

# DUTCHCHAM MAGAZINE



INTERVIEW WITH A CHIEF

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**Doing good and  
doing business go  
hand in hand**

**Creative fusion at the  
Business Awards Gala**



# 15 sustainable initiatives in Hong Kong CIRCULAR CITY MAP

香港15個可持續發展創變者

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## The Circular City Map

shines a light on exciting things currently happening in Hong Kong in circular design and craftsmanship. Created as a part of the 2023 edition of the Business of Design Week, this map leads you to 15 innovative ventures around town.

Discover their stories,  
passion, perseverance  
and learn what they love.

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Kingdom of the Netherlands



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Suite 3002, 30/F, Central Plaza  
18 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong  
[info@dutchchamber.hk](mailto:info@dutchchamber.hk)  
[www.dutchchamber.hk](http://www.dutchchamber.hk)



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## ESG



Kung Hei Fat Choy – wishing you a prosperous year of the Dragon.

Environmental, Sustainable and Corporate Governance (ESG) is and remains an important topic globally, for Hong Kong, for our members and it is also the theme of this issue, our last DutchCham Magazine in this format.

Starting April 1st, a digital restyling will commence and it will be released on a more regular basis, enhancing our delivery of current affairs, member-driven content, and chamber activities, and broadening our audience and community engagement. We thank the PR & Pub committee, with Annemarelle van Schayik as Chair and Zuba Adham-Bos as Editor. I am pleased to let you know that our usual authors will continue their work and contribution to the new newsletter, their work and contribution to the new publication.

This ESG issue features an interview with Deputy Consul Lucille Merks on the Dutch Government's ESG efforts, insights from Professor Lapman Lee and we reflect on the Dutch Chamber's Business Awards Gala, held on 16 November 2023 with the theme of "Redesign".

I will take this opportunity to express again a special thank you for our Award sponsors and congratulations to:

- Arcadis for winning the Sustainable innovation Award sponsored by Philips.
- Marriott International for winning the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Award sponsored by Randstad Hong Kong.
- FrieslandCampina for winning the Design for Circularity Award sponsored by the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Hong Kong.
- SeafoodFriday.hk for winning the Entrepreneurship Award sponsored by Leo Wealth.

I also would like to thank Marriott Bonvoy and Invest Hong Kong as our Strategic sponsors, our Table sponsors KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Saxo Bank, FrieslandCampina, ING, Robeco & Techpro Group Adhesives, our emcee of the evening Case Everaert from Black Isle Global, Rachel Yu (graphic designer, see interview on page 10), all of the short-listed entrepreneurs, the jury and anyone I forget for their engagement and support which made our Gala a big success! Lastly, a special thanks to all guests and sponsors who jointly contributed to our Gala's CSR ambition by raising HKD 80,746 for "Bring in Change", a charity dedicated to helping the elderly in Hong Kong through physical exercise programs, including boot camps and home visits.

I wish you happy reading and I am looking forward seeing you at one of the DutchCham events!

**Frery Winkel**

# DOING GOOD AND DOING BUSINESS GO HAND IN HAND

In this insightful interview, we speak with **Lucille Merks, Deputy Consul General for the Netherlands in Hong Kong**, who sheds light on the impactful ESG initiatives and collaborations between the Netherlands and Hong Kong, highlighting their significance in today's global business landscape.

■ By Zuba Adham-Bos



Lucille Merks

## Could you elaborate on the most significant ESG initiatives currently being pursued in the Netherlands?

In the Netherlands, the approach to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives is notably expansive, aligning with international standards like the UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines. This forms the bedrock of what's known in the Netherlands as Responsible Business Conduct (RBC). Central to RBC is the concept of 'due diligence' – an ongoing commitment by Dutch companies to identify and address potentially negative impacts of their operations on the environment, human rights, and working conditions throughout their international value chains.

Unlike a one-off activity or project, RBC embodies a company's basic attitude, shaping how companies operate and manage risks. The ESG framework, encompassing environmental, social, and governance aspects, provides a structure for reporting performance to investors.

Several key ESG initiatives demonstrate the Netherlands' commitment:

1. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The Netherlands has committed to meet the United Nations' SDGs by 2030, addressing broad ESG issues like poverty, gender equality, and sustainable consumption.
2. Climate Action: Ambitious targets are set for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, aiming for a 50% reduction by 2030 from 1990 levels, marking a significant step towards a low-carbon economy.
3. Renewable Energy: The Netherlands is actively promoting the transition to renewable energy sources, both nationally and internationally.

4. Circular Economy: The Dutch Government is fostering a circular economy, emphasising efficient resource use and waste minimisation, through recycling and resource recovery policies.
5. Social Responsibility: The Netherlands values labour rights, human rights, and diversity, advocating for responsible business practices and promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities.
6. Sustainable Finance: The Dutch financial sector is a forerunner in sustainable finance, developing guidelines and initiatives to encourage responsible investment and the incorporation of ESG factors into financial decisions.

## How does the Dutch government facilitate and encourage ESG compliance among businesses?

The Dutch government actively facilitates and encourages ESG compliance among businesses, both domestically and internationally, through a variety of methods:

**Legislation and Regulation:** Since 2012, the Netherlands has been implementing policies that require businesses to adhere to Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) and ESG standards. This includes environmental protection, labour rights, and corporate governance. The Dutch government





***In Hong Kong, the Dutch approach is multifaceted, including knowledge sharing and policy dialogues with government entities like the Bureau for Environment and Ecology and the Development Bureau.***

has been unique in negotiating multi-stakeholder RBC agreements across key sectors like textiles, renewable energy, and banking. Despite these efforts, evaluations indicate that the voluntary approach of the past is not sufficiently effective. Therefore, the Netherlands, in alignment with the European Union, is transitioning to mandatory measures. The EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) aims to create a level playing field in the European single market and address adverse impacts on people and the environment in global value chains. Simultaneously, the Netherlands is drafting national RBC legislation that complements EU laws, combining voluntary and mandatory approaches to make RBC and thus ESG increasingly binding for Dutch companies.

**Reporting Requirements:** The government encourages businesses to report on ESG performance using frameworks like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). The European Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) requires companies to report on the financial and environmental impacts of their operations, in line with RBC principles.

**Financial Incentives:** Financial incentives are provided for ESG compliance, including tax benefits for sustainable investments, subsidies for renewable energy projects, and grants for socially responsible initiatives.

**Collaboration and Partnerships:** The Dutch government collaborates with businesses, NGOs, and industry associations to develop best practices, share knowledge, and create initiatives that promote sustainable development and ESG compliance. This collaborative approach fosters a comprehensive and effective ESG environment.

**How does the Netherlands collaborate with other countries, including Hong Kong, in promoting ESG practices?**

The Netherlands embraces the motto 'Solving global challenges together' and actively collaborates with other countries, including Hong Kong, to promote ESG practices. Recognising the need for collective action in tackling global issues such as climate change and social justice, the Netherlands engages in various forms of collaboration.

In Hong Kong, the Dutch approach is multifaceted, including knowledge sharing and policy dialogues with government entities like the Bureau for Environment and Ecology and the Development Bureau. These dialogues often relate to initiatives like the development of the Northern Metropolis and Kau Yi Chau, showcasing Dutch expertise in supporting green transitions.

Significant collaborations include the CIRCO – Business Environment Council (BEC) partnership for establishing a Circo HUB in Hong Kong, participation in the '@Rethink' event alongside the Dutch Chamber of Commerce, and a 50-person business and knowledge delegation to the Business of Design Week (BODW). Additionally, there are joint research projects with Hong Kong universities, focusing on themes like Circular Design, Circular Fashion, and sustainable building practices. These efforts are complemented by policy exchanges at forums like the Hong Kong Construction Forum, highlighting the importance of sustainable buildings and new technologies.



**What impact have Dutch companies and their ESG practices had on the business environment in Hong Kong?**

The influence of Dutch companies and their ESG practices is increasingly evident in the business landscape of Hong Kong, particularly as the city serves as a pivotal trade and finance hub between mainland China and the global market. The implementation of the EU's CSDDD is poised to have significant repercussions in Hong Kong. As this directive imposes supply chain due diligence requirements on companies operating in the EU market that meet certain turnover thresholds, its impact will extend to Hong Kong and Chinese companies engaged in these markets. Additionally,

## Interview with a Chief

the ripple effects of the CSDDD are expected to influence entities conducting business with firms under the EU directive's purview.

The Netherlands Consulate in Hong Kong plays a vital role in disseminating information about supply chain due diligence across various industries. Through active engagement with local trade affiliates, chambers of commerce, EU office, Business Environment Council, InvestHK, and government officials, the Consulate emphasises the importance of ESG standards and Responsible Business Conduct. These efforts are further bolstered by annual luncheons hosted for Dutch entrepreneurs in Hong Kong on Entrepreneurs Day (17 Nov), focusing on ESG awareness.

The adoption of (increasingly mandatory) ESG practices by Dutch companies can contribute to elevating Hong Kong's business standards in sustainability, social responsibility, and governance. A collaborative and knowledge-sharing approach is key in fostering a sustainable business environment in Hong Kong, nurturing talent, and adding value to the region's economic ecosystem.

A great local initiative was when the Hong Kong Green Building Council collaborated with Dutch company Arcadis to develop a Guidebook for Sustainable Built Environment for the Hong Kong market.

### **How do cultural differences between the Netherlands and Hong Kong affect the approach and implementation of ESG initiatives?**

Cultural differences between the Netherlands and Hong Kong influence the approach and implementation of ESG initiatives, presenting unique challenges and opportunities in aligning sustainability goals.

Firstly, the value systems and priorities of the two regions differ. The Netherlands, with its strong environmental consciousness and social responsibility culture, has deeply

integrated circularity and ESG considerations into its society. Public awareness and support for these initiatives are high. Conversely, Hong Kong has traditionally emphasised economic growth and development, and while awareness of ESG issues is growing, it may not yet be as culturally ingrained as in the Netherlands.

The regulatory environments also differ. The Netherlands has a robust legal and regulatory framework promoting ESG practices, with various policies and regulations supporting sustainable development, renewable energy, and social responsibility. In contrast, Hong Kong is still developing its ESG regulatory framework. Recent efforts have improved ESG reporting and disclosure requirements, but the regulatory landscape is not as mature as in the Netherlands.

Lastly, business cultures in both regions impact ESG implementation. Dutch companies tend to adopt a long-term perspective, prioritising sustainability in their business strategies. In contrast, Hong Kong's fast-paced, competitive business environment often prioritises short-term financial performance, which can sometimes overshadow long-term sustainability goals.

***The Netherlands Consulate in Hong Kong plays a vital role in disseminating information about supply chain due diligence across various industries.***

### **What future opportunities do you see for collaboration between the Netherlands and Hong Kong in the area of ESG?**

The potential for collaboration between the Netherlands and Hong Kong in the field of ESG presents exciting opportunities, particularly in fostering trade and investment and promoting Dutch expertise in circularity, urban resilience, architecture, and design. The Netherlands, recognised for its sustainable procurement policies and high Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scores, is a frontrunner in water management, environmental management, and cradle-to-cradle production processes. These strengths can serve as a reference for Hong Kong, particularly in the Greater Bay Area and mainland China. Dutch smart solutions could act as forerunners, demonstrating best practices in ESG. Furthermore, the Sustainable Trade Initiative exemplifies how integrating sustainable practices into international production chains can be both ethically and commercially beneficial, reinforcing the notion that doing good and doing business can indeed go hand in hand.





# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER?

## The emergence of the ESG concept and CSO role.

Climate change (as a risk) has moved up the Boardroom agenda due to policymakers' and regulators' initial focus on the E of Environmental of ESG as a result of physical climate risk, transition climate risk, which is the financial risk on a company's assets due to the transition from a carbon-reliant to a low-carbon or net-zero carbon economy, and stakeholder climate change mitigation commitments. Then there is the S for Social and G for Governance.

### ESG vs Sustainability

While both ESG and Sustainability are concerned with environmental, social, and governance factors, ESG is a term used by stakeholders such as institutional (and retail) investors, rating agencies, and regulators to evaluate the financial and non-financial performance of companies based on environmental, social, and governance factors. Sustainability is a broader philosophy or principle that encompasses responsible business practices with a more holistic view on the long-term consequences of profit, people, planet (dubbed as the triple bottom line).

### The emergence of the Chief Sustainability Officer

With the growing importance and novelty of the sustainability topic, the role of the Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) or equivalent such as Head of ESG, was born.

The CSO role has evolved from a PR-centric function with the responsibility to tell the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) story, to become a strategic partner of the CEO and CFO, with its responsibilities driven by the industry-specific material risks and opportunities related to sustainability and the individual company's ambition (long-term strategy), accountability (governance structure), and action plan (short-term strategy) and maturity of its current state people, process, data and technology capabilities with regards to sustainability.

There have been admirable attempts by reputable consultancy firms to come up with different conceptual models to frame the different facets of a Chief Sustainability Officer's role. Let me take the opportunity to add my own model "**Four Ps or Purposes of the Chief Sustainability Officer**" based on their role's key mandate, performance indicators, and purpose.

1. **Planner (Strategic)** - acts as evaluator of a company's strengths and weaknesses, industry risks and opportunities (SWOT) with a focus on achieving a strategic edge in sustainability.
2. **Promoter** - acts as (brand) evangelist of external sustainability trends and developments relevant to the company and the company's internal sustainability progress with a focus on attracting capital, revenue, and talent.
3. **Project manager** - acts as executor of the company's sustainability transformation or transition plan with a focus on adapting the company's business model, policies and processes, products and services.
4. **Protector** - acts as enforcer with a focus on achieving compliance with external regulatory and internal governance, risk management, and control (GRC) requirements.

In theory, the ideal CSO should be able to play all these roles. Not necessarily everything, everywhere, all at once, but at different stages of the sustainability transformation journey. In practice, the CSO, who may not be familiar with the specific industry to add a fresh outside perspective, brings his or her own strengths and weaknesses to the role and is often more comfortable with one or two of the roles. This may justify having different individuals from different functions fulfill different sustainability related roles, together forming the ESG or Sustainability SWAT team, potentially supported by external subject matter experts.

As regulatory landscapes evolve, like the upcoming climate-related disclosure enhancements by the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong per 1 January 2025, companies are urged to enhance their board's ESG expertise. This includes potentially recruiting CSOs to navigate these changes effectively and integrate sustainable practices into their core strategy.



■ By Prof. Lapman Lee  
Professor of Practice (ESG, FinTech,  
Governance), Hong Kong Polytechnic  
University and Managing Director,  
Triniton Advisors

# FUTURE LEGISLATION AND ESG: WHAT THEY MEAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS

**Growing importance of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) factors is evident, with Europe spearheading new corporate ESG legislations.**

Notable examples include the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and Germany's *Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz* (LkSG). As of January 1, 2024, France is the first EU member state to incorporate the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) into its national laws. Legislations mandate due diligence on human rights and environmental impacts in value chains, aligning with standards like the UN Guiding Principles.

## Who Is affected By this legislation?

The LkSG is applicable to all companies with over 1,000 employees that are headquartered in Germany or have a branch there. The CSDDD is relevant to EU and non-EU companies with a turnover exceeding 150 million euros, and smaller companies in sectors such as textiles manufacturing, agriculture, mineral resources, and construction.

While it may seem like these legislations primarily concern "big companies", it's crucial to understand that ESG legislation covers not just your organisation's direct activities. It extends to a company's operations, subsidiaries, and their value chains (including direct and indirect business relations). Which means it also includes your business as a supplier to these companies.

Mandatory activities include establishing a risk management system, conducting assessments, implementing preventive and remedial actions, and reporting and documentation.

## Key mandatory activities under these legislations

A comprehensive risk management system includes policies, complaint procedures, and designated individuals to oversee it.

Risk assessments must be carried out across the entire supply chain. While you can do this yourself, it can be inefficient, particularly for smaller businesses. Many companies delegate this task to firms specialising in auditing social and environmental compliance, such as Amfori, SGS, Qimi, and Tuv.

Identified non-conformities require remedial measures and a systematic follow-up. When analysing reporting and documentation, this is where the greatest workload can be expected. For instance, the LkSG comprises 215 questions, all

of which the government can audit. This implies a substantial amount of reporting and paperwork. Thomas van Duinen of Trimex International Services Ltd., who advises the Asia sourcing offices of major EU importers and retailer on ESG reporting, confirms this. Several of his clients have received over a hundred information requests about their goods' origins from various Bundeslanders.

## Impact on your company

These changes will have a commercial impact on your company. Being part of your clients' supply chain, you and your suppliers are included in their risk assessment. Your customers will require information from you, and failure to provide this in a timely manner could result in exclusion from future tenders or RFQs. From a legal perspective, compliance with the law is mandatory to avoid hefty fines (up to 5% of global turnover). The government will request information and conduct audits.

All this will have an impact on the workload and costs. You will need to collect information downstream of the value chain and report it upstream. To accomplish this, you'll need to establish robust systems and processes capable of documenting the results of your risk management efforts.

## In conclusion:

A wave of stringent ESG regulations is upon us, and it's only going to intensify. Its effects will be felt across the entire supply chain, leaving no business untouched. While it may seem like these changes are a distant concern for some, early preparation is key. It is essential to start establishing risk management and reporting systems promptly.

As the Dutch proverb goes, "*Er is werk aan de winkel*," So, let's roll up our sleeves and get started.



■ By Paul G.M. Mol  
Partner and Senior Advisor at  
Mol and Partners



# DUTCHCHAM GBA VISIT TO SHENZHEN – 6 DEC 2023

Following our “Traveling in the GBA” seminar in June 2023, significant changes have been made to the Chinese e-payment platforms with the acceptance of linking your account with foreign credit cards, enabling more travellers to plan their visit to China. We received a welcoming surprise for our first GBA visit to Shenzhen and we couldn't have selected a better date. By the end of November 2023, China announced that they had decided to implement an unilateral visa-free policy for ordinary passport holders from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia on a trial basis. From 1 December 2023 to 30 November 2024, holders of ordinary passports from the above six countries may enter China visa-free for business, tourism, visiting relatives and friends and transit for no more than 15 days. We were glad that 5 members were able to benefit from this who did not have a China visa yet.

## Company visit - Huawei

On 6 December 2023, we arrived at the Huawei headquarters after a 45-minute bus drive from the Lohuo border and we were being warmly welcomed by the Huawei team. The company visit started at the impressive innovation centre where Huawei presents its wide range of technological solutions to the industry in various focus areas such as:

- Smart city
- Healthcare
- Oil & Gas
- Airport
- Transport & logistics
- Financial services
- Construction
- Electronic vehicles

Following the tour at the innovation centre, Huawei prepared a Chinese cultural dance performance prior entering the Company's restaurant where a business lunch was served and conversations continued about Huawei's business solutions.

In the afternoon, Huawei presented an overview of their global sustainability projects in various countries around the world where they invest and return value back to the local community by providing technological solutions that can be used.

We are grateful for the hospitality and generosity from Huawei to organise an inspiring day at their headquarters. We would like to thank Victor Qian, Gert-Jan van Eck and Afke Schaart Taghzout for making our visit happen.

## Netherlands Business Support Office in Shenzhen - opening reception

The Netherlands Business Support Office (NBSO) Shenzhen was officially inaugurated on 6 December 2023, and this was celebrated during a reception with more than 150 representatives from the local government, associations, businesses community from Beijing, Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

Mr. André Haspels, ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the People's Republic of China, held a speech in which he highlighted that the Netherlands is now China's second largest trade partner in the EU, a relationship that is worth 84 billion euros. Ambassador Haspels remarked that with the establishment of this new NBSO headed by Aniel Kerkvliet (艾紐), Chief Representative, the economic network of the Netherlands in China will be larger than in any other country. This reflects the importance that the Netherlands attach to the relationship with China, and the choice for Shenzhen as the location for this new NBSO illustrates the importance to Shenzhen and the Greater Bay Area in particular.



■ By Quinten Kah  
Chair of the China Committee  
Commercial Director Intertrust Group

# CREATIVE FUSION AT THE BUSINESS AWARDS GALA

In this interview with Rachel Yu, the Graphic Designer for the 2023 Dutch Chamber's Business Awards Gala, we explore her inspiration and creative journey to create an unforgettable attendee experience.

■ By Zuba Adham-Bos



Rachel Yu

## What was your primary source of inspiration when designing the branding for the Dutch Chamber's Business Awards Gala?

My primary inspiration for designing the branding for the Dutch Chamber's Business Awards Gala stemmed from the gala's theme itself—redesign. I was drawn to the hexagon shape for the coasters and the overall branding to introduce a contemporary feel. The choice of hexagons, beyond their modern appeal, was strategic; their ability to be rearranged into various configurations allowed for creating visually engaging compositions that reflect the dynamic nature of redesign. This geometric form not only offered a fresh perspective but also served as a versatile platform to embody the gala's four award categories, which included sustainability and innovation, diversity, equity and inclusion, design for circularity, and entrepreneurship.

As for each hexagon design, I delved into the essence of these categories, using them as a source of inspiration for the patterns, and colours. My aim was to make each category visually distinct yet cohesive within the overall

theme. While the individual hexagons were vibrant and patterned, I opted for a more minimalistic approach for the backdrop, focusing on lines to achieve a minimalistic look. This contrast between the detailed hexagons and the simplicity of the backdrop was intentional, designed to balance visual richness with understated elegance.

The concept of integrating the coaster into the gala's backdrop originated from a collaborative brainstorming session with gala committee member Jackie To. Jackie had the idea of creating a sustainable and interactive experience for the attendees, so the coaster doubles as a keepsake that could also be used as a Christmas ornament.



## Besides the award categories, were there specific aspects of the Dutch Chamber's brand that you wanted to reflect in your design?

In addition to the award categories, I was keen to weave elements of the Dutch Chamber's identity into the design, particularly for the backdrop, where I combined Dutch and Hong Kong elements. The backdrop's hexagons, which highlighted the different award sponsors, featured line drawings of iconic Hong Kong elements, such as the





junk boat, tram, and skyline. To represent the Dutch aspect, the large hexagon with the Dutch Chamber's logo in the top left corner included tulips. Beyond cultural symbols, I incorporated airplanes and ships around to capture the Chamber's networking and connections aspect and its identity as an international association, bridging the Netherlands and Hong Kong.

### What impact do you hope your designs have had on the attendees of the gala?

My primary aim with the hexagon designs and the backdrop was to craft a memorable and immersive experience for everyone attending the gala. Inspired by Jackie's vision for a sustainable experience, we integrated the hexagon concept from the moment attendees arrived, allowing them to engage with the design by placing the hexagons on the backdrop, and later, to take these pieces home. This recurring motif was designed to not only underscore the gala's theme but also to enrich the attendees' experience by adding an interactive element.



I hoped that this interaction would make the event more enjoyable, memorable, and distinct. By fostering a tangible connection between the attendees and the gala's theme, the intention was to leave a lasting impression that would contribute to the success of the evening. My aspiration was for the designs to facilitate photo-worthy moments, encourage networking, and overall, enhance the enjoyment of the gala. It was truly a pleasure to work as the graphic designer for the gala, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the success of the event.

View Rachel's full portfolio at  
[www.racheltyyu.com](http://www.racheltyyu.com)

# INTEGRATING ESG FACTORS IN CHINA'S BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRACTICES

The idea of environmental, social and governance (ESG) has become widespread in the world and China is no exception.

In 2004, the former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote a letter to leading finance and asset management CEOs in the world and encouraged them to adopt ESG into their investment practices. Recently, Chinese business leaders are also starting to consider ESG factors to assess an organisation's business.

Take the Chinese Information and Communications Technology (ICT) giant Huawei as an example. According to the *Future Smart Park White Paper 2022*, Huawei set up a blueprint to develop "Smart Park 1.0", "Smart Park 2.0" and "Smart Park 3.0". These parks are designed to be incorporated with different levels of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Overall, the smart zero-carbon park is based on an advanced management system fully empowered by digitalisation. The concept of carbon neutrality is systematically integrated into different daily operations, and digital technologies used to enable energy conservation, emission reduction and carbon monitoring. The 5G network and other ICT technologies will also be integrated in the recycling of waste and resources, the transformation of green energy and agglomeration and the sharing of facilities in the smart park.

On 6 December 2023, I visited Huawei's headquarter in Shenzhen. It was the first Greater Bay Area (GBA) trip organised by the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong since the start of the pandemic. To my delight, the delegation was given a special opportunity to understand the past and current megaprojects of the company. In many ways Huawei is much more than a smartphone manufacturer and supplier. The company has shown its concern for environmental protection by setting sustainable development goals by using innovative solutions. For example, garbage and recycling bins can be traced by AI devices in a smart city initiative. The company also set a carbon neutrality mission that aims to focus on areas that can improve low-carbon transformation. In 2023, Huawei was ranked number 111 on the Fortune 500. But Chinese corporations now compare both the traditional Fortune 500

ranking and the most updated ESG reports to determine the global success of a company in a specific field.

ESG practices are complemented by government policies and guidelines. In 2022, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (SASAC) set up the Bureau of Social Responsibility and ESG was regarded as one of the upcoming key tasks. On 25 July 2022, the "Work Plan for Improving the Quality of Listed Companies Owned by State-owned Enterprises" was released by SASAC and all listed Chinese state-owned enterprises are required to release their ESG reports. It is expected that Chinese companies will be more dedicated in ESG in their future investments and business operations in the next 5 to 10 years.

ESG factors also fit China's national economic strategy for high-quality development. In the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it was a clear message that the country aims to adopt policies that can effectively upgrade and expand economic output. As I mentioned in the previous article, there is a potential for further promoting ESG development especially in the Greater Bay Area. The GBA could draw experiences from the EU's Interreg programme to promote regional economic and social integration. The funded projects of the Interreg include the promotion of a greener, carbon-free Europe, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables, and the fight against climate change. With proper implementation, these policies can help China build a greener and more sustainable living environment.



■ By Dr. Wing Lok Hung  
Lecturer, Faculty of Social Science at  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



# ESG & THE GREEN WORLD

**Environmental, Social & Governmental Guidelines, a United Nations initiative, is a set of principles and tools to achieve a sustainable world. For practical reasons, this column is limited to the Environmental aspects.**

Recently this column mentioned an example of environmental issues in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in real estate. Approx. 40% of total world emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> comes from the building industry. If we look at this as an opportunity to make a strong impact, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in this industry may lead to 38% reduction by 2050. That is quite significant.



To have some idea, attached a link from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation for your convenience: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/videos/circular-economy-principles-for-achieving-net-zero-in-the-built-environment>

***It starts with the vision of an organisation, how they see the ESG principles and start a change process to get everyone on board.***

Back to ESG. Implementing it is not simple; all over the world efforts are underway to adhere to the principles as much as possible. Many disciplines are involved. Apart from choosing the right materials (those that have a lower CO<sub>2</sub> impact), it also requires a different approach to the financial consequences, risk management, long term view and so on.

It starts with the vision of an organisation, how they see the ESG principles and start a change process to get everyone on board. The vision entails a strategy what the goals are and should be realistic, understandable to those who will be tasked to achieve those goals. They will need to rely on cooperation of colleagues all over the organisation, on tools made available to measure data and understand the choices that must be made.

Once that is in place, the work plan starts, gathering data where the organisation stands now, where does it want to go, which investments are needed etc. Now, many will ask: what will this cost?

The current trend is that (incl. millennial-) investors, lenders, banks but also end user clients demand increasingly that the ESG principles are implemented or underway. The result, a long-term built environment, is showing a better and more profitable investment plan.

Consultancy firms see in their client base a growing number thinking ESG is the way to go, few examples:

Buildings are responsible for nearly 40% of annual global carbon dioxide emissions. Of these, 28% are caused by building operations, and the remaining 11% by building materials and construction embodied carbon (see earlier columns about measuring CO<sub>2</sub> per square meter). As the world transitions into a lower-carbon economy, real estate leaders can make an impact: first by collecting and assessing data on the environmental impacts of building operations, then by investigating and implementing resource efficiencies, and finally by partnering with developers who use sustainable practices and materials. (Source: Architecture 2030 Group).

By "green leasing" we mean that tenants either commit to or benefit from embracing sustainable practices, such as waste reduction. More and more organisations are focusing on green leasing. Half of respondents of the 2021 RICS Sustainability report claimed that green leases command premium rents, and 30% state that brown buildings (those without sustainability features) offer reduced rents to compensate tenants.

In my view, no time to lose!



**■ By Bernard Scheffens**  
MD iBSC  
[www.ibsc.nl](http://www.ibsc.nl)

# GREEN LIES AND POLITICAL DISGUISES

*"Che con un po' di trucco e con la mimica, puoi diventare un' altro" –Lucio Dalla, "Caruso"*

The paradigm shifts. Constantly and unmistakably. In all parts of society, only some more obvious than others. Nowhere more so at present than in the United States, where "the former guy" aka "Orange Jesus" has taken the usual bare-faced lying of politicians to a whole new level.

And it works. Others follow suit. Our very own "peroxide princess" was so taken aback by his persistent porkies play actually being bought into by the Dutch electorate, that his first reaction was to say his statements should not be taken that literally and he would put certain of his more extreme positions to one side for the time being in the interest of forming a government.



Call it the drive to be principal over principled, or form over matter - they all want the top job and will do anything for it. The same, in essence, as C-Suite executives engaging in "greenwashing": you know, the practice of deceiving your customers and the public about the environmental impact of their products or services so as to create a socially responsible, "green" image.

In China, gigantic graveyards for electric cars and bikes, lawns spray-painted green at the Beijing Olympics and entire ghost cities of unfinished apartment blocks all bear testament to the local take on the environment. Yet in the glossy brochures, skies are blue and the grass is green, and all are cheerful and content. I wonder what "greenwashing" is in Chinese. Oh wait...

And the trend seems to be towards acceptance of the practice. One of the most mind-boggling statements (and there are many to choose from!) coming out of the US at the moment is that somehow the First Amendment rights provide an entitlement to lie. That it would somehow matter whom

untrue statements are directed against and that they constitute "political speech".

So how about statements that insult, unlawfully discriminate, cause actual injury? We have seen convictions of Holocaust deniers in Germany and elsewhere. Our very own peroxide princess barely got away with his comments on fewer Moroccans. And tell me how anyone who ever sued for libel or slander can argue with a straight face that their own free speech rights are absolute?!

Soldaat van Oranje's *"Ieder zijn plaats weten en verder je smoel houden"* is somewhat simplistic, but I kind of like the "shut up" portion of that statement. You don't have anything meaningful to say, better not try - especially when you lack the facts to back up your statement. Too many in this world believe others are genuinely interested in what they have to say. Most are not. They listen purely out of courtesy, or because they have nothing better to do at that moment.

To me, greenwashing is fine, *IF* it is not taken seriously. What do I care if a neighbour claims to recycle home waste, then takes a 30-minute shower? Just don't boast in an annual report, OK?

Those who illustrated this point to perfection were Kees van Kooten en Wim de Bie in the early 1980s, the heyday of the *Tegenpartij*. The new "Anti-party" figureheads Jacobse en Van Es (working class criminal characters) propagated a drive against everything, including maximum speed limits, Parliament itself and, of course, all taxes. *"Samen voor ons eigen"* ("Together for ourselves"), and *"Geen gezeik, iedereen rijk"* ("No whining, everyone should be rich").

How better to convey the ridiculous side of politics. When the 1981 polls showed that the fictitious *Tegenpartij*, essentially started as a comedy sketch, would actually have won two Parliament seats, both Jacobse and Van Es were killed off by the writers to avoid real life election issues.

Perhaps an idea for those in charge of US and Dutch politics - or am I not allowed to say that...?



■ By Ralph Ybema  
Managing Director at China Law & Tax  
[www.chinaltd.nl](http://www.chinaltd.nl)



# PASSING THE PEN

**Name:** Calvin Kha

**Organisation:** Oliver Wyman

**Email:** calvin.kha@oliverwyman.com



### Who am I?

Hi everyone! I'm Calvin and I was born and raised in Waalwijk, a small and charming town in Noord-Brabant. It's near the Efteling - for those who know! Like many immigrants, my parents used to run a Chinese restaurant where I spent much of my childhood. Although I practically grew up in the kitchen, I lacked the culinary talent to become a star chef.

Whilst I sometimes miss the tranquility of my hometown, I really like the vibrant energy and connectivity here in the city. In my spare time I enjoy hiking in Hong Kong, and I often take the opportunity to travel and explore other parts of Asia.

### My professional background is:

My academic background is in Applied Physics. I studied in Eindhoven at the University of Technology and spent some time at the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab as a post-graduate researcher. I was fortunate to be part of a remarkable team of scientists conducting fundamental research, laying the groundwork for technology we hope to widely use in the future. I enjoyed the technical challenge, but I also felt the excitement collaborating with brilliant minds across the globe.

This collaborative mindset was an important factor in my decision to venture into consulting. I began my professional journey at KPMG, a firm with Dutch roots. The transition from academia to consulting was made smooth by the support of wonderful colleagues and mentors.

### I moved to Hong Kong because:

In 2017, an opportunity arose for a 2-year secondment in Hong Kong, and it was an offer I couldn't refuse. Known for its cosmopolitan vibe and large expat community, I knew I could fit in easily. The city lived up to its reputation, and it prompted me to extend my stay for a bit longer than I initially planned for!

### I work for:

I'm now part of a growing actuarial consultancy team at Oliver Wyman, covering the Asia Pacific region. Our mission is simple: we help our clients build better and more resilient businesses that make genuine positive impact on our societies.

### My most remarkable work story is:

I'm incredibly proud of my colleagues in the team! We expanded our actuarial team from the ground up to 15 people last year, spanning across both Hong Kong and Singapore. I can sense that we are creating something extraordinary and I'm hopeful we can maintain this great momentum!

### I find most of my business contacts through:

The Dutch Chamber has been a great platform for me to widen my network in Hong Kong. As a closely connected city, it's relatively easy to grow my network here. Interestingly, if I may believe my experience with LinkedIn, the degree of separation between two random individuals in Hong Kong is only about 2, which really highlights the interconnectedness of the community here!

### One day I will:

I started collecting Chinese ceramics from the Ming and Qing dynasty about 12 years ago, and I hope to have a small gallery one day to display the collection and share the fascinating history and craftsmanship of the pieces.



# SUSTAINABLE SHIFTS: EMBRACING CHANGE

Change is an inevitable part of life.

It can be a source of excitement and opportunity, but it can also evoke fear and uncertainty. When it comes to addressing pressing ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) issues, such as extreme weather events, change is not only necessary but crucial for our future. As the world progresses in its drive to reduce emissions and conserve resources, how will our lives actually change from the current status quo?

## Resource Conservation

Conservation is an integral component of sustainable development. As our population expands and consumption patterns evolve, demand for resources puts strain on the planet. As individuals and households, we can do more to conserve resources with conscious efforts and simple tricks in our everyday lives. For instance, cutting water use by taking shorter showers, promptly fixing leaks, and using appliances that conserve water are effective strategies for conserving resources and decreasing our environmental footprint. Reducing energy consumption through energy-saving practices such as using LED light bulbs, turning off electronic devices when not in use and improving home insulation can help preserve valuable resources. Adopting these simple "Eco-Hacks" will make a real difference towards resource conservation.



## Waste Reduction

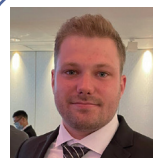
Society's "throw-away culture" has led to an abundance of trash accumulation and environmental degradation. To address this problem, waste reduction must become a top priority and one effective approach may be changing our mindset towards reusing and recycling products instead of throwing them away as quickly. Instead of choosing single-

use items, bring a reusable alternative that can be reused multiple times, which can help us significantly decrease the amount of waste destined for our landfills. Reusable shopping bags, water bottles, and coffee cups can all play their part in helping to decrease plastic pollution. Repurposing items instead of throwing them away when damaged can extend their lifespan and decrease waste production, helping us contribute towards creating a more circular economy.

## Recycling

Recycling plays an essential part in both waste management and resource conservation. By turning waste materials into new products, recycling helps to decrease raw material needs while mitigating environmental impacts caused by raw material extraction and manufacturing processes. However, its feasibility and effectiveness depend on several factors including infrastructure development, technological innovations and consumer behaviour. Governments, businesses and individuals such as ourselves all play an essential role in creating an environment conducive to recycling. Governments can invest in infrastructure dedicated to this activity while creating policies which foster recycling practices. Businesses can prioritise using recyclable materials in their products and support recycling programs, while individuals can learn proper recycling practices, sort recyclable items from general waste, and support initiatives which promote recycling.

Change can be daunting; it requires pushing us outside of our comfort zones and upending the status quo. Yet in response to pressing global challenges like climate change and international conflicts, change becomes both necessary and vital. By taking advantage of ESG trends such as resource conservation, waste reduction and recycling initiatives we can work collectively towards creating a more sustainable future. Let us accept change without fear and work together to protect our collective Mother: **Earth**.



■ By Martijn Ros  
Co-Founder at Tech Pro Green  
[www.techpro-ad.com](http://www.techpro-ad.com)

## A CHAPTER CLOSES

As we prepare this final issue of our magazine, I find myself reflecting on my editorial journey that started over four years ago. It's been a significant period, not just professionally but also personally, filled with learning and memorable encounters.



Issue #203 marked the start of my role, and now as we arrive at issue #225, it's hard not to feel a sense of nostalgia and accomplishment. During my time as editor, I've had the privilege of interviewing a wide array of individuals both in Hong Kong and the Netherlands. These conversations were content for our magazine, but also opportunities to hear unique stories that were personally enriching.

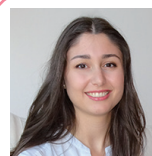
The contributions from all our members and authors have been the cornerstone of our magazine. Your stories, expertise, and perspectives have shaped the magazine into what it has become. Thanks to each one of you for sharing your knowledge and experiences, making our magazine a repository of valuable and diverse insights.

It has been a pleasure to collaborate with the DutchCham team, the PR & Pub Committee, and our graphic designers. I am grateful for the experience and the friendships formed along the way. I want to extend a special note of

appreciation to Annemarijn de Boer, whose vision gave our magazine a fresh and modern aesthetic from issue #213. And as Committee, we set out to modernise the content, ensuring our magazine stayed relevant and engaging.

This role has been a gateway for me, leading to opportunities in freelance content writing and digital marketing. It's a path I am keen to continue exploring. As I say goodbye to the magazine, I'm looking forward to new projects and collaborations in content creation and digital strategies. If you're looking for someone passionate and dedicated, consider this a subtle invitation to get in touch.

Lastly, I want to thank you - the readers. While this chapter is closing, the journey does not end here. You may find future content of the Dutch Chamber through social media, the newsletter and the website.



■ By Zuba Adham-Bos  
Editor of DutchCham Magazine  
Content writer and digital marketer  
[linkedin.com/in/zubaadham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/zubaadham)



## Event photos



**16 November**  
**Business Awards Gala by Marriott**



**22 November**  
**Waste Management Tour Waste Collection Systems**



**23 November**  
**Talk on Circular Construction by Robert Dijksterhuis**



**27 November**  
**Hong Kong Circularity Map Launch**



**6 December**  
**GBA Visit to Shenzhen**





7 December  
Finance Dinner 2023



13 December  
Holly Jolly DutchCham Christmas Cocktail 2023



18 January  
Business Awards Appreciation Lunch



6 February  
Cybersecurity Everywhere



7 February  
Joint-Chamber Happy Hour



22 February  
CNY Lion Dance





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As the representative body of Dutch business in Hong Kong, we maintain close relationships with both the Dutch and the Hong Kong SAR governments.

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• Corporate Member	HK\$ 9,800
• SME Member	HK\$ 4,000
• Associate Member	HK\$ 3,750
• Young Professional	HK\$ 750
• Start-up Member	HK\$ 2,000
• Overseas Member	HK\$ 2,500

Joining fee waived for 2024

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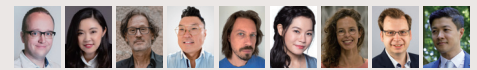
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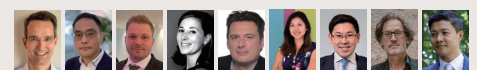
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