

## Small steps, big results report

The debate is introduced by **David Hamers**, Reader of Public Space department (Design Academy Eindhoven) and researcher at Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving (PBL Netherlands). Hamers explains that the Design Debates aim to explore how designers can create a 'climate' to make change happen. As for Hamers, designers can mitigate climate change and have the skills to come up with new sustainable recourses, but in order to do so they need to know how their small interventions can play a bigger, more strategic role in society. Therefore they not only need to have design skills, but also need to get their ideas across the political agenda, align it with scientific research and make sure that they get public or media attention. Therefore, for this debate, 3 experts from different fields are invited to reflect on 2 alumni projects. Before introducing the forum Hamers questions students on some facts and figures related to climate change. Most of the students are aware that 2 degrees stands for the expected temperature rising, but they are not aware that the so called Delta Commission is working towards scenarios regarding a national water plan and peak rain fall for 2100.



After that Hamers gives the stage to **Tracy Metz**, an acknowledged journalist for NRC Handelsblad and author of many publications on public space and climate issues amongst with the recent published *Sweat and Salt, Water and the Dutch*.

Metz points out that being an American by birth living in Holland, she can question things from an outsiders perspective. When she was a member of the Delta Commission (2007-2008), she started wondering how the Dutch should prepare themselves to keep them safe and dry in the near future. She came to understand how crucial water policy is in the Netherlands and how poorly the Dutch prepare themselves for potential floods. "Why is it that all the electricity in Holland is installed in the basements? This doesn't make sense in a country that is mainly below sea level. Why not place everything in the attic."



Tracy not only tries to generate curiosity amongst the audience, she also wants to give the students some advises. “As students you think that anything is possible. When you leave here; reality will soon kick in. There is a huge body of knowledge out there, and that is definitely something you need to use. **More knowledge means more impact and you do want to have impact.”**

To exemplify the importance of that Tracy Metz gives some examples of great design projects that failed because knowledge was lacking or the designers forgot to align their ideas with crucial stakeholders. She refers to water squares in Rotterdam, designed by the Urbanisten in Rotterdam. Rainwater that falls on the square runs via large stainless steel gutters over it, into the basins. Although the design was very enthusiastically embraced by the politicians, people living in the neighbourhood made complaints because their kids couldn't swim. Tracy: “ This obstacle – of social nature- made it complex to realise it. Not because the design wasn't good, or that the government wasn't supportive but because the people didn't want it.”

### **3 recommendations from Tracy Metz**

Tracy concludes her inspiring talk with three recommendations:

1. Students need to do the math. “ You have to make sure that you know what you are talking about.”
2. “Furthermore you have to make alliances, to avoid projects to fail because of groups that feel excluded:
3. Finally Tracy Metz stresses that it is crucial to do piggybacking: “Give your own idea magnitude and align with other disciplines and expertise.”

After that David Hamers introduces the forum.

**Lucas Zoutendijk**, alumnus DAE design department Public Space, Studio 1:1, working on the Ecological Energy Network. **Bennie Meek**, alumnus DAE design department Public Space presenting his Living Pavement project. **Harry Otten**, meteorologist and weatherman and **Paul Hofhuis**, counselor at Permanent Mission of The Netherlands to the European Union.

Lucas Zoutendijk presents his Ecological Energy Network. Lucas graduated in 2010 at Design Academy Eindhoven (Public Space). The High Voltage Network in the Netherlands Electricity pylons like giants ploughing straight lines in a dense and detailed landscape. Out of economical and construction necessity, the pylons and the continuous straight alignment is unique in its appearance. As if the network were added to the Netherlands as a final touch, the plan cuts right through all types of land; water, fields, forests, greenhouses, highways and cities.

For the project Lucas worked together with Studio for unsolicited Architecture, Fabric, Lola, Alterra and Planburea Nederland. With these stakeholders, Lucas tried to realise the project. Till so far he didn't yet succeed.

After that Bennie Meek presents his project. Meek graduated in 2010 at the departments Man and Public Space and Man and Wellbeing and in 2012 he graduated at the master department Social Design with the research project; Living Pavement, a new application for urban green. Together with designer Vincent Wittenberg he is now working on the realization of this project.

### **Advices from Harry Otten**

After these presentations David Hamers asks the experts to give their comments on the projects. What kind of skills and expertise is needed to realise the project? Harry Otten calls himself an entrepreneur of weather. He questions whether Lucas is aware of the fact that there is also research going on how plants can generate energy; it might be interesting for Bennie to align with this kind of scientific research.

As for the project Living Pavement of Bennie Meek, Harry Otten wonders whether Bennie did the math. "How much water can they really have? Or can you maybe lift the pavement so it can handle even more water? How much of the cleaning could the plants and trees do in a big town? If you could clear the air pollution that would be perfect. If you do the math on that, you can be really powerful."

Bennie responds that he did some research on how greenery can filter the air, but that he also came across many discussions on the effectiveness. Harry Otten replies: "indeed **experts don't know either, but only on a higher level.**"

### **Recommendations Paul Hofhuis**

Paul Hofhuis, represents Dutch Policy makers in Europe. He points out how to get these kind of projects on the European Agenda. Therefore he also has recommendations for the designers.

1. "While working on the project; picking your subject it is very important '**go with the flow**' with the political agenda. You have to realise what issues are going on. You can't possibly influence the agenda yourself. "

2. "Don't make it too complex, **put things in a clear frame**. On a small scale you can make things rather complex; on a large scale you should keep it simple."

A student from the audience disagrees. He thinks that though it is important to follow the political agenda he is of the opinion that the European politicians should listen to them!

**"Designers also need to be entrepreneurs and influence the agenda themselves."**

Harry Otten completely agrees: "**You can make change happen! Don't take no for an answer.**"

To round up, moderator David Hamers asks the two alumni how important design qualities are to bring ideas across. Does beauty work? Both mention that the design skills are crucial, it really helps to impress and convince stakeholders.

After the debate visitors can visit the exhibition themed *Climate* by students of the Public Space department at the 3rd floor of the Design Academy.