



The Heart of the Matter

At only 27 years old, Anne Walraven has built a reputation on her unique ability to gain access to global thought leaders and CEOs and make them talk.

In Haida Gwaii, a small island off the coast of Canada, Anne Walraven witnessed miles upon miles of abandoned timber that had washed ashore and been left to rot. This unsettling vision left the young student with an ultimate question: "Can anyone please explain how this world works?" As the founder of FutureFuel.nu, she has asked that question, and 300 more, to gather 14 hours of recorded answers from today's leading influencers, in politics, academia and business, including Thomas Friedman and Jane Goodall.

We understand that you are motivated by your experiences as a student researcher. Tell us more.

I met a NASA researcher exploring the Greenland ice sheet. He showed that the sheet is melting much faster than anyone believed. Several months later, I also heard the president of the Maldives talking about his group of islands submerging in rising sea levels caused by global warming. When I was born in 1986, our planet was already using more of its natural resources than it could sustainably produce. Why?!

‘Economic growth as we know it has come to an end. Our generation needs a new narrative, a shared new vision to work from. New circular initiatives need to align with the business case, otherwise my generation won’t buy it.’

A lot of people have these realizations, but few do anything about it. How did you make the leap from thinking to doing?

It took four more years to realize that academia wasn’t going to provide the answers, so I had to go out and find my own and it began on one average weekday in February 2012. My grandmother thought I had gone crazy: I had no budget, no plan, no journalistic experience and no professional network. However, what I did have was the trust that things were going to work out well. So I made up a list of 15 people who inspired me. I come and ask for wisdom. To my surprise, everyone has said yes.

You’ve met half of the list and filmed the interviews. What is the wisdom that you have found?

The Stockholm Resilience Centre has mapped nine planetary boundaries that we cannot afford to cross. We’ve already gone too far with two. Economic growth as we know it has come to an end. A real challenge is the critical shortage of raw materials, which makes sustainability an everyday reality for corporations.

So how do we act on this?

New circular initiatives need to align with the business case, otherwise my generation won’t buy it. We’re moving from traditional thinking to a decentralised world with new initiatives and start-ups that are reinventing the economy in a sustainable way. New values such as sharing, co-creation and connecting are imperative for this new circular model. This is the new reality, not competition and ranking. Environmentalist Julia Hill says that the key question to answer is, “Are you in sync with the planet and the values attached to it?”

What is your advice to investment managers in understanding the new circular model?

You must connect with the undercurrent: go out and see how sustainability thinking is being implemented in today’s new businesses that are shaping the future. “Otherwise you’re going to be left behind,” as environmentalist Severn Cullis-Suzuki says. One example, Floop2 is a business to business marketplace where equipment can be shared. The community is at the core of a business model based on mutual trust. Another example is Puma’s cradle-to-cradle Out of the Box project. This is not about

doomsday scenarios. This is where opportunity knocks!

Links

www.futurefuel.nu/en
www.stockholmresilience.org
www.floop2.com
www.youtube.com (Enter ‘Puma Clever Little Bag’)
www.juliabutterfly.com

→ **CALLOUT**

The Nine Planetary Boundaries

In 2009, a group of scientists identified and quantified nine critical planetary boundaries. Working within these boundaries, humanity can continue to develop and thrive for generations. However, crossing these boundaries will trigger abrupt and/or irreversible environmental and economic changes. For more, see “Tipping Toward the Unknown” at stockholmresilience.org