil Service is traditionally designed along the lines of such formal expertise. There are ministries of public works, agriculture and economic affairs. Within these domain-oriented ministries are people with expertise in relevant fields and alongside them, there are a number of lawyers and accountants. This set-up reflects the issues that have dominated the agenda for a long time and have marked the boundaries between the different disciplines and areas of policy.

During the last couple of years a new generation of concerns has come to the surface. Prevention of health problems - advisable for both everyone's wellbeing and the continued survival of the welfare state - requires measures which cross the boundaries between work, leisure, diet and health care, and thus, the boundaries between the corresponding fields of expertise. Integrated water management measures in rural areas do not observe the traditional boundaries between agriculture, nature conservation, planning, the environment and, of course, water management. These issues reflect a complex public reality. Traditional formal expertise is no longer sufficient.

There is a need to enrich it with the knowledge, understanding and desires of the parties involved. It's necessary to reach across boundaries and to connect different regulations, funds and players.

Change can be initiated from the top down less than ever before. The real art is to connect with what is going on already. To enhance and facilitate and to get closer to one's dreams on the back of existing dynamics. Knowledge and understanding of the environment in which obesity and lower backache occur and can be prevented. Knowledge of the way a polder works and an understanding of what the people who live there want for the future. The challenge is to connect all of these insights and obtain a clear picture of one's goals and a strategy for how to get there.

In short, this new generation of problems requires clever change. A new generation of civil servant will need to create that. Not better than the traditional civil servant - there will still be jobs for them - just different. Capable of inter-disciplinary cooperation, of synthesising their own expertise with that of others and possessing practical understanding that both fuels and enhances cooperation and energy. In some ways, this new type of civil servant has already become less unusual. Over the past few years, many have joined government service, and lots more are moving in this direction. But in other ways, they remain remarkable. They often act in ways that are at odds with the, still too many, routines and rules within government, and with the norms of society. This does not make the task any easier. But it does make it more exciting.

What's best about this booklet is perhaps that what it offers; making clever change easier, and more exciting. This has a lot to do with it being written by someone, who herself, turns theory into practice in remarkable ways, working within an innovative and passionate group

in Agency NL. While reading, you will see the writer at work, unafraid to give us a candid look behind the scenes and to pass on her own inspiration and excitement to the reader.

*John Grin*

*Professor of Policy Science, especially system innovation, at the Department of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam and Co-director and Co-founder of the Dutch Knowledge Network on System Innovations.*

## Tips for Clever Change

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT** The tips in this booklet are written for people working on change for a sustainable future. Sustainable development is a concept in which social, ecological and economical concerns converge. The Triple P approach: people, planet and profit/prosperity. Sustainable development is about looking to increase value in each of these three domains. Development that is sustainable for near by and far away, for both present and future generations. And striving for the Triple P top line instead of the Triple P bottom line. To realise sustainable development, many actors in society have to work together; companies, knowledge institutes, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the government etc. Multi-stakeholder cooperation has not always been the case. In the 1980s companies initially implemented green measures within their own firms. Some 10 years later businesses started to form the first alliances with, for instance, an NGO. Consider the cooperation between the Dutch energy company Essent and WWF to develop certification of green electricity. A decade later, networks of companies appeared sharing knowledge on sustainable product chain management. In the last few years, cooperation has continued on a sector level, within Round Tables on sustainable palm oil, soy, bio fuels or fish flour. For no-one can sustain their production processes on their own any longer. Cooperation is key. But this kind of change doesn't happen just like that. To foster these processes, I came up with 10 tips.

**EXPERIENCE IN THE DUTCH CONTEXT** The ten tips are based on twenty years of experience with the process of sustainable development. Studying chemistry I discovered the existence of facts. And how they make up the truth. Moving into the world of science philosophy, my world turned upside down: truth was something that was constructed and developments were uncertain. I encountered transition-like concepts for the first time. During my PhD in environmental science I got into back casting; deciding what to do today on the basis of a vision of the future. My thesis, titled 'Locked up in Waste? Environmental Strategies of Companies', dealt with social dynamics and positive feedback loops. I went to work with AgencyNL, a governmental organisation responsible for sustainable energy and innovation and I got posted at the National Initiative on Sustainable Development. There we took trends in society as a starting point to speed up sustainable development. Our method was to bring companies together and let them learn from one another. To involve all public actors and organise scientific reflection. As process manager of a programme on the marketing of sustainable consumer products, I learned about the force of connecting. At the Biodiversity Transition Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Development, I had to put the international side of sustainable development into practice. And the P of people: on poverty and fair distribution. I also got involved in the Energy Transition Programme. And thus learned about the challenges of innovating within a ministry. Coming back at AgentstchapNL at the Competence Centre for Transition Management, I had some time for reflection.

**CHANGE** Sustainable development requires systemic changes or transitions. Transition management is a new approach that has been developed for this purpose. Transition management is about influencing, adapting and adjusting. There are some rules of thumb. All public actors need to be involved, changes occur on micro, meso

and macro levels, a long term vision should be the mind-set for short term actions and there must be room for experimenting and learning. The transition process results from the combined action of various players, each with their own rationality. A transition process isn't fixed from the start. In the course of the process, one will have to adapt, learn and respond to new situations. A transition is not subject to laws. It isn't acting on a blueprint either. Transition management implies learning by doing and doing by learning. It is a process-oriented philosophy for change, in which uncertainty, complexity and connecting are core concepts.

**CLEVER** Many social scientists assume a paradigm on societal change from Newton's era. In the Newtonian view the world is a machine. But with the development of Einstein's theory of relativity, the paradigm changed. The world is a field in which objects and forces influence each other continuously and sometimes unpredictably. Thanks to the contributions of scientists like Bohr and Heisenberg we now have quantum physics. But according to Margaret Wheatley this paradigm shift has not yet occurred within the social sciences. She provides the impetus for a quantum physical paradigm on social change. In this paradigm, the system is a collection of processes. The world is a network of relations. Just like a brain. There is no centre, no entirety. Only by taking up a position in one of the parts, can you start to see the whole. But you won't see everything. Some processes and relations are invisible at the start and only reveal themselves through time. Networks emerge and organise themselves. Systems show collective behaviour, where the collective whole is equipped with features the constituting elements do not have. Joost Quaternaat, a former colleague of mine, explains: 'Complex systems are characterised by unexpected new features and identities. Contingency and insecurity are everywhere. Wherever systems accumulate, there is room for 'more is different'. The key factor is the growing intricacy

of such accumulations; of such entanglements, such a network, such tissue. This means that new systemic features can rise to the surface spontaneously.'

In a quantum physical world we can observe positive feedback loops. In the economy, for example, technologies typically improve as more people adopt them and firms gain the experience to guide further development. And thus, a positive feedback loop develops: the more people adopt a technology, the more it improves and the more attractive it is for further use. But can we apply this concept more broadly than for economic and technological systems? Can we observe or even provoke social feedback loops? For stimulating and enhancing social feedback to achieve sustainable development sounds clever to me.

When dynamics are non-linear, minor changes can have major consequences. Consider the butterfly over China that causes a thundercloud in the West. And individual actions can have a large impact. It thus gives credibility to the lots of hits when googling 'one man & change' and titles like 'You Can Change the World.' Feedback loops lead to fractals. In a fractal economy a company's success is no longer related to its size, but to the value it adds, to the outreach and quality of its networks, to its initiative and learning. And the same holds for societal change.

Non-linear patterns and new features of a system can only be observed over time. You can come to see what quantum physicists calls the 'strange attractor'. According to Wheatley the strange attractor in societal change is the intention of the process. To find this attractor you need intuition. You must develop a sense for synchronicity, for significant coincidence. You need to be clever. Because uncertainty, complexity and dependency exist. When there are many players, many things happen and many aspects may not be visible yet. You, as an individual, do not have power; only influence

at best. And the consequences of your actions will only develop over time. But you can't simply wait until it all becomes clear. So you will have to make clever choices continuously. Based on intuition, experience and the right intention. In these processes wisdom is better than strength.

**CLEVER CHANGE** So quantum sociology concepts combined with transition management results in clever change. John Grin and I came up with the expression some five years ago. He has written, for example, about making clever connections between people and processes and clever change alternating constantly between bottom-up and top-down. The word 'clever' is on the rise. People talk about a clever government, Erik Gerritsen, city manager of Amsterdam, about a clever council and the permanent secretary of the Environmental Department, Hans van der Vlist, about clever connecting. There are clever energy meters, will be clever mobility and the phrase 'clever building' has been patented. AgencyNL organised the workshop 'funds for clever innovation' and clever permits are sought after. According to the Dutch magazine *Intermediair* clever is doing it with clever. There is even a clever dating show. And how does one become clever? By chatting a lot, according to research quoted in the magazine *ODE*.

The basis of clever change is that you can only get to know a system from within. You have to step inside to realise change. After thorough preparation, of course. Know who your actors are and understand the context, the playing field. Regard the system as a set of processes, observe relations and consider the whole system through its parts. Change happens by connecting, learning happens by doing and doing by learning. Clever change is recognising and realising positive feedback loops.

**TEN TIPS** This essay consists of tips. Tips because in 2005 I gave a lecture on clever change for transition management practitioners, organised by the Competence Centre for Transition Management. Some years later somebody asked me: 'Caroline, didn't you once give a presentation on clever change? I'm giving a workshop and could do with some tips'. My neighbour Jan Peter van Doorn advised me to write them down. I have been helped greatly by my clever friends Anne-Mart Prins and Theo van Bruggen. The tips also draw on the experiences of colleagues, on papers about transition management, and on learning histories, written by Douwe Jan Joustra, Rob Weterings and José Andringa. For much more hands-on information see [transitiepraktijk.nl/en/](http://transitiepraktijk.nl/en/).

I've called them tips and not guidelines. For they are to help people not to prescribe. And I've developed ten because I like alliterations and numbers. I also want a triptych: this essay, the 10 tips show (a presentation illustrated with short videos from the internet; see [www.slimmesturing.nl](http://www.slimmesturing.nl)) and an interactive website with examples, experiences and tips of others. To learn more together. And get even more clever.

**FOR WHOM?** The tips have been written for people who are involved in processes of change. People who have both a vision and their feet firmly on the ground. People who promote sustainability. People in companies. In government, knowledge institutes and public organisations.

I have written briefly, almost snappily. To encourage and to make it light. I've enriched the tips with some context. Hopefully you will see, experience and sense how the tips can be used. So that you're able to apply them to your situation. Gracefully, light-heartedly and with joy.

For questions or comments you can mail to [info@slimmesturing.nl](mailto:info@slimmesturing.nl).





## Tip 1 - *Live in parallel universes*

**DIFFERENT LEVELS** Processes of change in society take place on many levels, at different locations, in different domains and sectors, in real life and on the internet, in heads and in hearts. Clever change is about living in these parallel universes. Let's start with the different levels. In transition management we distinguish between the macro, meso and micro level. The macro level is about major trends like climate change or globalisation. These trends change slowly and are hard to influence. But they can be used for the societal change that you're after. The meso level is about dominant system structures; such as price agreements within a particular sector, the number of large companies, government regulations or the level of trust in a certain sector. The micro level concerns the actions of individual companies and organisations.

To support processes of societal change you must operate on each of these levels. At micro level concentrate on frontrunners, at meso level be aware of the rules of the system and at macro level have a clear picture of trends. Clever change is about knowing and using these different levels. Keep an eye on them. Who are the frontrunners? And the cultural creatives? What are the common barriers they encounter? And what are governmental and international trends? Form a picture for yourself. You don't have to create a full overview at once, but you have to be able to use them strategically. Develop a feeling for the different levels.



Working at the Dutch National Initiative for Sustainable Development we connected the micro and meso level by bringing together individual companies and encouraging them to talk to the government. A similar set-up is used in two Dutch government programmes. Both in the Energy Transition Programme and the Sustainable Trade Initiative companies, NGOs and knowledge institutes work together on various topics at micro level. At meso level they are interconnected via platforms or learning programmes. And at macro level, connection is established through changing government policy and regulation and through the influence of a taskforce, comprised of company CEOs and NGOs, on public opinion. Another way to link the micro and meso levels is by introducing societal concerns into the longer-term research programmes of knowledge institutes.

**MORE PARALLEL UNIVERSES** Other parallel universes exist. Consider various economic sectors. They often share similarities and underlying issues. Companies have to work together with other firms in their product chain to make sustainable products. But how do you spread the costs and revenues of sustainability across the production chain and over time? Who pays now and who gets the benefits later? So bring companies from various sectors together so that they learn from one another and you from them.

Policy processes also exist parallel. Policies aimed at research, implementation, or the development of a particular technology; policies concerning a common theme but coming from different departments. Council policy, provincial policy and State policy. You need to understand them and know how they can reinforce one another. So you know when it's beneficial to bring them together. Parallel processes can happen on a conceptual level. Like thinking and acting in parallel. Because that's what learning is about. If you sit

around the table with companies, NGOs, or knowledge institutes, in order to learn, it's not only about talking. They must to be involved in a real project, so that they can share experiences. And put reflection into practice. And share the results in turn. So make sure that thinking and acting happens iteratively.

Another thing about parallel universes and learning. There are different levels of learning: first, second and third. The first level is about taking in new information and facts, at the second your perception of things changes and at the third you react in a different way. Metaphorically speaking, the first level is about learning to look in another direction, the second about learning to put on new glasses and the third level is about learning to walk in a different direction. Sustainable development needs third level learning. To make that happen you'll have to pass through the other two levels. So you will need to be able to recognise them.

Parallel universes exist in language. People use different expressions to say the same thing. Or they use the same words and mean different things. This happens with projects where companies, knowledge institutes, public organisations and / or government work together. Misunderstanding is common when something is new. Because the innovation hasn't found words yet. Confusion is not necessarily a sign of bad intentions. Consider it the outcome of parallel universes. Be aware of them. Ask for meaning and reason. And then last but not least, there's first life and second life. Meeting in real life or on the internet. Clever change requires smart use of the internet. Create a LinkedIn or Facebook group to connect, blog to let others join in, twitter to let go of your ideas.



## Tip 2 - *Start underground*

**SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL** To start small might seem counter-intuitive. Starting with a small group. We like to think big. We believe we'll have more impact that way. We like to build large structures. Everyone must know we have started. Don't do it! Clever change is starting underground. And staying there until you have grown strong enough. Because the system has a habit of hindering what is new. Opponents and naysayers will gather around you. Vested interests will appear and oppose the change you seek.

Elfrieke van Galen, head of communication with Royal Dutch Airlines, states: 'If you want to change something, a small enthusiastic group should take the first steps. This will help you to win over a larger group. And once you have achieved this, there is time to focus on the naysayers. Don't begin with trying to remove resistance from those who'll dig in their heels.' Jan Rotmans, Professor of Transition Management, observes: 'a large programme like the Energy Transition once started off with a small group of civil servants. At the Ministry of Economic Affairs they were initially seen as adventurers and amateurs.' Cees Buijs, working on sustainable change for the city of Rotterdam, uses the concept of cells: 'We work in small groups that concentrate on certain issues. These cells are allocated a certain amount of time and money. The results are reported to steering committee which is only allowed to give positive feedback. Then a new cell sets out to bring those suggestions into practice.'

When I worked at the Dutch Biodiversity Transition Programme we started with a large group of people. But the Ministry of International Cooperation, being in charge of the programme, decided it was too ambitious. So the group was scaled down considerably. A smaller start was chosen. On the theme of maritime ecosystems we began with a multinational, Nutreco, that wanted to make the fishmeal for their salmon more sustainable. Furthermore, two NGOs, two civil servants and three knowledge institutes joined. Thanks to this modest size, a positive atmosphere and a high level of agreement were quickly created. This small underground group went to Peru for a dialogue on making anchovy fishery, which is the largest in the world, more sustainable. Half a year later a somewhat larger group from Peru visited The Netherlands. We introduced them to other Dutch companies working on sustainable raw materials. And four years later, the Peruvian anchovy fishery, is striving to obtain the MSC-Certificate. So the small start made a big impact.

So make sure no one can see you in the beginning. Give the project an insignificant name. Like 'working group' or 'community'. Don't call it a Task Force or Special Committee. For then also the opposed will want to join. Start with a small budget too. So people want to join out of passion and not for the money or the status.

Build a positive atmosphere within your small group. Create trust and make progress. Don't over-communicate with the outside world. Just make sure you're heard of once in a while. Use viral communication via the Internet. Mention it casually to opinion leaders. Or in a presentation at a conference. Ask the other group members to spread news of your work, to build up a buzz in the outside world. Stay small by splitting into groups. But keep in close contact with each other individually, and as a whole. Communication is key here. Read books like *The Starfish and the Spider*; the unstoppable power of leaderless organisations.

**WHO IS WILLING?** So who should you start with? With a diverse group; people from companies, public organisations, knowledge institutes and government. Or from a variety of types of companies. Make sure that you gather a mixed party around the table. What is of utmost importance are the people themselves, not their status as representatives of a company or organisation. So no trade or sector organisations. Representation has grown out of style. Begin with individuals who are really interested. Passionate, competent people. This will yield both inspiration and pleasure. It will induce commitment and create camaraderie.

Finding these people is an instinctive process. To help you a bit, here are some suggestions from people involved in processes for societal change. Some are looking for tigers. Tigers are people with a goal-oriented approach to change, which distinguishes them from outsiders and downright innovators. People with a long term perspective. Who are able to fulfil a bridging function both externally and inside their own organisation. For people who can enter into a dialogue: no string pullers, but bridge builders. Hugo Brouwers, director of the Energy Transition Programme, wants frontrunners with an urge for innovation, preferably with a large network to be mobilised when needed.

Make an extra effort to find motivated and risk-taking civil servants. And people working for an NGO who know how to reach a compromise. Companies that are already heading in the right direction.

Select your people with an eye for their impact on change, for cooperating potential and with a sizeable network. People who are, informally, held in high esteem. A trick I use quite often; once you've heard a name three times, you're on the right track. And if you want to make sure whether these people are seriously interested, watch their behaviour! What have they demonstrated so far?



### Tip 3 - *An eye on the future, feet on the ground*

**A LONG-TERM VISION** Sustainable development requires system innovations. These innovations concern new products, processes, domains and structures; changes in technology, the organisation of institutions, behaviour and culture, infrastructure and more. They thus take time. Maybe ten years, maybe forty. So you'll need a vision for the future, in order to know what to do today. That vision is something that people hope will become a future reality. As Peter Senge observes: 'Creating a shared vision is about seeing people as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future. Such a vision has the power to be uplifting and to encourage experimentation and innovation. The practice of shared vision involves the skills of unearthing shared pictures of the future that foster genuine commitment and enrolment. A vision helps the future to emerge.' Organisational psychologist Roos Vonk states: 'A common desire unites people. It creates commitment and team spirit. You all dedicate yourselves in unison. There is no fighting. Egos make way for the common good. Everybody is important.'

There are many ways to develop a vision of the future. The Dutch Energy Transition Programme used well-known energy scenarios for 2050, from the multinational Shell. Four paths of transition were scrutinized by a consortium of knowledge institutes for affordability, cleanliness and security of supply. But it is also possible to develop a



vision of the future with your small underground group. First voice a general picture of what you want for the future. Then give everyone homework. Scan the most important scenarios and studies. And meet again. In my experience, this will get you a long way. On the subject of marine biodiversity, within the Dutch Biodiversity Transition programme, it didn't take long for us to agree on two things. Firstly, that people will still want to eat fish thirty years from now and, secondly, that sea fish must not become extinct. Therefore, sustainable fish farming is part of the future. And thus, we decided to back projects working in that direction.

But where to put the time horizon? That depends on the subject of your innovation. When you are working on a major and long-lasting process, such as making the energy system sustainable, you have to put your horizon far ahead. If the expected process of change is happening on a smaller scale and with faster rotation, use a less distant horizon. Tune your time horizon in with the process' rhythm of change. Consider, for example, the timing and timespan of investments within the system, or the cultural shifts needed. What is the rhythm of your system?

**BACK TO THE PRESENT** Once you have a dream, you can take the first steps. Because it is all about the present. Now is the time to act. Change begins in the present. This is also the case with system innovations. You have to convert long-term thinking into short-term action. To ensure your short term actions contribute to your long-term vision. To thus prevent existing problems from being passed on into the future. To reduce the implementation of short-sighted solutions. To allow today's investments to keep their value tomorrow. So what are you going to do today? What will you do first to bring about your worldview, your vision, your dream?

A good selection criterion is voiced by transition scholar Derk Loorbach: actions should cause disorder. They have to change the

rules of the system. And not only be directed at their own local space within the system. They have to change their own context. This context can be anything. Legislation, licenses, support, regulations, technological questions, etcetera. When the rules of the system change, scaling-up will happen with a lot less effort. If for example sustainable goods become less expensive than their non-sustainable counterparts, consumers will buy these products more automatically. And there is no need for subsidizing them. Therefore this will protect you from going on endlessly, action after action after action.

Ask yourself whether these activities will result in entanglement, in reinforcement and synergy. Do they complement each other and bring about acceleration. And are people learning, is follow-up ensured and is the process embedded? And select the steps you take together with the small group. An example. Within the Biodiversity Transition programme fish farming was part of the long-term vision. What was needed for the short-term was making the production of fishmeal sustainable. So the salmon farming company, Nutreco, used its purchasing power to put pressure on the producers of fishmeal in Peru and Chile. NGOs like the IUCN and WNF sketched the urgency of the matter, and knowledge institutes supplied sustainable solutions. The Dutch government brought all the parties together, facilitated the process and took care of the commitment of high-level contacts. All on mutual terms and within their own budgets. Quite cheap, actually.

A final point. Keep an eye on the road. Are you still going in the right direction? Will you reach your goal? Choose your moments of reflection wisely. Organise them in time. Figure out in advance how you're going to do that. There are many different methods for monitoring at hand. From methodological up to intuitive. It's important to share your interim results. Talk about them in your group and note them down. Make sure you close the circle.



## Tip 4 - *Unite and connect*

**UNEXPECTED COALITIONS** Sustainable development requires new solutions. By uniting different worlds and making cooperation of different actors possible, you will bring them to the surface. So look for parties that can evenly promote the interests of the three P's: people, environment and the economy. Coalitions between companies and NGOs are a useful tool. Companies can ensure the interests of profit and NGOs know all about the planet and / or people aspect. Coalitions also increase the understanding of each other's practices. NGOs will develop a more realistic view of the margins for manoeuvre for trade and industry parties. And government can facilitate the synergy between companies and public organisations by making the exchange of views between potential partners happen. It is also important to engage both theory and practice. Be sure to drag the researchers from behind their lab desks and make them get their hands dirty. Changing society is about co-creation. Making a new world together.

Building unexpected coalitions is so crucial for system change that within the Energy Transition Programme a special subsidy scheme was developed. It was entitled the Unexpected Transition Coalitions Subsidy Scheme and was aimed at companies, NGOs and knowledge institutes. It stimulated new ideas and solutions. And via the new coalitions real frontrunners were brought to the surface. A nice additional bonus.



By uniting different universes you create a hybrid. Hybrids are special. They belong to two worlds and yet they are different. Because they connect universes, hybrids are an effective instrument for change. Like a hybrid car that unites old fossil fuel technology with a new all-electric world. Or a hybrid organisation in the form of a public private partnership. So when the gap between two worlds is not easily bridged, try to come up with a hybrid.

**COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE** Uniting parties can be sufficient if they can continue to collaborate without further assistance. But often they need a little help with ensuring that the learning process is goal oriented. So form a community, because learning together yields higher outcomes. In a well managed community the interaction and the reflection of participants creates synergy. As is nicely stated by Mark W. Elroy: 'While individuals certainly invent, only whole social systems can innovate'. Build a group with intellectual diversity and a variety of opinions. So carefully consider the makeup of this community. Are you connecting participants from different domains i.e. public and private? Or only companies, but from various sectors? Large and small companies? Make it diverse. Don't be afraid of strange combinations. Experience teaches us that unorthodox mixes are the best recipe for creative ideas. And thus, the best foundation for true learning processes.

At the Dutch National Initiative for Sustainable Development, a group of companies worked on their own projects for two years. They met each month to learn from one another. This is the testimonial of a participant from a large chemical company: 'The diversity turned out to be unexpectedly fascinating. I entered the project quite openly and without prejudice. I was a bit shocked, though, to discover that other major companies did not participate. Mainly small companies did. To my surprise this did not devalue the

meetings. We turned out to have a remarkable amount in common. Not with regard to company profile, but in terms of internal processes necessary for a sustainable business. These similarities occurred regardless of the size and type of company. For example, my question was how to create support for sustainable business among the various business units worldwide. I had the backing of central management, but not of the sites on location. Then it became clear that smaller participating companies were struggling with the same problem on one location. They were treating it directly, within their own establishment. I learnt a lot from that.'

The time has come for this type of arrangement. In the Netherlands we have a network of companies working on sustainable product chains and we saw the start of The Sustainable Trade Initiative. This initiative supports companies in to learning together, to make their economic sector sustainable. In these communities the processes of individual companies are connected. They even have a separate programme for inter-sector learning. Furthermore a Community of Practice (CoPs) on sustainable purchasing was set up. And the list is growing; CoPs on topics such as Cradle-to-Cradle or sustainable palm oil.

# 普普教父安迪·沃荷



## Tip 5 - Let go of your ideas

**FROM COPYRIGHT TO OPEN SOURCE** We like to receive credit for what we do. Or make money from our ideas. All kinds of systems have been developed to protect concepts against theft. Consider legislation on copyrights and patents. In present times we are seeing the shifting of this paradigm. Under the influence of the Internet protecting music and software is becoming ever more difficult and we read about the struggles of established record companies. So aspiring to be the sole beneficiary of an idea is becoming an anachronism. Sharing is the credo of the 21st century. Books like 'The Wisdom of Crowds' show us the emergence of a collective brain. The author regards our current view on expertise as spectacularly narrow. Wisdom should be generated through decentralised systems which are independent and of varied opinion. These systems are equipped with a method for collecting information, a place where information can gather. Well-known examples of a collective brain are open source systems like Wikipedia and Linux. Wikipedia is the encyclopaedia which is being composed by thousands of people all over the world. Everybody can contribute to Wikipedia. Anonymously, if preferred. There is no limit to what one contributes. Those who try to manipulate the content will be corrected by the group. All content can be edited by anyone. Linux is free software. The underlying source code is available to everyone and can be freely used, changed, copied and disseminated. Linux is distributed free of charge. Extras like support, manuals and non-free software must sometimes be bought.

**票價** (各項優惠辦法不可同時使用，其他優惠辦法以現場公告為準)

票種	票價	適用範圍
全票	200元	一般個人參觀者
優待票	150元	學生持本國學生證憑證件，可現場購買1張
敬老票	100元	本國籍65歲以上長者憑證件，可現場購買1張
團體票	同票種(未搭配其他優惠)	一次購買10張，送1張貴賓券

**安迪·沃荷** (Andy Warhol)

眼的藝術家之一，本展是為了紀念安迪沃荷藝術策畫公司所籌畫並向歐美的收藏家巡迴，台灣則是亞洲巡迴首站。本次展包會其自1950年代發跡至1980年代期間、〈康寶濃湯〉、〈瑪麗蓮·夢露〉等里亞力(Dino Pedriali)在1975年創近安

Clever change is letting go of your ideas. If this sounds negative to you, then your thinking is based on an old paradigm. But if you're clever, you'll welcome people stealing your ideas. An example is discussion on the database that is coupled to the concept of Cradle-to-Cradle (C2C). One of the central ideas of C2C is to keep chemicals as long as possible in a so-called technological material cycle. The inventors of this concept therefore developed a database of chemicals that must stay within this cycle and may not enter the biological sphere. In The Netherlands C2C is a success. More and more companies want to produce their products according to C2C principles. But you're only allowed to enter the database when you have a contract with the inventors or with a few accredited consultants. And they can't cope with the flood of applicants. Therefore there is a risk that initial enthusiasm will fade. Recently it was announced that the database is going open source. Then, scientists from all over the world can contribute and C2C will become better-known. And more organisations will help to develop and legitimise the concept further, ensuring more companies using it. A positive feedback loop may develop.

Or design your ideas as a meme. A meme is a self-perpetuating unit of cultural evolution. An idea that spreads rapidly. A concept that behave as a contagious information pattern. An example of a meme is the idea of René Descartes 'I think, therefore I am.' As is described in the book 'Descartes' Bones: 'Employing reason beyond the limits of theology – free thinking – caught on and spread across the European continent with a speed and impact that flabbergasted religious authorities.' More recent examples of a meme is Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream.' Not easy to come up with something like that.

**THE ART OF LETTING GO** To let go of ideas you will have to be able to set them free. It's clever to stay invisible. By claiming an idea as

only yours, others are less likely to contribute to it. Societal change is not about your pride but about results. Not about the ego but about the collective sustainable result. It's about true leadership. Roos Vonk states: 'A good leader shouldn't be focused on glory for himself but on putting the good cause at the top of his wish list. That's the kind of conviction that makes people connect with the ambitions of a leader. And thereby creates team spirit. But modesty is rare for people who reach the top. When success is hijacked by the ego, authenticity is lost.'

A more modest position will generate more support. It will give people the impression they thought of the idea themselves. You should consider theft of your ideas as the highest degree of acceptance. Have faith that the credits of your idea will return to you one day. But it won't happen if you sit and wait. Waiting is seldom a good idea. There is more than enough work to be done. Parallel processes have to be developed, coalitions have to be encouraged and connections made. Sow the seeds and then leave them to grow. This can be quite fulfilling at times. You can always come back to see whether your flowers are blooming. At least you know that it was all your idea, originally. Shouldn't that be enough?

Or do you want the world to applaud you? That's quite understandable. That's what many of us need. We all want a pat on the back sometimes. It then helps to be surrounded by people who are supportive. A good boss, for instance. One who doesn't feel threatened by you. Not always easy to find. Or that smart friend of yours. The appreciation will return one day. Of course, it's likely to happen at the moment you stop wanting the acclaim. And sometimes you won't be rewarded. Other people will strut around in your plumage. And nobody will notice you. Is that really so awful? When things are working as planned? Give yourself a hug. Enter it into your diary as a success. It looks pretty good there as well.





## Tip 6 - *Use those procedures!*

**I KNOW THE BUREAUCRACY** Everybody is complaining about bureaucracy. Bureaucracy of the government, of multinational companies, or large international NGOs. But what else are we modern people better acquainted with? Little, after all. So we should know how to deal with the red tape. The memos, notes, replies to official letters, the answers to parliamentary questions, or contributions to a memorandum. You may complain about procedures as much as you please. But if changing them is not in your job description, then use them! No greater commitment from bureaucracy than when you lay down your goals and activities in its procedures. Then they are fixed. So you can move on.

Its like aikido. Using the force of your adversary. The principle of *ju no ri*: do not react to your adversary's force by resisting but by yielding. There is no attack in aikido, only defence. This defence should be so subtle that it enchants the attacker. Organisation consultants call this the triptych: connect – yield – change. So be smart when you are dealing with procedures. Seize every opportunity to submit your points. Don't do it only once, do it, if possible, every time. Because if your idea surfaces often, it will stand a better chance. Vary it, though. Slip it into the minutes of a meeting, into memos to the minister, into plans of work, into letters to parliament and into budgetary negotiations.

Ponder the status of the procedure. The national budget has more weight than a memo to a manager. The latter can get lost anyway. Answers to parliamentary questions are sacred, minutes of meetings are not. Learn all about the procedures concerned. Be informed about schedules and planning. And know who is important when it comes to selecting ideas and writing the notes. A clever moment is when the budget period of a financial arrangement is about to expire. Provided that not all of the money has been spent, a call for good proposals will often follow. Have your plans ready. Know your procedures, boring they may be. It comes with the job but it shouldn't become a goal in itself. It's a matter of finding the right balance. How much time will submitting your ideas take and what do you consider the possible revenues to be? Don't let it become a dogma. With all the existing procedures, bureaucracies already have plenty of those.

Be consistent, for you don't want to confuse anyone. Coherence is not all that is important, although it helps. A bit of strategy is always a good idea. But be alert to unexpected opportunities. They come more often than you think. The reverse is also true. Seemingly unimportant procedures may have a major impact. So, some strategy and not too much prejudice. Do not necessarily go for only the big deals. When your idea surfaces in different locations, things will all begin to relate to one another and a buzz is started. Strategy will work here as well. Have an idea about the relationship between procedures. But also let it just happen. You can't be aware of all the connections beforehand. You'll have other things on your mind, too. But when synergy appears do not forget to explore it. It will teach you something you can use the next time around. And handle your terminology flexibly. Adjust it if the procedure demands it. Creativity with words works miracles.

**THE UNWRITTEN RULES** Apart from procedures there are many unwritten rules. They are often regarded as being unchangeable, but they aren't. Freely citing John Grin: 'Structure is a verb. It's socially constructed and thus changeable.' That's why the unwritten rules were never written down. But they are actively kept alive. And unwritten rules, like old structures, will frequently hinder you. They are aimed at preserving the system. You'll have to get around those rules. You do not have to accept them. They aren't written down, are they? You can tamper with them. The unwritten rules are where you'll find room to manoeuvre. Use it. Don't dash about like a bull in a china shop. Make jokes about the rules. Pretend to be highly surprised. Let yourself get upset sometimes. And don't be disheartened.

You'll find unwritten rules everywhere. In each company, at every ministry, at every foundation. They can even vary from department to department. Unwritten rules are difficult to handle and not easily detected. They are, after all, not written down. They exist in people's minds. But you'll find them by observing closely. Where is the best place to observe them? In a meeting. Or listening closely to the gossip in the coffee corner. Who has the final word? Who takes all the decisions in the end? Who are they talking about with respect? Or not? What kinds of action evoke admiration? Or disapproval? Focus yourself on subjects such as risk, trust, control, cooperation and transparency. These issues are often subject to unwritten rules. They will tell you what kind of world you have entered. Use your intuition and be persistent. The rules will surface in due time.



## Tip 7 - *Link up*

**USE WHAT'S THERE** You've become involved in supporting a number of parallel processes with many different actors. It's time to link up to what is available around you. You can't achieve everything on your own. Limited time or budget often leave you no choice. You shouldn't want to do it all by yourself anyway. What you need, after all, is critical mass. An easy way is to link up with others. Connect your own process to parallel movements being trends, organisations or people. Use them. Link up wherever you can.

Working within the Biodiversity Transition Programme we planned to copy the successful Energy Transition Programme. So we organised arenas and we wanted to set up networks of companies. It didn't ring a bell with the Ministry of International Cooperation. But the Ministry had created a new subsidy scheme directed at partnerships with commercial firms. So we decided to change our vocabulary and go with the latest trend. Goodbye networks, hello partnerships. Our initiative worked both ways. Via our connections the subsidy scheme received high-grade proposals and we were no longer the odd one out. Linking up to trends is what some try and hope with the economic crisis. There is talk of restructuring our economic system. It is regarded as an opportunity to rewrite our economic rules in such a way that they will stimulate sustainability. In other words, making use of the crisis to enhance sustainable development. You can also link up to an organisation. Look for the one that operates in something



like the same way as you do. Or that is the right partner for certain elements of your process. Tell them about your goals, ambitions and long-term vision. Keep repeating your story. And speak the language of your partners-to-be. In that way they will start claiming your story for themselves. Don't forget to pay them compliments. Tell them how well they are doing. Better than you could have done. Let them score! Regard potential organisations for linking up as foster parents. Soon they will have to take care of your baby. The parents, however, are not yet aware they are going to have a child. So you will have to tell them. And you will have to teach them how to look after your baby. It isn't always easy. They may have dissenting opinions on education. Perhaps they speak a different language. Or they envisage the future differently. These are reasons to involve them early on in the process. Let them accompany you to see how your education works.

To link up, you can use the concept of Lev Vygotski's, a Russian educational psychologist: the Zone of Proximal Development. This is the zone in which people can make a step towards change. If you don't link up within their zone of proximal development you will lose people's attention. They will become distracted and their eyes will glaze over. Speaking the correct language and using adequate expressions is, therefore, very important. Discover your potential partners' zone of proximal development. And also know your own. Learn to use it smartly. And how to let it grow bigger. The process of linking up will teach you a lot about your own zone too.

**MAKE SURE IT'S EMBEDDED** Sometimes the movement you have created will continue on its own. But there is a chance that the new-born dynamic is too fragile. That it will fade away. Embedding secures the dynamics that have been set in motion. Fix the movement somewhere. You'll need a 'somewhere' for that. To link up to. At the Dutch Initiative for Sustainable Development, programmes

lasted for only two years. But the objective of all programmes was a long-term impact. So within these programmes we looked, from the start, for ways to embed the dynamics we would be creating. We found that you can link up with other organisations, but also in policy, knowledge and even in products. So companies, NGOs, government and knowledge institutes each have their own way of embedding. By letting companies discover different markets, a movement can become embedded in new products. By leading knowledge institutes to different research questions, new insights and solutions may come up. By showing NGOs a different paradigm, they may adopt a new role. And by presenting authorities with a different view, they might develop new policies. Thus, by helping other organisations to think differently, they will start to act in a new way. And if you succeed in letting them travel these new roads together, they will keep each other moving.

Don't bet on only one horse. Dynamics are best embedded in a variety of places. So search hard. Look for organisations with a comparable mission. One that you can partner with without too much difficulty. Make sure their mission stays the same as yours. Explore the campaigns NGOs are planning, so you can join and let them take over from you. Be informed about policy debates within government and know the market trends. Following trend watchers every once in a while does no harm. I find it can be fun. Scan the words they are using. The concepts they see coming. Look for a good one and involve them. Ask around and you will find one.



## Tip 8 - *Turn it round*

**EXAMPLES FIRST** First I'll give you some examples of reversal. Later, I will explain the importance of the art of turning things round. The first brilliant reversal I heard of, midway the nineties, came from Michiel Schwartz. He reversed the slogan of one of the English unions. From 'united we stand, divided we fall', to 'divided we stand, united we fall'. To demonstrate diversity is of overriding importance to innovation. And that too much unification can suffocate change. In The Netherlands, organisations involved in water management, such as the Ministry of Transport and Public Works and Water Management, reversed their slogan from 'holding back the water' to 'accommodating the water'. So don't swim against the tide, but go with it. Implementing this new outlook proved to be a true system innovation. Another example is turning greenhouses from energy guzzlers into energy sources. Mixing and intertwining, as leading concepts for agriculture, instead of specialisation and separation. And now there is the economic crisis. Conferences are advertised with titles like 'long live the crisis' where hands-on experts explain how you can turn a backlash into a success formula.

Two more examples. First a consulting firm's idea to set up a Q&A on CSR. The questions were meant for market players and the plan was to approach scientists for the relevant questions. The consultants would answer these questions and then check their usefulness with the market. A colleague suggested reversing the proposal. Let the

consultancy firm take an inventory of questions already existing in the market. And let the scientists answer those. Clever for then the Q&A would be in tune with the needs of the target group and enhance their commitment. It turned out to be cheaper as well.

A second example stems from the Biodiversity Transition Programme. We had developed a long term vision and came up with actions for the near future. We were ready to get going with our small group, but many parties said: 'Yes, but China!'. Meaning it wouldn't make sense to develop projects in the Netherlands since the impact of China on the use of natural resources was going to be so enormous. And as a small country, we wouldn't be able to exert influence. That brought everything to a grinding halt. Director of a communication agency, Marcel Schuttelaar, turned this problem into an advantage. He proposed a series of lectures entitled 'When the giant awakes; China's impact on natural resources - such as soy, wood and palm oil - in 2030'. We invited speakers from the business world, NGOs and the realm of knowledge. It was very successful. Everybody gained an insight into the, truly scary, impact that China would have. And it yielded committed speakers, lots of visitors, contacts, great visibility both within the Ministry and outside, a lot of press, but above all new ideas for innovative solutions. What more could one ask for?

**MY FIRST TIP** Reversal was the first tip I consciously started using regularly. Maybe this is because I have literally been turning myself upside down for 20 minutes a week for the past twenty years. Standing on my head at a yoga institute in Amsterdam. I've also always been curious about finding new ways. If people say 'that's impossible / can't be changed / is compulsory', it makes me wonder 'Is there really no other option?'. Knowing how to turn it around comes in handy. Because change requires breaking down existing structures. Also in one's own way of thinking. Are your assumptions really that self-evident? Or do

they limit your outlook on renewal? So take a critical look at your assumptions. During a Masters degree in Public Administration, it turned out that counter-intuitive thinking and taking a different view were the most important things to teach people.

So why is this tip number eight? Because reversal is only needed in the case of a conflict. When there is deadlock. As long as you're working in a flow, there is no reason to change. It could even be a bad idea. But resistance will occur. A good sign in itself. It means you are engaged in something meaningful. Resistance only surfaces if your process of change has an impact. At such times, reversal is a powerful way of breaking through to the other side. From closed to open. From threat to opportunity. From complex to simple. Or the reverse... Reversal calls for courage and perseverance. People are often prisoners of their own concepts. It is difficult for them to see things from a different perspective. So when you intervene, do it gradually and subtle. Change means disruption. The stronger the intervention, the stronger the reaction will be. Research shows that people even experience a sense of pain when their opinions turn out to be different. Take this into account when you start to reverse it. Propose it light-heartedly. Drop it in casually and illustrate it carefully. Offer people the opportunity to taste and grasp it for themselves. Before you know it, they will start believing it was their own idea. If you can convince a group of a new notion about what is right, what is the norm, what is accepted, you own one of the most powerful weapons of influence. So be brave! Ask yourself questions that turn things around or upside down on a regular basis. Put yourself outside the process every once in a while. Look through other people's eyes. Or ask someone else to do it for you. It might help you to notice what can't be seen from the inside. Doing something completely different also might help. Go to the cinema. Or go out dancing. Or stand on your head. Success guaranteed!



## Tip 9 - *Ride the zebra*

**A LAYER OF CLAY IN THE MIDDLE** Experience teaches that you'll often find innovators on the shop floor of large organisations. And support for real innovation from top-level management. But that middle management is cynical or aloof. Commitment by people on one level of the hierarchy, none by people on the next, and then, once more, on the third is sometimes referred to as zebra commitment. The reason for this middle management attitude is that it's their job to secure the affairs at hand. Not to renew. This has nothing to do with their personality, but with roles. People have their responsibilities inside the organisation and do not always have time to notice the outside world is moving in a new direction. And because the bureaucracy is designed to cover risks. And because they already have so much to do. It is a good thing they don't always accept change. Continuous change isn't everything, after all. We also need some consistency.

But how do you deal with this layer of clay? How do you get middle management to go along with the process of change? By cleverly using the concept of the zebra commitment. Mobilise people on the shop floor and let top management exert pressure. Not easily achieved, but very effective. For, if you come up with concrete proposals bottom-up, at the same time as a top-down desire for change is ventured, the middle management isn't exposed to any risk. They can score with their management while only having to deal with another executive task. And that is what they are good at. They will be appreciated for it.

So not bottom-up or top-down, but both will get middle management moving. And turn the clay layer into fertile soil. With lots of nutrients and a healthy texture. So you have space for connecting, for linking up etc.

There are different methods for riding the zebra. Build that underground community of innovators in your organisation. Develop concrete ideas in anticipation of pressure from the top. Mobilise the top-down wishes, by having a deputy secretary, a CEO, or a minister make statements in speeches or in a cabinet meeting. And then it turns out the shop floor is able to fulfil these intentions. Middle management will have no reason to turn them down. So what you need is a clear picture of what the top is susceptible to. What is going on in the media, in parliament, in the CEO-meetings?

What holds on an organisational level, is also true for society. Let's go back to the three different system levels, micro, meso and macro. Societal change is often hindered by system rules on the middle meso level. Relations on a meso level are often so tight that nobody has space to move. And thus changes on a meso level do not come easily and the system becomes rigid. But then you have innovators active at micro level. Working on innovations on a small scale. Not belonging to the main structure of the system. When you succeed in connecting their activities with the trends on a macro level, there's a good chance that the meso level will start to move.

It also works the other way around. When a trend is developing in politics or in the media, it is smart to connect these to activities on a micro level. By presenting your activities as a contribution to the trend. By using the proper expressions. Climate change and reduction of CO2 instead of sustainable development. Or fair trade instead of fighting poverty. Or the other way around.

**FROM THE OUTSIDE IN** To get layers in bureaucratic organisations moving, it proves useful to work from the outside in. From the outside society to the inside of the organisation. The media, for instance, can come in handy for mobilising the top. CEOs, ministers and the like, are much in the spotlight. A nice example is an action in The Netherlands by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Together with fifty CEOs the IUCN placed a plea to the government in the newspapers, asking for more policies concerning biodiversity conservation. This forced the government to formulate an answer. As a result, various innovative policy ideas gained priority. So, if asked, advise the CEO of a high-profile multinational, the director of an influential NGO or the head of an important knowledge institute to write a letter to a newspaper, or directly to the Minister. And if possible, let them send the letter together. In my experience a private company is the very effective and a knowledge institute a little less.

You can also get the outside world in by setting up a platform of people from industry and public institutions. A platform that presents ideas, develops strategies and carries out action in line with the long-term vision. These set-ups are organized, for example, as part of the Biodiversity and the Energy Transition Programmes. But while establishing such platforms you'll have to be clear about their role and pay a lot of attention to their composition. An effective group includes the right choice of chairman. Ideally an authority and an excellent networker who can surpass partisan differences. And a variety of participants from private companies, NGOs, knowledge institutes. And beware of vested interests and people or organisations only representing others.





## Tip 10 - *All in due time*

**PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE** Of course you want to go fast, fast, fast. Understandable, because a lot is not going well in the world. Glaciers are melting, animal species are going extinct. It puts enormous pressure on everyone to act immediately. But not everything can be done fast. Going slow is also a trend. Think of the Slow Movement. This movement began as a protest against the opening of a McDonald's restaurant in Piazza di Spagna in Rome. It sparked the creation of the Slow Food Organization, as well as developing into a subculture in various other areas, Slow Travel, Slow Shopping, and Slow Design, just to name a few.

Patience is essential for change. Changing systems, organisations and people: it simply takes time. Fundamental change and cultural shift do not happen overnight. Investing in time is a prerequisite. Often, the system took a long time to grow. So it will also need time to disappear. Don't be too impatient. Understand that all will come in good time. It is better for people to participate on the basis of a true desire than because of superficial expectations.

Be aware that processes have their own pace. Their own rhythm of change. You should look for this rhythm. The rhythm of policymaking on a national level is, for instance, a yearly process. Each department and management board draws up their own working plans and budgets are allocated. If it comes to new legislation, then you'd better prepare yourself. That really takes time. Therefore, make sure your



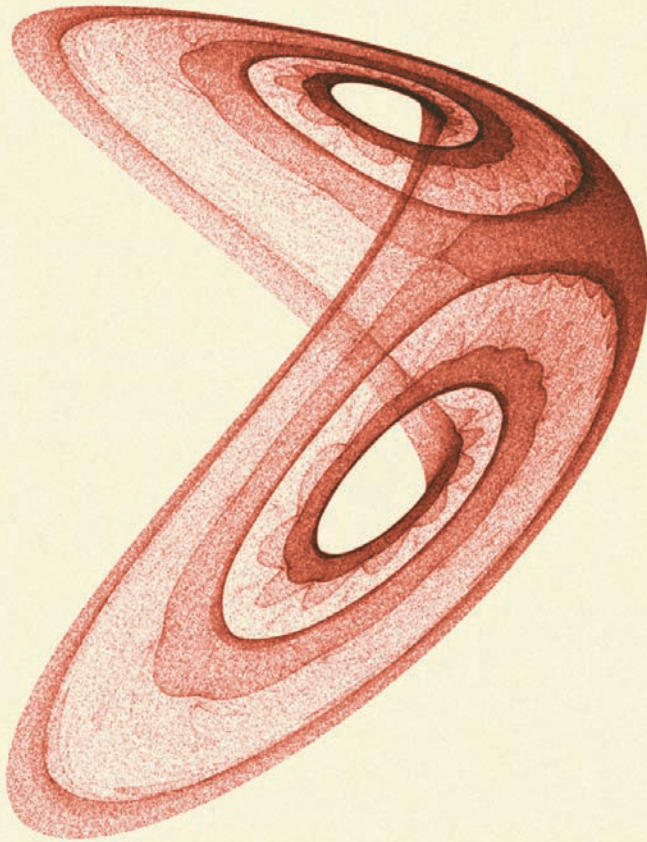
processes are in tune with its rhythm and make preparations early on. The world of research has its own timeline. Here the rhythm of processes is determined by the cycle of research programmes, which is, more or less, four years. Completely different is the fast world of consultants. Or companies. They decide quick and expect you to do the same. To give system innovations a fair chance, you need more time than the four years of the political cycle. According to Marko Hekkert, Professor on Innovation, impatience in politics is one of the main reasons why so few innovations are actually implemented in The Netherlands.

So each process has its own rhythm. Understand this and be patient. There's no point in getting upset. Before you know it, you will be stressed. Less receptive, seeing less, getting ill. And we don't want that. Because there's still so much to be done. And be aware of what you have already accomplished. Sustainable development is in itself a notion that was underground for twenty years. Right now, it's surfacing into the mainstream. The change, from disputing why to discussing how, is noticeable. And what are twenty years in the rhythm of profound social change?

**DON'T PUSH** You gave it all you had. And then things didn't work out as fast as you wanted them to. Let it ferment. Concentrate on things that are running smoothly. That are in need of your attention. Understand that forcing things doesn't help. We often think otherwise. That pushing really hard might help. When you have found an organisation with impact and status, for instance. And you really want to involve them in your process. So you go over there, meet and they respond enthusiastically. Delighted, you go home. And then you don't hear anything. Or it takes forever. Or they really have no time. Perhaps they can't see the point of it yet. Or it doesn't fit in with their plans. Then stop right there! Don't keep pushing! It seems easy, but actually it's not. We live in times in which we are

used to fighting for things. Of convincing others. And when we don't succeed, we regard it as failure. And so we push a little harder. Don't do that. Go your own way. They'll come back if they really are interested. Trust your intuition. You might make inquiries once in a while. But don't spend more energy than writing an e-mail. Or a coincidental chat at a conference. Because if it's good, it will come back to you.

Make good use of the time that waiting gives you. Reflect on what you have been doing. Analyse whether you are still on the right track. This is important, anyway. Make notes about what went well, what stroke you as remarkable, what could have been done better. You have probably spent too little time on reflection. Because you were so busy. Therefore, incorporate reflection in the process. And pass the responsibility onto someone else. So you won't be able to forget. Give someone the specific task of helping you to reflect. Use the time to make those unusual appointments that have been on your wish-list for so long. Which have never materialised. At the start of a week I make a list of things to do. The list is not allowed to be longer than one page in my notebook. At the end of the week I cross out what has been done. Things I couldn't find time for, I transport to the list for next week. Or I abandon them when they turn out not to be so important or redundant after all. Because sometimes ideas catches up with themselves. But some ideas accompany me for weeks on end. And if there's suddenly nothing else to do, I finally have the chance to deal with them.



## Positive Feedback

**THE TIPS REVISITED** The paradigm for clever change is considering the system in which you operate, as a network of relations, like the human brain. There is no centre and only by taking up a position can you first see a part and then maybe the whole. Profound change occurs when enough mass is created for a process of self-organising and reinforcement. And thus the movement will continue to develop without you being involved.

Successful processes of change sometimes require the organisations involved to change too. Clever change is not only about changing the relationships between organisations but also about changing relations within; it's also about dragging people and organisations along in the process of change. It's possible that some won't be able to keep up with the pace. This is well captured by the title of a famous article on innovation: 'The Creative Winds of Destruction.' Similar to the god Shiva, who destroys to let new things come into being.

Within my paradigm feedback loops play an important role. Negative and positive loops occur inside the network. Things changes or becomes extinct. Feedback loops create non-linear dynamics. When dynamics are non-linear, minor changes can have major consequences.

The tips are aimed at causing these positive feedback loops. Loops can occur, for instance, by connecting parallel processes at different levels or within different domains. When you link the activities of individual players to macro level policy, when you have scientific knowledge put to use by private companies, or have solutions from one sector applied in another. Positive feedback can also result from bringing together passionate people from suitably varied backgrounds. From them starting to inspire and stimulate each other. And from every person involved becoming their own positive energy spot in the network. Everybody sets to work as part of their own environment. An individual part of that giant network. Because people in the network can become connected with other companies in the production chain. Or because, when they are a consultant, they drop in on other organisations. Or because they give an interview to the media.

Positive feedback can also occur between creating a long-term vision and prioritising short-term action. A long-term vision legitimises short-term actions and, because the long-term is still far away, the short-term activities prepare the course. Peter Senge states that visions spread because of a reinforcing process. Increased clarity, enthusiasm and commitment rub off on others in the organization. As people talk, the vision grows clearer. As it gets clearer, enthusiasm for its benefits grow. Positive feedback is obviously possible when people are brought together and become connected. When coalitions and communities of practice are developing. The connection creates its own dynamics. Call it social influencing. And if it turns out positively, there will be positive feedback. And if your ideas take on a life of their own, there's no stopping them. Quite frightening actually. And they may or may not generate their own positive feedback. Procedures give you the opportunity to anchor achievements, and by linking up you continue to spread those achievements.

Reversal and the tip on zebra commitment are not about positive feedback, but instruments for when you are having a hard time. And you will, I can assure you. In fact, it will happen quite regularly. But that's because you are doing so well. So therefore, finally, have a break and take some rest. No more talking about dynamics for now. You might get exhausted. And I don't want that. I want you to keep on going.

**THE RIGHT INTENTION** Non-linear patterns only become apparent over time. They are set and kept in motion by the strange attractor. The strange attractor is the common vision that people share. A desire for something that is coming into being. The intention that motivates the process. To be able to see this intention you'll need intuition. Develop a sense for synchronicity. For significant coincidence. And for apparent chance. And you have to be able to listen. Otto Scharmer states that there are four kinds of listening. Firstly: Yeah, I know that (downloading). What you hear confirms what you already know. Secondly: Oh, look at that (object listening). Concentrating on facts and on what differs from data you know. Thirdly: I know how you feel (empathic listening). We have a real dialogue here that changes your perception. The other person is important here. And you already sort of sense what that person is going to tell you. It requires intelligence of the heart. And finally: I can't explain it. I feel connected with something bigger than myself. This is about listening with an open heart and with a longing for a future that is begging to come into being.' The last kind of listening is all-important for clever change.

So what do you need? The right attitude and a good sense of intuition. So strengthen your intuition through meditation. Have the curiosity

and a desire to learn. Organise frequent reflection from the sideline. Act with a modest ego. And have the power to leave it to others. Be able to connect, link up and reverse. Weave your threads like a little spider in a huge web and reinforce existing relations. So they become stronger. Become a swarm and know that for a swarm good feedback is vital and too much hierarchy blocks the process. Good luck!

## A short personal after word

**PASSION** Clever change starts with you enjoying your work. It is important to maintain your curiosity. That you keep changing and adjusting, reflecting and learning. And stay inspired by the good cause you are working for.

Clever change is also about intuition, the right intention and passion. So devote enough time to your passions. I have a number of them. The first passion is, as you might have guessed, sustainable development. Not only in my professional work. I work on minimising my footprint in my private life, too. Eating very little meat, but other great dishes. Travelling by train, reading on the way. And buying second hand clothes, more original.

A second passion is the concept of dynamics. How can we set things in motion? How can we create mass movement? How can we get systems to flip over using positive feedback? Working for the government is a passion as well. Working for people and trying to find my way through the bureaucracy. Looking for ways to make a large impact on a small budget and with the right group. Connecting people and scaling up to larger system changes is fun, too. And connecting on a conceptual level; getting new ideas, being inspired by others, coming up with concepts together. The wonderful experience when one plus one becomes three.

A more tricky passion is the art of living in doubt. Not knowing which way to go or what to do. To trust my intuition. And to try something different if it doesn't feel okay or when I get stuck. I then book tickets for a documentary festival, go to an unusual congress, or go dancing (anytime!). For I know that then good ideas will pop up automatically. So I take a day off to restore the balance. And thus my final passion; yoga and standing on my head.

Since the publication of the tips, I've started doing presentations resulting in the 10 tips show. I tell groups of professionals working on change about the tips. And I show short videos from internet etc to tell the story of the tip in another way. Then follows stand-up advice: give me a dilemma and I'll give you a tip. People are asked to discuss a dilemma in smaller groups. A dilemma in the field of change management. The presented ones are given some tips. A great pleasure to do.

## For Further Inspiration

### **ON TRANSITION MANAGEMENT**

» [www.transitiepraktijk.nl/en/](http://www.transitiepraktijk.nl/en/)

### **ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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- » Jacqueline Cramer (2003). Learning about Corporate Social Responsibility; the Dutch experience. Amsterdam IOS Press.
- » Ervin Laszlo (2003). You Can Change the World: the Global Citizens Handbook for Living on Planet Earth. Select Books, New York.
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### **ON CHANGE**

- » Giovanni Dosi et al (1988). Technical Change and Economic Theory. Francis Pinter, London.
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- » James Surowiecki (2004). The Wisdom of Crowds. Why the Many

Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies and Nations, Doubleday Books, UK.

- » Phillip Ball (2004). Critical Mass: How one Thing leads to another. Arrow Books, UK.
- » Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom (2006). The Starfish and the Spider; the Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organisations. Penguin Portfolio, UK.
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- » Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski and Otto Scharmer (2006). Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future. Academic Services, New York.
- » Otto Scharmer (2007). Theory U; Leading from the Future as It Emerges. SOL, Cambridge Massachusetts.

**FOR THE BEST YOGA**

» [www.criticalalignment.nl](http://www.criticalalignment.nl)

**FOR REACTIONS AND QUESTIONS**

» [info@slimmesturing.nl](mailto:info@slimmesturing.nl)

Cover photo:

*'My ship Janna Pieternella and me on our way home'.*