

[Introductory speech by Anton Buijs at the official launch of the animated film Morrowland (Morgenland), on 12 December 2018, Energy Barn EnTrance]

Good afternoon everyone. Nice to see so many of you today at the launch of our animated film *Morrowland*.

In a moment you will watch an atypical company film lasting 12 minutes. Not because it's fully animated, even though you don't see that so often. No, it's an atypical film because the message of this production seems to contradict the direct interests of the company responsible for commissioning the film, GasTerra.

As you know, we buy and sell gas, mainly *natural* gas, to be precise, a fossil fuel and this also includes *Groningen* natural gas. How socially *irresponsible* do you want to be, outsiders might think. Why would we, of all people, have a film made that makes it absolutely clear that we need to abandon fossil fuels and to do so as soon as possible.

Is that logical?

Yes, I think so and I'll explain why.

Usually, corporate lobbyists have a clearly-defined task, which is to promote the interests of the company. In practice, this means that directors, politicians and other stakeholders are encouraged not to do anything to damage those interests, in fact to develop policies to boost the popularity of their organisation. The product or service marketed by the company underpins this work. Any obstacles to the sales or profitability of those products or services must be swept aside. Pharmaceutical companies therefore lobby against regulations that could put pressure on profit margins, car manufacturers urge caution when emissions

standards risk becoming too stringent for their liking, and industry in general is against any plans that could cause short-term profit-seeking shareholders to become unsettled.

I understand it but it seems rather short-sighted to me. Certainly at a time when we are contending with a number of social issues for which shareholder capitalism has no credible answer. Worse still: free interplay between supply and demand exacerbates the problems for the very reason that they cannot be kept in check by a regulatory framework. The latter point is ultimately also in the long-term interests of industry.

But we can't solve everything with regulations. Energy companies, for example, which manufacture and sell products that we, on the one hand, still need very badly but which might also damage their shareholders and the public should make it clear that their supply – a fossil fuel – was once a blessing but now seems to be resembling more of a necessary evil. And that not only their social responsibility but also their own interests require them to use their knowledge and experience to accelerate the transition to new energy. You've noticed: I'm a strong advocate of the Rhineland model of capitalism and I don't have much time for the Anglo-American variant that has made such an impact here over the last few decades. Companies have a responsibility towards more groups of people than their shareholders. If they don't do that then I'm convinced that they will lose their *license to operate* and, as a result of that, ultimately their revenue model and continuity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I've come to today's topic: energy, and, more specifically, the fact that we need to make our energy supply climate-neutral before 2050 and to clarify the role of fossil fuels in the transition. What does this mean for society and the companies still earning most of their money from these?

Morrowland outlines the transition towards a clean energy future. The starting point is that our energy supply must become CO₂-neutral as soon as possible. Renewable sources, predominantly sun and wind, and much greater energy efficiency will form the basis of this. Fossil sources remain indispensable for the time being, whether used in combination with mitigating investments such as CCS or not, but we have to phase them out. First the most polluting, coal, then oil and finally, natural gas. We will choose gas-fired instead of coal-fired power plants and then, after that, other cost-efficient means of stabilising the electricity network. Where possible, we will replace oil as a fuel with more sustainable alternatives such as green electricity and hydrogen. Natural gas will be increasingly replaced by renewable gases such as biogas and green hydrogen. In the meantime, our work on technological innovation will continue such as here at EnTranCe. For let's be honest: we simply won't get there with our current resources. New sustainable forms of energy generation are indispensable if we want to achieve the very ambitious targets set by the Paris Agreement. *Morrowland* also emphasises that. The future is always different to how you imagine. But that fact must never be an excuse for doing nothing and waiting, for the time being, for a *Deus ex Machina* to appear on the stage and take the plot in a completely different direction.

Morrowland does not hide these facts.

My company, GasTerra, has recognised since its formation in 2005 that the energy transition is unavoidable and necessary. We've been partners with EnTrance since the beginning. We cooperate with the New Energy Coalition. Wherever we can, we support projects that can accelerate the transition towards a climate-neutral energy supply such as Sustainable Ameland. At the same time, we remain primarily buyers and sellers of natural gas. However paradoxical this may sound, precisely that combination makes us part of the solution and not the problem. For now, natural gas continues to be indispensable in the energy transition. We have to move forward but not at any price. For then it could be those lobbying for a rapid 'greening' process who lose their license to operate; and then we're even worse off.

Morrowland shows this very effectively.

All that remains is for me to thank the creators of the film, director Joost de Smet and animator Floris Sprong of Strawberry Fields in Groningen. It just goes to show that you don't need to look far for artistic talent if you want to create something wonderful. I'd also like to thank all the other people who worked together to create *Morrowland*. My colleagues Areke van der Sluis and Gerard Martinus, of course, but also the experts who ensured that the facts and figures mentioned are accurate. You'll see their names in the credits in a minute.

For now: watch and enjoy.

Thank you for listening.