Green Aruba

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Aruba is going green! An exciting race against the clock to be independent of fossil energy sources by 2020. With the help of the Carbon War Room and Dutch center for applied sciences TNO, the island is progressively heading for a green future. Meanwhile, interesting spin-offs of the country's transition are ready to be shared with a knowledge hungry world. Much interest is shown in the educational programmes of Green Education and Green's'Cool, through which Aruba makes efforts to involve the whole island, aiming to achieve a fully sustainable economy.

The Aruban National Library has manoeuvred itself into the spotlights with its Green Education initiative. With an invitation to contribute to the 2nd Green Education Conference in April 2013 with a series of lectures and workshops, our Aruban-Dutch alliance came to be. The in- and output of the conference have been displayed in a publication, putting them in perspective of Aruba's development and a fast changing world. Where possible, output has been interrelated or merged into plausible initiatives. The aim is to feed the establishment with tempting alternatives and stimulate them to make use of crowd participation, all the while working on awareness about sustainability in its broadest sense.

In Chicago our Dutch Caribbean Library Association delegation held a presentation during the American Library Association's annual conference. There, we were publicly dared to create a toolkit for educational institutions and libraries to be able to follow suit. Those inspirational stories and initiatives are accompanied by a vision on the repositioning of libraries as hubs of information and know-how and catalysts between top-down and bottom up parties and programmes.

New players, new rules
In our antiquated suppliers market, deals used to be relatively easily made. Government and large corporations could decide between them and the output would find buyers anyway. That old game of strategy and negotiation does not work so well in a demanders' market. The crowd can now exercise more influence and wants to actually participate.

From now on suppliers will have to answer to what we individually or collectively ask for. Governments and other traditional partners will have to change the way they operate. Experts and consultants must take up a much more independent role. Based on their knowledge, they will cooperate in integral development. With a greater diversity of active players, the rules of the game will have to be altered. New players will have to learn those new rules, but traditional players will first need to unlearn their old customs.

In the world as it is
We can only innovate from within the confines of the world as we presently know it. Governments, large companies, financial institutions, etc. are not instantly ready to adopt new concepts and procedures. Changing too fast will make them stumble. No one would want that: people would lose their jobs and besides, we will always need investors and financiers.

It is important to know and understand the interests of the different players and parties. Once everyone is well aware of all other stakes, forces can be joined to identify and elaborate multi-win solutions. The traditional parties will have to disarm and put their cards on the table.

Adaptation is the issue at stake: the old (supply driven) economy is all we know and many of us have worked in that environment for a long time. Innovation is coming fast; the establishment does not manage to hold a grip on it. Besides what makes sense for younger generations is often quite new for the older ones.

At the moment, national governments focus mainly on issues at macro-economic level, trying to solve global effects of economic instability. Meanwhile treasuries are (almost) empty and public spending is being cut across the board. This has direct consequences for the viability of public amenities, also for libraries. On a micro-scale, economy and welfare are gradually left more to communities to take care of themselves. This makes the public a relevant new stakeholder, with its own demands, interest, solutions and means. As such, communities can be valuable partners in development. No one knows the right way, so we need to advance by trial and error. But in order to be able to act appropriately, the knowledge and mentality of the new generation is urgently required. Their ideas and advice are very welcome! In the end, everybody can genuinely work together on and play his part in a fantastic transition to a better and greener world.

Added value of co-operation
The crowd maybe an important new player, but then, who is the crowd? In every case, the composition of stakeholders and interested parties from the crowd is different. How can these people find each other and team up? How can they turn or be turned into full grown counterparts of the other players?

Communities can establish co-operations or other alliances of all kind. Through co-operations, demand will be directly fed by people's interests and needs: "we ask for what we need only, no less... and no more". They can channel demand and negotiate deals. From there on crowd co-operations can develop into producers and even suppliers of energy and food. Together with the public and their capital and insight, goals can be reached that would take industry years to achieve.

Hub
The way it is
Libraries will need to make strategic choices now to secure a timely transformation and remain (or become increasingly) relevant. While their traditional function of safeguarding knowledge and cultural capital is becoming somewhat outdated, digitalization brings great new opportunities. The avalanche of available information is getting increasingly harder to 'make sense' of and solidify it into useful knowledge.

There is urgency for libraries to re-position themselves. It would create great opportunities if they did so strategically, by broadening their focus. Information is arguably a religion and the

library could be its church. Libraries should, like churches (used to), be involved in societies at community level and give direction and guidance toward (cultural) education, and emancipation. The library then will have to transform into an institution that informs the public on its interests on the one hand and ventilates public opinion on the other, translating it to usable input for investment initiative and (local) government policy.

The community as a partner
The effects of economic instability are very evident in our field of expertise, urban planning and spatial development. The deadlock that classical partners are in has everything to do with the shift from a supply to a demand driven market. This is being forced into existence by the growing awareness among the public, thereby changing the rules of the game to be played. Growing responsibility in livelihood enhancement stimulates active involvement on neighborhood level, as well as on municipal level. This more structural and more significant type of grass root development is waiting to start living up to its full potential. Many people are, by nature, interested or involved in (physical) development on different scales; from NIMBY (not in my back yard) to long-term perspectives for their living-, working- and recreational environments as well as for the city they live in and have affection with.

Increasingly, livelihood enhancement, social structuring and function(ing) of public space, will be left to public responsibility. This time of transition, is also one of great new opportunities, especially in green-tech. People are loaded with ideas and concepts and ready to put them into practice. They are vital to the re-ignition of spatial and economic development.

Energy, food production and distribution are highly potential responsibilities to be (partly) brought back to communities to take care of. Current scarcity of raw materials will have its consequences for their availability. Food related logistics will become less relevant as communities grow food regionally. There are wonderful examples of city-farming, oases in cities that bring food and its production closer to consumers, raising their awareness and sense of ownership reducing the cost of especially logistics. These are mostly examples of private initiative, many of which have a hard time getting there. If at all they do.

The system (governance and corporate interests) still lacks will, ways or means to reach out to full public participation. For public, government and private parties to effectively embrace each other, there's need for experiment. In a process of trial and error, successful examples can add to (the development of) viable alternatives. A reflective practice! That's where people need assistance and guidance. To find each other, to finetune their stakes, through series of decisions (many in specialized areas), through procedures and legislation, etc.
They will need knowledge and know-how.

Making information work
While antiquated development processes still dominate, people need help to hear and be heard. It is now more important than ever, that interaction between bottom up and top down is facilitated or even strategically directed. If we could organize a catalyst for information, education, participation and integration between all different stakeholders, we'd create a much needed addition to (free, but without context) information exchange, mainly through internet.

We have a long way to go in making information more interactive and have public collaboration better structured. We need to try to bridge that gap. We should collect and structure public opinion and professional input, feeding strategic policy making. We could

identify and stimulate private initiative, revealing strengths and weaknesses and advise policy makers on embedding private initiative in their medium and long term strategies.

The neo library
Libraries could become just that, specializing in making available information usable and integrating information streams. That would help bridge the gap between availability of information on the one hand and public awareness and collaboration on the other. In such a role, they would stimulate and support civil empowerment and help catalyze its consequences towards meaningful and effective cooperation.

The library could be the place to turn to for (local) governments and other stakeholders (e.g. housing corporations and real estate developers) when seeking interaction with the community. It shall maintain its function as a guardian of cultural capital and knowledge. But beside that the library could become an active hub of information and knowledge exchange, involved in education, awareness and public collaboration programmes.

With solid knowledge of (technological) opportunities and innovations, libraries can actively inform communities on sustainability and energy transition, livelihood issues and ways to organize and act. On Aruba the national library, Biblioteca Nacional Aruba, has already positioned itself accordingly. Libraries could be centers of communication and channel information to and from everywhere Transmitters of information can do so through the library, while information receivers have a reliable place to turn to. Libraries have always been forefront in accessibility of information, why not do so now and become an embodiment of the internet!

The cultural background of libraries should be secured in prominent physical presence within communities. These buildings should be(come) hives of cultural education and information exchange. Besides reading, all libraries should stimulate and facilitate life enriching activities such as music, art, drama, writing and philosophy. Moreover, other creative industries, such as digital design, photography, film and architecture, could be incorporated. Furthermore, if libraries turn to seeking partnerships with educational institutions, cultural and social institutes and local governments to interact with the public through them, they could become profitable. This would require a different, more (CSR) commercial attitude of them.

Libraries could generate income by renting out (flexible) office space, (temporary) ateliers and client desks to independent, highly specialized professionals who can have office hours in the building. This way, we will create guilds for crafts that need to come back to the public, such as architecture, urban- and neighborhood planning, etc. Also food- and energy based know-how could find its place within those hubs. In the end, libraries will be trade centers for information, knowledge, advice and cultural riches. It would greatly enhance the libraries' dynamics and would attract an array of new clients and visitors.

Toolkit
For libraries
Although we are still at a very early stage in the development of the toolkit, the outlines of it are clear. The kit will consist of several worktools, accompanied by inspirational best practice examples from the field. In first instance from Aruba, but we welcome crowdsourcing and will add valuable material from abroad.

The in- and output of the Green Education Conference 2013 have been displayed in a

publication, putting them in 'Perspective of Aruba's development' in a fast changing world. The Green Education Aruba book is the first step toward the toolkit and will serve as its introductory story. The first half consists of an essay on which the presentations and workshops were based. The story is interwoven with the images of the presentation.

The second half of the book shows the power of new approaches and crowd participation. Those 'Inspirational Practices and Initiatives' are accompanied by a 'Vision' on the repositioning of libraries as hubs of information and know-how and catalysts between top-down and bottom-up parties and programmes.

First of all there has to be an 'Evaluation Framework' that enables interested parties to identify their point of departure. As said before, Aruba has a progressive wind blowing over it, welcoming initiative and innovation. For libraries, schools or universities elsewhere, the (political) circumstances will differ too much from the one on Aruba, to just copy paste our programmes.

After customization, the green candidate can begin setting its targets using several 'Tools'. One will be on getting started. What are the local stakes and urgencies? On what front can a difference be made? Can you connect to any other sustainability programme running? Another tool will be financial. Our programmes all run independent of public funding, not costing society money. That is essential to the viability and sustainability of a green education programme. How to involve local and international beneficiaries, making the programme a true public private partnership?

Furthermore we want to incorporate several working 'Methods' with which to engage and empower the crowd.

The toolkit that we are working on is meant for all kind of institutions, such as schools, governments and libraries, but also business and the crowd, to take part in a participative and sustainable society. The part that focuses on libraries is a response to ACURIL's call for aid and will be presented to them on the Bahamas in June 2014.

Working together on the toolkit at BOBCATSSS
Several other Caribbean islands have shown interest in a similar approach. We are trying to get those projects started within the coming months so they may serve as examples of practice and for further foundation. BOBCATSSS Barcelona would give us a great opportunity to crowd source among (future) information professionals in Europe. Because we need to work with and within different contexts and different cultures. The results will be highlighted in one or some of the books in our series. While working on a sustainable society, the Green's'Cool programme stimulates crowd participation and hence helps create the conditions for participative society. Another governmental hot item.

For our advancements on the toolkit we refer to: http://greeneducationtoolkit.wordpress.com
We wholeheartedly invite you to comment or contribute