

## **Fresh Urgency About New Economy as Belgian Ford Plant Closes**

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Thursday, November 1, 2012 -- Griet Bouwen

In the region Limburg, Belgium, we now find ourselves in the middle of a loud and busy crossroads. A crossroads to change. The local Ford plant will close down in 2014. More than 10,000 people will lose their jobs, and the economic damage will reach much further. But the people in our region are strong and resilient. Twenty-five years ago, we overcame another economic disaster, the closing of the coal mines.

But times have changed. In these years, another major issue has entered our lives: the question of how to organize an economy that supports the sustainable life of people and planet. This additional field of attention changes everything.

It cannot be just the question of replacing the Ford plant by another big industrial player. Other matters have come into the playing field. What products do we really need, do we want to create? Do we have the courage to talk about other ways of living together? About a small-scale economy? About our food supply, spatial planning, the relationship between consuming and well-being? About changing modern patterns like outsourcing the education of our children, the care of our parents?

There are already hopeful signs. Lots of them. The regional government in Limburg is working on a climate plan to become a carbon-neutral region by 2020. This is fantastic. I am also curious about what will come out of their co-operation with people like entrepreneur and economist Gunter Pauli. I can imagine that this climate plan, combined with the surprise of the closing of the Ford plant, can create a sudden boost in the transition agenda. Agoria, the federation for the technology

industry, declares that investing in the production of green energy could provide 30,000 jobs in our country. This is huge.

But this transition cannot be the responsibility of economic and political players alone. It is also about how we civilians want to live in a way that supports sustainability. So, we also talk about a cultural shift. Then the question is: How do we help each other to make this shift and what can we as a person, a group, an organization, contribute to that?

Over the past years, I discovered that there are many people with a similar hope and willingness to act. The momentum we hold is — as I see it — extremely powerful and fast growing.

Inspired by people such as David Cooperrider, Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski, Peter Block or Karen Armstrong, I'd say that connectedness between people could be a main gate to solutions in this disrupting period. Key to these needed connections could be an open, strengths-based approach to our questions, aims and toward each other. Key also is an awareness of the holistic character of reality. And that the "knowing" can only rise from a space where the "not knowing" lives, both in ourselves and in the space between us.

The strengths-based and assets-based thinking is winning confidence and getting embraced by more and more people in different sectors. I notice that my colleagues of [De Werf](#), a co-operation between about 10 people taking initiative to bring the strengths-based perspective to life, are committed to contribute to the reshaping of our economy and society. I can see that we, as a group, can lean on experiences all over the world. There is the will, the power and the knowledge to organize strengths-based, multiparty conferences in which stakeholders from every corner of society can join in thinking and acting for the good of the whole.

With a Belgian Axiom News platform, I can help by making resources from inside and outside our region visible and more accessible, by bringing these together on a news platform. This platform will be characterized by its strengths-based approach and its co-creative character. By bringing meaningful ideas and actions to the surface, Axiomnieuws can contribute to innovative thinking and actions. It will foster connections between people and their initiatives. And because we bring our news from an appreciative perspective, it will honour and encourage people's ideas, courage and actions.

I have the vision that Axiomnieuws could offer opportunities for people who would like to contribute to change by using their strengths of curiosity, willingness to learn, need for reflection and a deep love for writing and sharing ideas. It could become a kind of movement, that not only brings strengths-based news to the region, but brings people from the region to other places to learn and find new ideas, to connect with other people and start having a feeling that all over Europe “we are in this together, to share and learn and support.”

I feel supported and encouraged by a lot of people. What I need now is time to fully dedicate to this important work. I'll have to find a way to finance the co-ordinating work. I'm sure that there are ideas and opportunities that could help launch Axiomnieuws in a moment in a time when it is most needed here. I'll start with having some connecting talks here and there.

[Click here](#) to read an e-book featuring a more in-depth discussion with Griet on the new economy.

## Comments

Submitted by Philippe Belien (not verified) on Fri, 11/02/2012 - 06:42

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### **Imagine Limburg, powered by AxiomNieuws**

Hi Griet, great story. Great calling. For sure Axiomnieuws is the right thing on the right moment. I also see the dilemma: how to find resources in the old system, while the new is not yet there. You don't want to compromise your principles, nor your goals. The fact is: other pioneers have done it before. So it can be done. Just days ago, I came across a new project in our area (Limburg) that raised 2.4 million Euro in less than 2 months. In the area of sustainable economics, balancing working, living, eating, learning, performing... A 4P project in its early, but entrepreneurial stage. So there is enough money out there. What it takes, is probably some pioneers. Like you.

My thoughts are following the same routes than yours. This is indeed the end of an old, and the beginning of a new era for our province. The good thing is: this is big

enough to allow significant change. The time is ready for an integrated approach, based on a sustainable ecology (living system) in its widest meaning. An 'ecology' integrating industry and society, aligning the visions of children and adults, alliances between business and education, man and women, artists and journalists, money and wisdom, ... . How can we bring together all these forces in order to Imagine and Invent Limburg 2025, in order to co-create it soon thereafter? How? We know the answer. Bring the whole system in one room. Do we dare? Do I?

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