



**Leaders for
Nature**

Doing Business with Nature

Leaders for Nature Forum 2011 - **Report**
17 February 2011



IUCN National Committee
of The Netherlands

In the impressive setting of ABN AMRO headquarters the annual Leaders for Nature forum took place on 17 February and was attended by over 250 people from 17 different companies.

Welcome

The forum was opened 9 am sharp by Anil Joshi, the facilitator of the day. He told the audience some things about his roots and reminded us that eventually we would have to make 'Doing business with nature' understandable even to the 80+ grandma he met in Singapore.

After Anil had taken us through the day's programme, he gave the floor to Mr. Willem Ferwerda, director of IUCN NL. Mr. Ferwerda explained the mission of IUCN NL and Leaders for Nature, after which he focussed on the relationship between business and biodiversity:

biodiversity is the indicator of the health of the planet we all depend on. Businesses rely on services that ecosystems provide like:

- *provisioning services* such as food, water, timber, and fiber;
- *regulating services* that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes, and water quality;
- *cultural services* that provide recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual benefits;

The services of these ecosystems are under pressure due to human activities which causes a degradation of the services through for example pollution, overexploitation, climate change and land use changes. Analyzing the direct and indirect impact and dependencies of participating companies is therefore crucial in integrating sustainability within the core business.



The next speaker was host ABN AMRO's CEO, Mr. Gerrit Zalm who gave the Leaders for Nature participants a warm welcome. He explained that his bank was rebuilding its sustainability strategy, which will become part of the different way ABN AMRO has to start looking at nature and clients. Mr. Zalm encouraged all companies present to implement their action plans and to focus on sustainability in the core business. "This event is not about topics such as energy savings at our offices, paper use etc. but focuses on our core business, the relationships with our clients". For ABN AMRO, entrepreneurship, client relationships and resource efficiency are two central themes. Mr. Zalm challenged participants by stating that he did think that ABN AMRO would benefit from the advantage of the 'home' position. He will definitely be checking their progress.



After the welcome addresses it was time to announce the winner of the 2010 Action Plan competition: P&G. Marijke Wijnberg from P&G presented the company's success. All activities as stated in the action plan have been carried out successfully in 2010, with strong support from P&G's CEO. P&G's long term-environmental vision include powering plants with 100% renewable energy, using 100% renewable materials or recycle for all products and packaging, having zero consumer or manufacturing waste go to landfills and designing products that delight consumer while maximizing the conservation of resources. At the end of the presentation P&G introduced it's new sustainability motto to the audience: 'Gewoon Doen'. This new motto inspired many in the audience throughout the day.

'Towards a new economic paradigm'

Mr. Wouter Scheepens

ABN AMRO's head of CSR presented the results of the bank's economists' research into the causes and common denominators of both the economic and the biodiversity crises. The conclusion is that it is due time for an economic paradigm shift which includes starting to monetarise ecosystems and biodiversity. Instead of strengthening each other, business and nature are off-balance, much to the detriment of the business sector's public image and sustainability of doing business in general. It is time to approach the economy in a cyclical manner, instead of linear, much like the cyclical processes in nature.



Mr. Scheepens made it very clear that there are no clear-cut solutions or answers. The financial sector can, however, play an important part in making the change happen by setting up proper financial systems for the valuation of ecosystems and biodiversity. With saying 'We should have a healthy disrespect for the impossible' and 'Those who say it can't be done should get out of the way of the ones doing it' Wouter Scheepens promised he would continue researching these matters.



'Competitive business models inspired by Nature'

Mr. Gunter Pauli



After coffee it was time for the forum's keynote speaker Mr. Gunter Pauli, who was introduced by Anil as 'Gunter the Troublemaker'. With 'I didn't come to this world to please everyone' and 'we have to rephrase everything related to biodiversity', the tone of Mr. Pauli's talk was set.

Before telling the audience about his views on competitive business models and out-competing everyone, Pauli first took us through his personal history:

- 1984** Restoring a rainforest in Columbia – value per hectare rose from 1 to 3000 dollar in 2010.
- 1992** Pauli's cleaning products line Ecover became highly successful ('You have to change the rules of the game in order to change the paradigm'), but when he learned that the production of palm oil – which was needed as recourse for the products - was destroying the habitat of the orang-utan in Indonesia while cleaning up the rivers in Europe, he sold his share to his business partner. 'If you pollute and you pollute less, you're still a polluter'
- 1994** Pioneered with Zero Emissions Zero Waste (ZERI) – After the COP leading-up to the Kyoto protocol in Japan 2,800 Japanese companies followed Pauli's protocol
- 1996** Started bring science and sustainability to children by becoming an author of fables. 'Teaching kids how apples fly'
- 2000** Began working with bamboo as a construction material and built the biggest bamboo house in the world. Smart design of a bamboo house with a balcony: 'Bamboo is for the poor, a balcony is for the rich – a bamboo house with a balcony is for the middle class'
- 2005** Start of the Blue Economy: 'Everything I'm doing is sustainable, all is inspired by nature.' Pauli is of the view that the red economy failed: plan economy failed (although China will be number 1) and the economies of scale didn't work either. Green economy 1.0 will not take off because its message is 'Everything that is good for the environment is expensive'. Pauli challenges people to go beyond that, to do much better.

The Blue Economy (or, if we like, The Green Economy 2.0) offers a competitive business model inspired by nature. 'Sustainability is the capacity to respond to the basic needs of all with what we have – which is exactly what ecosystems do'.

The principles of the Blue Economy are:

1. **Use nature** – example of the Songhai Centre in Benin: diabetes wounds are healed by maggot saliva
2. **Process and consume at normal temperatures**
3. **Substitute something with nothing** – 'Unsustainable production and consumption adds to waste, bad health and climate change'. 'Discover what you're doing with your consumption patterns – do not prohibit, out-perform!' > Silk instead of titanium, fibre production without acids, sensors without batteries.
4. **Generate value through multiple cash flows and benefits** – 'think like an ecosystem and grow one!' Do not just focus on the core business.
5. **The best is the cheapest and the necessary is free**
6. **Generate jobs** – 'Nature knows no unemployed'



Some of Pauli's quotes:

- 'It's not about cutting costs anymore, time has come to make more revenue, to create more value'
- 'Some look in the other direction asking the right question'
- 'What's the most abundant source of energy freely available? Gravity. The sun only shines half the day on half the planet'
- 'Physics is what nature exploits first > gravity. It always works.'
- 'If you give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day. If you teach him how to fish, he will overfish. Old wisdoms don't work anymore.'

Next Pauli challenged everyone in the audience to stand up and cross their arms. And next with the different arm on top. That proved to not really work out well. 'Our body's keep doing the same thing, change is hard, but learning from case studies helps!'



Amongst others the audience was shown the following cases studies:

- Water purification by gravity – doing it the way rivers do it, with a vortex
- Holy energy – Generate energy by attaching sensors to pray flags
- The phone generating energy without batteries
- Use existing pylons to generate wind energy – ‘Why not? Because it’s not our core business. Work together, co-create’
- Rethinking glass – glass + CO2 = foam – structural building material. ‘Recycling programs have been too expensive. Who pays? The customer. That is not fair. You’re creative and innovative & you can do better.’
- Office of Daiwa House in Sendai Japan – play with black and white > big temperature differences generate wind and thus free cooling.
- Chido’s blend – African woman who grows mushrooms on coffee waste. Blend is now also sold at La Place. ‘Look at globalisation and go beyond crop export. Women empowerment should be a priority for every company. Reach the unreached.’
- El Hierro island – goals: self-sufficiency in water & energy, all electric cars, all agriculture goes organic. ‘Follow the circle of the economics of audacity – we need people who know every aspect of the system’
- Polymers – Nature makes it with amino acid, people do it with petroleum and starch.
- Silk is a by-product; the Chinese grew it to generate topsoil – something we also need for life! ‘Or do we all want to go hydroponic?’

This all means: ‘Develop a new business model with and based on Nature’

To see a shorter version of his presentation please go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQBp6z4j704



Mr. Jan Ernst De Groot – Managing Director KLM & member of Taskforce biodiversity

Mr. De Groot challenged the forum participants to take action where governments and previous generations have failed to do so. 'It's about the how, what can you do?' 'In the Netherlands we have to stop the Calimero attitude, because we do have an impact. And we have creativity!' He urged participants to convince their own networks that biodiversity and ecosystems is an important issue and that companies need and can act. Mr. de Groot promised to take this message to Mr. Bleker and the Dutch government.

Best practice sessions

After Mr. Pauli's very inspiring talk and some questions, InterfaceFLOR, van Gansewinkel and Unilever encouraged the audience to visit their best practice sessions after lunch.

The forum participants split over three best practice sessions:

InterfaceFLOR

Interface is a worldwide leader in the manufacture of modular commercial flooring. Its founder and Chairman Ray Anderson pioneered corporate sustainability in 1994 by recognising that the way industry works is fundamentally unsustainable and that it had to stop having a destructive effect on the natural and social environment, and, instead, work to restore it. There was no blueprint for this kind of organization in business. But there was in nature. If nature designed an industrial process, what might it look like? Seven strategic pillars were formulated:

- eliminate waste
- benign emissions
- renewable energies
- closing the loop
- Resource-efficient transportation
- Sensitising stakeholders
- Redesign commerce

Unilever

By the end of 2010, Unilever tasked itself to meet stringent sustainability goals. The impact on the environment needs to be halved by 2020. This is the way Unilever wants to lead the sector and what consumers expect and demand. By 2020 Unilever will therefore source 100% of the agricultural raw materials sustainably which lowers the impact on biodiversity. Sustainability is now incorporated throughout the entire company and all business processes.

Unilever has put sustainability as central point in its growth strategy. The sustainability goals include the impact of Unilever's suppliers and the impact of its products when used by consumers. Consumers are key in making the biodiversity impact less.

Van Gansewinkel

There's no such thing as waste! This was the key message throughout the session, focusing on reducing waste and how to use waste as a source for new products. Simple solutions like centralized waste collection in an office can reduce waste by 50%. Cradle-to-cradle is being used by more and more companies, lowering their environmental impact and offering quick wins as well as long-term changes. Using the concept of no waste it is possible to re-use raw materials like metals for new production processes. Sustainability is the leading concept in the van Gansewinkel business model, it is its core product and service.

Gunter Pauli



Gunter Pauli hosted an implementation session for a select group of people. About 25 people continued the discussion with Gunter Pauli during the best practice session. During this session people received some hands-on pieces of advice like 'Instead of input-output, think output-input' and 'get some field experience'.

Mr. Pauli also advised on sustainable office space, how to regulate heat in buildings, control health issues on a natural basis and motivate by using nature as inspiration. The session inspired the participants and Leaders for Nature will offer its members the opportunity to keep brainstorming with Mr. Pauli.



'Doing business with Nature'

In-company workshop

It then was time for the company teams to sit together and apply all lessons learned on their company. Company teams were asked to discuss their impact on ecosystems and biodiversity, and their use of natural resources. This made clear what the risks and opportunities are for the companies. People then started working on the action plans.



Important criteria for the action plans were: (1) Link with natural resources and biodiversity, (2) Cooperation between companies, (3) Innovativeness.

Market place for Partnerships



During the in-company workshops the plenary room was transformed into a marketplace with a spot for each company, a CEO-corner and a stage with a gong. Anil, the lead broker, hit the gong and trading started. Energy levels rose when people started roaming the room looking for people from other companies to discuss possibilities for cooperation and co-creation. When these conversations ended successfully a trade was written down, handed to Anil and put on the big announcement board. Over 70 deals were made between Leaders for Nature member companies!



CEO Carousel

During the CEO carousel 15 company representatives presented their team's action plan. Most were very ambitious plans focussing on reducing the use of raw materials, making production processes more efficient (like using less water), mapping impacts on biodiversity and looking into new sustainability models. The completed action plans will be presented during the LFN follow-up event 14 April at the TNT headquarters.



Closing ceremony



At the end of an inspiring forum day Leaders for Nature manager Daan Wensing and IUCN NL president Hendrik-Jan Laseur thanked all participants and the organising team, expressed hope and expectations for the future and closed the day. Daan also explained how the follow up of the LFN Forum will look like, amongst other that all Leaders for Nature member companies are asked to submit their final action plan by 31 March. The action plans form an important part of the LFN programme 2011, which is tailored to assist and support the member companies in developing and implementing policies on biodiversity & ecosystems.

More information you can find [here](#)

