

“In every moment, there is the possibility of a better future.”*

This is the phrase that I used as the title for my motivation letter to apply to LUC, and I am still using it three years later, in this article. It is the motto I use to motivate myself every day. I am Daan de Leur, and I am a 3rd year BSc student at Leiden University College in The Hague. Aside from academics, I am the Chair of the LUC committee for sustainability, Act Aware, and Communications Officer for the LDE Centre for Sustainability Student Board.

What interests me most about sustainability is that, for me, it is the ultimate (moral) problem and links together almost all things I care about – inequality, injustice, nature, philosophy, politics, and more. My passion for it was ignited by an incredible documentary called *Home* (2009). Since that documentary, which I saw when I was in elementary school, I have never let go of the idea to make this planet a better home – for everyone.

Because I so strongly believe that the best way to create a better future is to start with working on solving the climate crisis, I incorporate sustainability in my life on several levels. Personally, I try to live sustainably: eating vegetarian and vegan meals, not flying, recycling, cleaning up streets, etc. Academically, I am majoring in Earth, Energy & Sustainability and have done a very interesting minor at Wageningen University about seaweed production. However, the part I like most is my work with Act Aware and the Centre of Sustainability. In both these boards I work together with other passionate and creative students. With Act Aware, which is a smaller committee, we are trying to not only organize fun events, but also make the university college more sustainable. We have been trying to a recycling system set up in the building, informing students about sustainable initiatives in the Hague, looking into energy use at the building, and more. This has been very educational – since some projects were far from easy to finalize. Being part of a committee and experiencing how rigid these structures are in the university can at first be a slap in the face – but it is also a great learning experience for after graduation.

One more thing I loved is to see Act Aware grow. I became part of Act Aware right in my first year. I was the secretary, but I was still shy and looking what exactly Act Aware was and could do. The next year I became treasurer and later took over as chair, which I continued in my 3rd year. Because I have been part of Act Aware for all this time, I have been able to develop myself as a leader and create a committee that feels like it is my legacy at LUC – which feels very special. Because I learned a lot being in different positions in Act Aware, I actually decided to step up my game this year and apply to a larger student organization: the Centre for Sustainability Student Board (CfS for short).

I am amazed with what we have been able to achieve with CfS – I really did not think 8 months ago that I could organize a complete 6-week Case Competition on the Energy Transition in the Netherlands – yet here I am! Before this however, we have organized panel discussions, documentary screenings, workshops, networking events, a new project with ING, competitions and more. One thing I love about this work is that it allows me to explore topics related to sustainability that I don't have room for in my studies – such as sustainable fashion. Another thing I love is meeting so many inspiring fellow students. All in all, I have really learned how valuable teamwork is, and how much fun it is to work together with people – even online. Half of the Centre for Sustainability Student Board I have never met in real life! But this hasn't held us back.

For those who wish to incorporate sustainability more – whether into their personal, professional or academic life – I would say: don't be too harsh on how *you* have to be sustainable. Don't be afraid to focus on the bigger picture. Link sustainability to something you like, care about or enjoy doing, so you always can go back to that drive you have. Always try to work together. Start close to home: what can you do for your family, your friends, your neighbourhood, your university, your city? Yes, making the sustainability a constant part of your life is hard sometimes – but there are so many things that you can do, so many differences you can make.

I have learned – and would like to convey to you – that sustainability, despite how much it is an issue of environment, is ultimately a question of – and for – people. We are not going to solve the climate

crisis – or any crisis – if we cannot communicate with each other and work together. I believe the more people realize this and act on it, the better our chance to create a better future. It can start in every moment, and it can start with you.

*From *Tomorrowland* (2015) directed by Brad Bird