**ES WASTE INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT**

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**Interview with Plastic Beach Party : Tony Sevold & Christie Mettes**

On Friday November 17th We interviewed Tony and Christie from Plastic beach party.

Their initial goal with Plastic Beach Party was to recycle plastic and sign up 50 households in order to reach their goal of recycling 1 ton of plastic. Christie's professional opinion on the waste management on Aruba is that our island is inefficient in the way it disposes of its waste and the way it tries to prevent polluted beaches. She mentioned that Aruba hosts a lot of beach cleanups but it does not lead to progress since the trash from the beach cleanup is transported to another dump that is at the beach. This leads to plastic ending up into the ocean. It is not a systemic approach because nothing is intervening and making sure the plastic does not end up in the ocean. She stated that plastic and e-waste are the biggest concerns when it comes to waste here on Aruba.

Their desired future for waste management in Aruba is to reduce 50% of Aruba's waste by contacting the hotels on the island. Since a lot of the bigger chains in hotels have in their franchise agreements that they should recycle it would be possible for it to happen given that there are now services for it available. Christie said that there is an intersection between tourism and locals which is fluid since a lot of people here work in the tourism industry. Because of this it can set a standard to citizens here as well that could help sign up more people to recycle in the future.

**Interview conducted with Christie Mettes & Tony Sevold**

Q: So, let's start with names. Tony, tell us more about yourself.

A: My name is Tony Sevold. I'm from Canada. I worked as a biologist in California and then I studied environmental science in Holland and then we started Metabolic foundation. We started our internship there. Then we did work in Thailand, Jamaica and Aruba. Now we are running the Makers Space here and plastic recycling.

A: I'm Christie, I grew up here in Aruba. I studied in the Netherlands and then I did some things in South America. Did part of my bachelors in Mexico and then did research in Bolivia. Then I went and did my masters. It's the same masters as Tony 'Sustainable Development' in Utrecht. I then started interning with Metabolic and then basically we have been working together ever since. I did my master's thesis with Metabolic in Thailand on being able to adapt technology for low income areas to create surfaces that are needed in urban areas that are otherwise not economically or politically feasible.

So, we left Thailand after there was a military dictatorship, came here for a little while and then we went to Jamaica. In Jamaica we worked with a community called 'Almond Town'. We did a lot of activities with kids, with a community center there. But also, like looking at community needs and what we could build up. We did a lot of science in action, so kind of environmental science but though live experiments with kids. It was fun.

Funding got cut for that project, so we decided to come back to Aruba. That's when we started Brenchies Lab. Which is a maker's space with the goal to give people access to tools to be able to make solutions for the things that they see lacking. One of the first things that we heard from a lot of people is recycling. 'We don't do anything with our waste' and so we started a design thinking session. It was funded by stimuleringsfonds in the Netherlands. We got a Scottish designer to come over and we had an open session, promoted it everywhere. Just random people came and we designed products to be made out of plastic waste and to build enough support to start a recycling base for Aruba at a relatively low cost for what recycling facilities cost.

Q Who came up with the idea? So, like the foundation or the research you guys do.

A: So, we were interning with this like, it was a clean-tech at the time consultancy development firm. But they weren't even registered.

Q: Where?

A: In Amsterdam

A: So, the guys starting it were like younger than Tony, one or two years older than me, and we just kind of got involved immediately. It's called Metabolic because it has this concept of Urban Metabolism. Which is the concept of circularity, just like the human body metabolism where everything that comes in and comes out can be re-used and re-processed. It's designing cities based on those fundamentals. One thing that everybody kind of noticed is that we got a lot of business from really rich people that were like “I wanna make my house sustainable but I also want a jacuzzi “stuff like that. We had a lot of businesses because of European regulation need reports, so you put a lot of work into like coming up with 'this is how you're able to do this' , but they don't actually do anything. It's just to check off a box of like 'I need to do a company scan.' So, you know, it's a lot of PR bullshit. What we were building at the time was two communities in Amsterdam. One of polluted terrain and one that's floating in the harbor.

Both of these communities for different reasons need to be kind of disconnected, so they have systems that are not connected to the grid, so off-grid housing. So they have in-house water treatment and collection and waste processing and energy. We're like 'this is great' but there's people who don't have access to these things. Not because they wanna live off-grid but because they have to, right? So why can't we make these technologies in a way in which it can be applied there. So, I did my master's thesis to research the opportunities to do that in Thailand because I don't know. My boss at the time was really into Thailand. Most people live in Asia lack access to these things and so we're like 'OK'.

The concept initially was that we would still do these business analyses but we would take the money from the businesses and invest it in implementing the technology in areas that actually benefit and take ownership of those things. Like there are big cities in Asia that really fit that where there's both a lot of money and a lot of poverty. So, that was the goal.

Q: How long ago did you guys start?

A We started in Amsterdam in 2013 or 2012.

A: Well we started our internship in 2012

Q: And then here?

A: The first session we came here but we were just here for 6 months in between going to Jamaica, because we had to leave Thailand unexpectedly and we hadn't prepared yet. That was in 2014, and that was when we built our first set of digital fabrication machines out of E-Waste. We built our first set of machines out of E-Waste in 2014.

Q: When was it established? When did you get the name, when did you start like with the website and everything for Plastic Beach Party?

A: So basically 2 years ago when we applied for Unoca in 2014 when we had the E-Waste machine building workshop. We didn't hear anything back so we just did it anyways. We asked a lot of people, we ended up getting 1,000 florin from SETAR, we got a space from Ateliers, we got the motors from Delta printers and we got the things going. But then a while later, I think in 2015 I met Sahira who was in Unoca at the time. She told me to write a bigger proposal to have makers space for Aruba and to have it at scol di arte San Nicolaas. So, we wrote a full proposal and everything but during that time when we turned in the proposal they fired everybody at Unoca and hired new people. So, it was a long time before we even heard from them, but then they said 'yes you got the money' and were like 'Ok great!'. Right when we went to sign the contract it resulted that they only allowed money from machines. Not for space rental not for labor. The initial funding we had designed was to also make filament out of waste, to some extent. Just 3D printing filament because it's really hard to order stuff in Aruba. Ordering plastic is like we have plastic so. When we opened the event, we opened it on the 9th of January, and that's why we went to the academy. That was 2016. We opened up and we immediately said 'we will make recycling filament'. We got money from stimuleringsfonds shortly after in like February. We started the project and in the funding application I named it Plastic Beach Party and that was because we want to recycle plastic and our dump is a beach so I thought it was interesting. There's also this song called Plastic beach by Gorillaz. We wanted this to be a party in the sense that it would be a collective. You know like if nobody comes to your party then it's not a party. It only works if there's a lot of people there that buy into it. We wanted it to be fun where it has this element where we do parties sometimes. We do events and we collect trash from events so yeah, for it to be something where people come and take part in and not just a business behind a gate that nobody knows what's happening in there.

Q: What does your proposal say? What are your goals, your vision?

A: The initial goal was just to start recycling. We had a goal to sign up 50 household to recycle 1 ton of plastic.

Q Have there been any obstacles when you first established Plastic Beach Party? Or have you been supported by the community.

A: Initially we wanted to raise 1,000 dollars. We raised a lot in person. We were in a lot of events such as Art Fair and Jazz Festival and some concerts. So, people donated in person. Not as many people donated online. It was a bit difficult to get people to be connected to the donation.

Q: I don't know if Aruba is perceived as a country that is environmentally conscious so I don't know if that could play a role into why people didn't donate as much or lack interest?

A: I think it's a mix of two things. At the time we got some press attention. There's a lot of people we talk to that are really excited about it. Aruba's not really into online donating. It takes a lot of time for us. Traditional funding just takes a lot of time and we were trying to do more of an American/European crowd funding.

Q: How do you feel about how the waste is handled in Aruba?

A: I think it’s really dumb because you know that plastics stay a really long time. We have been trying to get Bucuti to recycle but they said no because Ecotech would do it cheaper.. But they don’t do it, it ends up back at the landfill. Doing beach cleanups won’t help either, we are basically picking up trash from one beach and moving it to another (The dump). Plastics and E-waste are the biggest of concerns. The best way to reduce plastic is to produce less, by using re-usable bottles. Or like taking old ice cream containers to be refilled, at parties use silverware instead of plastic forks and plates. For the marketing part Plastic Beach Party has applied for a grant and are thinking about doing pop-up events. Like a public education pop-ups where people can register, taking people to the beach and look for micro plastics in the sand, go to fish markets and when people bring in the fish open their stomach so you can see the plastic in the fish. Like a hands-on science experience but just as an event on the beach. They also built air quality sensors where people can see this is the effect of the dump and the effects on our health which is decreasing our life expectancy and the IQ of our children.

Q: Do you think your business is going to be bigger in the future?

A: Yeah, we just started offering our services in the summer so we are pretty young. We did a pilot for Bucuti which they did not accept, we also did a pilot for Divi which they did accept. They have 5 resorts on the island. Its also the bigger chains of hotels in Aruba like Hilton Marriot and Renaissance has a franchise agreement which they have to recycle. But since there wasn’t any recycling facilities available they didn’t do it. But with it being available now they have to do it. 50% of waste comes from tourists that 50% is from 30 Hotels. That’s convincing 30 managers. For example the Netherlands only 14% of plastic is recycled every time we sign a new hotel we can expand our capacity. The intersection in Aruba between tourism and citizens is fluid because everybody works in tourism. And it sets a standard. Because of the tourism industry we have a potential to grow rapidly. If people starts doing this it will put more pressure on the government.

Q: Will the recycling of plastic have an impact on the environment?

A: So, as it is, what we do at the dump is litt burning. When you melt you don’t burn, there is no smoke. There is some gasification of the material but to a smaller extent. Additionally, if you don’t recycle it you would still buy a plastic product that is made out of virgin plastic that needs to be made that includes the cost of processing plastic. You also need to import it which is the emissions from transport which is also extra. In total it is not zero impact but when you account for the impact it is much lower. It is energy intensive but so is processing virgin plastic. Preferably you would not use plastic.

Q:Is plastic substitutable?

A: There are two things:

1. Moving future production: the bottles that are made out of LG (people do not want to deal with their waste); therefor, we would have to come up with a way that people does not have to deal with it in 500 years. It is like: if something is designed to be used for 15 minutes than why does it have to stay for 500 years? Which means that it is not designed according to use.
2. Let’s say we make no more plastic bottle and all plastic bottles are replaced. Nevertheless, we are still stuck with the bottles we have made: what are we going to do with does? Therefor, you want to decrease the bottles being produced, but you also have to find a way to deal with the bottles that have already been created. So, it is good to create alternate water bottles.

Q: Spaces for multiple uses:

A:

* Do you plant/grow any vegetables, fruits or herbs at home?  
   We have sorsaca, banana, aloe, mandarine, coco, red beans, yerba di hole.
* We make space for birds to have their habitat and grow in the house.
* We have a pizza place in the bank that is somebody else's and opens in the weekends. The chef makes vegan vegetarian with vegan cheese, and other crazy mix of flavors. He also puts movies on the wall in the porch.

Q: What are your goals for 2018?

A:

We want to sign two more hotels to be part of “Plastic Beach Party” to recycle. By the end of next year we would like to have five ton of plastic recycled. Compared to the amount of plastic that Aruba imports it is not a lot, because Aruba imports 6,000 tons of plastic. It could actually be more because this is what the costom signs as plastics, when in really there are more products that contain plastic and they are not marked as plastic.

Q:Aruba needs to collect more data about corals, will we need someone from abroad to do it or are you able to do it?

A: We actually have an intern from “Hogeschool Rotterdam” working on that right now. He is building a “underwater drone” which will be able to take footage, stitch them together, and map Aruba’s reef without diving. This is great, because one of the limitations is that no one wants to pay the amount it takes for diving. The project is something we are coordinating together with Arikok.

Q: Have you guys thought about making your incentive more broad and include maybe other materials as well?

A: We’ve played around, the only thing is that we don’t have to capacity for it. Trying to get people and hotels to sign is hard. For example, Bucuti says: “Well, Ecotech takes everything, you just take one thing.” So we looked at: what would it mean to take everything? Metal could be sold to ALTRA. We could built a few composed-decentralised systems for a hotel that composes all its food-waste, paper, and cardboard, collect it and send it to ATCO. There is an opportunity to actually collect everything separately, and send it out; and e-waste plastic. Glass is the one product that is difficult, because it is not poisonous but it cuts, it is heavy and you make little profit of it. The government has been digging sand from the deep ocean-waters onto the beach, which then decreases the capacity of the ocean to create more white sand; so it is like not understanding how things work. But glass is made out of sand, so there are these intense crushers that make glass back into sand. Compared to other things it is bad, but it is less bad.