



A NEW WAVE

A manifesto for true sustainability in yachting
by Bart M. Bouwhuis & Marnix J. Hoekstra

We are serious when we say, the challenge we're all facing is beyond comprehension. It's more than we can handle in our lifetime and bigger than any challenge that has come before. We are also serious about our belief that sustainability isn't a political dilemma, nor should it be a personal sacrifice, because there is no singular solution. Instead, sustainability is, and should be treated as, the most important design challenge of our generation.

We feel uninspired and anxious about how the yachting world at large is neglecting our oceans' cries. Schools, scientists, publishers, builders, traders, regulators, sailors and creators all appear blind to the sea of potential, to the 'New Wave' of possibilities before us. Yes, a few individuals have made inspirational ripples, but collectively we are adrift.

This is our manifesto for true sustainability within yachting.

Education

Within design colleges, polytechnic institutions and naval universities around the world, the focus remains steadfastly on the creation of boats as singular entities that celebrate the individual creator. Every day, our young open-minded talent are taught to believe they should, in fact only need to, focus on one specific element within the dazzlingly complex world of yacht design. They are exonerated from all responsibility outside of their focus, free to leave the rest for others to solve.

The teaching institutions seem unconscious to events happening outside of the classroom, to the birth of our new world. They appear oblivious to the New Wave that is shifting society away from materialism and individualism, and towards interaction, inclusion and collaboration. They are insensitive to the celebration of diversity, unaware of the all-encompassing movement back to nature.

Schools need to tap into the world beyond their walls. To encourage start-up collaborations with designers in the form of field labs or skunk works, such as our Vripack Brewery, which connect fledgling minds with seasoned professionals. These pressure cookers structurally support a requisite re-connection, sparking thought, debate and action around daily questions, such as toxic emissions, the diminishing reserves of precious hard woods, extreme energy consumption and waste management, to name but a few.

Collaboration empowers our youth to conjure fresh ideas. To return to the drawing board with original concepts that are ripe for adoption by teaching institutes and designers alike. Only by creating a multi-faceted learning environment can we join together and lead the way forward.

Research

It is impossible to overstate the importance of environmental research. Without it we would remain ignorant to the state of our oceans for decades to come. We would lack all insight, operating without the scientific baseline that is required for the New Wave to move us forward. Research informs the critical climate debate. Researchers are the ones who have led the climate movement helping us to listen to nature once again. They should be applauded and given every role, opportunity, means and freedom to continue this pioneering work.



And yet, research also suffers from the singularity visions witnessed in our education system. Research should accelerate progress by connecting local initiatives with multi-level global ones where results and databases can be shared. It's via the international connection of real live data that solutions are found. In the 1990s, Vripack designed *Turmoil*, the first yacht to conquer the treacherous Northwest Passage. She did the crossing carrying scientists and spearheaded the way for present initiatives like the International SeaKeepers Society, Yachts For Science and numerous privately-funded ones. In these 30 years, huge amounts of data have been successfully gathered but not uniformly shared, allowing it to be washed away and lost once more.

Sadly, we must conclude that while environmental research triumphs, development is simultaneously oppressed. If scientific facts and insights continue to evade us, yachting will lack the knowledge required to avoid a miss match between sustainable innovations and the true needs of our oceans.

Research, too, requires collaboration in an open community that results in publicly available data and know-how. Through trial and error, building a continuous stream of New Waves is the crucial next step.

Media

We should all be immensely mindful of what we hear and read in the media, particularly when it concerns sustainability. The media has so far played a positive role in creating awareness within the industry, effectively waking us up with sharp written articles and visually appalling documentaries like *A Plastic Ocean*. Nonetheless, journalists and broadcasters increasingly underestimate their role, often falling into the trap of publishing quick sound bites and bluntly regurgitating press releases that herald innovations, such as "Green!", "Eco!" and "Sustainable Yacht!". They do this without any journalistic due diligence, therefore reducing their profession to tabloid gossip and undermining their carefully built-up advantage.

Media has the unique ability to inspire both young and old and to be in the eye of the storm that creates the New Waves. Media has the power to share scientific innovations, report on the true failures and success stories, and to create knowledge-based platforms, like Ocean Talks, where experts and laymen can share research and aspirations without hesitation or restraint. They can showcase how our industry lives and breathes because of the oceans, and that we need to care and take care of it.

Manufacturing

Unlike many other industries, yacht building predominately takes place in the Western world, which means it refrains from the exploitation of workers and nature that occurs in many developing countries. As such, it's surprising that shipyards remain rock steady in their resistance to the sustainable New Wave. More times than we can count, we at Vripack have joined sales presentations where a yard's production ecological credentials were wafer thin, if mentioned at all. Sustainable approaches are dismissed due to rising costs, as if money is the sole object.

Shipbuilding is, in fact, the second stage in a yacht build, the first being the holistic process of design and naval architecture. By nature, shipyards should act as a safety net that enhances or integrates any ecological credentials omitted in the design stage. Being the strong brands that they are, though we are wary of their current greenwashing, the opportunity to inform owners about the manufacturing and operational costs and benefits available to them is uniquely placed in their hands.

Fully informed owners will decide for themselves how far they want to go, partly informed owners will refrain from doing anything.

It is no exaggeration that assembling a yacht within the average three to four-year timeframe is more complex than building an aeroplane. Millions of parts and individual machines are assembled to create a



whole, operating in one of the harshest environments on our planet. Manufacturers' hopes lie with the producers of these components, many of whom are ahead of the sustainable curve. With alternatives to teak, like Tesumo, and toxic-free underwater paint like EcoSpeed, they are enabling yachts to become more sustainable from the inside out.

And yet the scientific research and concepts for zero emission combustion engines, circular HVAC systems and recyclable batteries are all too often developed and brought to market by component manufacturers only to be shelved by shipyards as they hurt the bottom line. It's a profit-hungry avoidance tactic that should be treated as a criminal offence.

Flag State Authorities & Classification Societies

Flag States play an essential role in yachting, and one that could grow the New Wave beyond the current swells. Far removed from industry politics, they are responsible for the safety of their Flag and waters, which by definition means quality. When acting upon their duty, rules and regulations are driven by the needs of nature first, humans second. Equally as important is their support of the development, approval and adoption of innovations early on. The time has come for an environmentally-friendly Flag State, instead of a tax-friendly one.

Though they are without any geographical power, Classification Societies also need to come out of hiding. We acknowledge their proposed set of optional and voluntary eco-friendly notations, yet the current state of our ocean roars for more than a code that can easily be dispensed with if not seen fit. When it comes to approving innovative solutions, all too often we witness the Society building a seawall to keep the New Wave out, rather than jumping on a surfboard and riding it.

Brokers & Owners representatives

Considering they position themselves as the trustees and voices of owners, it blows our minds how disconnected from their current and future clients' needs this large and essential group of representatives remains to be. They are the privileged few who have rare direct contact with clientele who are eager to learn, willing to listen and able to act. And yet they prefer to settle for stagnant status quo.

In recent years, there has been an unprecedented increase in yacht sales; a substantial growth never seen in the history of yachting. We call for all brokers and owners' representatives alike to now match that rise in demand with an equally relentless surge that challenges designers and shipyards to provide truly eco-friendly vessels for these prospective clients.

We feel a mix of disbelief and frustration when, in the light of the final deal, rather than informing owners about the possibilities and additional costs of sustainable options, decisions are made on their behalf without consultation. Is the appetite for monetary gains so large that ecological ones are discarded?

We concede, there is no quick fix. Progress requires endurance and perseverance. More dedication and education, leading to slower, nonmonetary rewards. A lifetime's devotion for humanity, instead of the individual. When will the first brokerage house jump on the New Wave and only offer charters with Blue Diesel-powered yachts that reduce CO₂ and NO_x emission by over 90%? Charters that are single-use plastic-free, that use eco cleaning products, only serve exquisite meals made with locally-sourced, organic produce and where a beach set up is paired with a beach clean-up.

Owners, captains and crew

The sailors of tomorrow will ride the New Wave first and harder than anyone else. We recognise an ever-growing group of impassioned people asking for solutions, for yachts that leave little more than a footprint in



the sand to be washed away by the sea. They don't have the full focus of the industry, but we hear their sounds like the calls of humpback whales migrating across the ocean. Much like those whales, few truly listen to them or seek to understand.

They may be growing, but their numbers need to increase at a greater exponential rate to successfully impart their determination for change with the force to hit the shore that this New Wave deserves. They will break the pattern of innovation being closed off due to false pretences of privacy and promote Open Source access to their successes and failures. With this democratisation of knowledge, a disruption in yachting will occur, leaving behind those who close their eyes and ears to nature.

Sailors will understand their ability and responsibility to act and inspire. They will actively make the choice to go plastic and toxic-free, to buy locally-grown food and flowers, to catch fish off the back of the boat, all the while providing humanitarian aid to those in need, from clean drinking water and clothes to re-building communities left devastated following natural disasters caused by climate change. Sailors will continue to sail the Seven Seas, but they will make provisions for oceans to prosper instead of spreading human impact to the corners of the world.

Designers

Let us explain once and for all:

Mastering the field of styling, however strenuous it may be, makes you a stylist. Mastering the intrinsic field of naval architecture, however intricate, makes you a naval architect. Only those who master both should call themselves a designer. It is only in the holistic combination of the two that any one person or group of people can set a course for the New Wave, for they have the rounded understanding of how to mould a sustainable future for yachting.

Great designers in yachting history have managed to change behaviour, modify shapes and rewrite how yachts are both built and sailed. William Fife, Nathanael Herreshoff, Olin J. Stephens II, Jack Hargrave, Jon Bannenberg, Frits de Voogt, Gerard Dijkstra and Dick Boon all created a revolutionary vision that led to some of the most iconic yachts ever built. But the effort they undertook and the time they invested into learning the behaviour of ships at sea and the experience of humans on board has largely been lost to the rise of 3D surface modelling software.

It's the new designers who will become future leaders in converting waste to value. The power of the pencil is paramount and from the first vision, the first sketch, they will sew sustainability into their work to a depth no one else can. It will be a true celebration of human understanding of the forces of nature and how they envisage we can co-exist.

Designers can only achieve this when they place themselves in a community, like our Vripack Brewery, that is connected to science and works with shipyards who can and will collaborate. The solutions for sustainable yachts are both environmental and economical, and it's the designers' challenge to show the way forward. Go further, push harder, inspire beyond the dreams of anyone before. With the support of sound science and research, designers can join owners in changing the industry as we know it.

Postscript

We plead all of you to go beyond simply scratching the surface, which suffocates true progress.

Collaboration, dialogue and, most importantly, action is what is required today. In this challenge, you will fail, we will fail and no-one should aim to be a saint, as this design challenge is too vast, too substantial and too important to fall prey to ego. Change will only commence when awareness is followed by inspiration.



From the day Vripack opened its doors in 1961, we've chosen progress over perfection. Every day, we're torn between running an innovative yacht design studio and creating responsible designs. Yet it doesn't stop us from partnering with North Sails and OFF, upcycling discarded sails into waste bins and bags and giving them to yacht owners and crew who take The New Wave pledge to clean the next beach they land on. It didn't stop us from founding Solar Sport One and challenging students from every continent to design, build and race solar-powered boats and inspire a generation. And it won't stop us from being at the leading edge of yacht design by creating the world's first fossil-free luxury yacht, open sourcing every single innovation related to her.

We're serious about all of it. True sustainability is our generation's biggest design challenge, and we're facing it head-on by creating a New Wave.

Bart M. Bouwhuis, B.eng.
Creative Director | Partner

Marnix J. Hoekstra, B.eng.
Creative Director | Partner
