

# REconomieproject

Nederland

*Investeren in lokale veerkracht*

*Investing in local resilience*

**A summary of 5 great examples of Transition oriented social enterprises in the Netherlands**



## A much needed dose of inspiration

The term 'Transition' has long been a jargon word in governmental and scientific circles. Only in the past couple of years it seems to have become more commonplace. The Dutch Transition movement has played its part in that development, though it's not a mainstream movement yet.

With Transition being on the brink of becoming a real buzz word, the Dutch Transition Hub, Transition Towns Netherlands, has taken on introducing a much needed dose of inspiration to the Transition public discourse of the moment, in the realm of the economy.

The current economic paradigm is one of perpetual growth, even though everyone knows we're all confined to a finite planet. The signs that we've now reached the long-professed limits to growth are more apparent than ever, with the confluence of the issues of resource depletion (and Peak Oil in particular), the indisputable effects of accelerating climate change and the clear need of a systemic change at the very foundations of our financial system.

The Netherlands has an open economy. In other words, it thrives by grace of the perpetual flows of imports and exports. International trade (and colonialism) has been the driving force behind our economy for centuries. And it's exactly this that will prove to be the Dutch Achilles heel in the decades to come, with the inevitable rise of (fossil) energy prices and carbon emissions that need to be drastically capped.

In this context, the advocacy of the Transition movement for a re-localization of the economy seems to make more sense every day. Amongst economists one can nowadays hear the term 'circular economy' on a regular basis. But whenever this idea is tested in practice, it looks much like a game of cutting corners and green-washing old recipes instead of coming up with fundamentally new ideas.

## Reshaping the playing field

With these case studies, therefore, we hope to show some glimpses of what a re-localized, new economy might look like when we focus on Transition oriented businesses that more or less show five common characteristics. Enterprises like these show the way to reshaping the economic playing field into one that can withstand the impact of energy price shocks, economic recession and the effects of climate change. In short, these characteristics are:

**1. Resilience outcome** – Transition enterprises contribute to the increased resilience of communities in the face of, for example, economic uncertainty, energy and resource shortages and climate change impacts. As part of their community, these enterprises are also resilient in themselves, seeking to be financially sustainable and as independent as possible of external funding.

**2. Appropriate resource use** - Transition enterprises make efficient and appropriate use of natural resources (including energy), respecting finite limits and minimising and integrating waste streams. The use of fossil fuels in particular is minimised.

**3. Appropriate localisation** – Transition enterprises operate at a scale appropriate to the environment, economy and business sector with regard to sourcing, distribution and interaction with the wider economy.

**4. More than profit** – Transition enterprises exist to provide affordable, sustainable products and services and decent livelihoods rather than to generate profits for others. They can be profitable, but the use of their excess profits prioritises the community benefit rather than benefit to investors.

**5. Part of the community** - Transition enterprises work towards building a common wealth, owned and controlled as much as is practical by their workers, customers, users, tenants and communities. They have structures or business models which are as open, autonomous, equitable, democratic, inclusive and accountable as possible. They complement and work in harmony with other likeminded entrepreneurs.

## A ‘Top Five’ to start with

For the moment, we’ve put together a Top Five group of such enterprises. In due time, we’ll extend this overview into a whole listing of inspiring examples. As they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Real life examples of viable Transition enterprises in all economic sectors will make a strong case for concerted efforts in every region, city, village and neighbourhood to invest in the transition towards a resilient local economy.

For more extended descriptions of these examples, please refer to the [Dutch full version available here](#) - for those of you who feel highly motivated to read it all, [a crash course in Dutch is available here](#).

### **Bakkerij De Ondergrondse – Community Supported Bakery**

Bakery ‘De Ondergrondse’ (‘the Underground’) is a cooperative enterprise, which is a spin-off project from an urban gardening project of Transition Rotterdam. They only produce as much bread as is pre-ordered by its cooperative shareholders and occasional external customers. Flour and wheat is obtained from a local windmill. De Ondergrondse is also active as a learning-by-doing project for those who want to master the art of bread baking. The bakery gets lots of requests nowadays to help seed other cooperative bakeries in other parts of the city. [ondergrondsebakker.tumblr.com](http://ondergrondsebakker.tumblr.com)



## **Atelier 3D – local cooperation for practical sustainability**

Atelier3D is a cooperation of nearly 70 local social and (semi)commercial enterprises, as well as all primary schools in the city of Zutphen. It's a financially self-reliant enterprise working towards a sustainable and harmonious society in which everyone can participate according to their own capacities. Atelier3D aims to connect and support all local initiatives that can help to strengthen local resilience.

[www.atelier3d.nl](http://www.atelier3d.nl)



## **NLD Energie – energy delivery as local catalyst for resilience**

This energy company originates with 'Grunniger Power', a local renewable energy initiative by Transition Groningen. Asked for their success-formula, Philip Kocken went to the neighbouring villages to explain how to set up their own cooperatives. Thus a provincial coop of cooperations came into existence, which in turn joined forces with those in two adjacent provinces.

Together, on a not-for-profit basis, they now deliver local renewable energy to many villages and cities in the wider region. The revenues are donated to those same villages and cities on condition that they invest it in sustainable community projects.

[grek.nl/over-grek/nld-energie](http://grek.nl/over-grek/nld-energie)



GRONINGER **ENERGIE** KOEPEL

## Lazuur – community owned food shop

Buijs & Ko, a whole food store in the small city of Wageningen recently took the step to transform its traditional set-up as a commercial enterprise into a community-owned cooperation. In the process, all customers were offered to change their customers card into a shareholder card. The enterprise reorganized itself into a covered food market and took 'Lazuur food community' as their new name. They now actively promote the concept in the rest of the Netherlands.

[www.lazuur.com](http://www.lazuur.com)



## Meerlanden – waste disposal which benefits the local community

A traditional waste disposal company in the Northwest of the Netherlands has taken some significant steps towards becoming a Transition enterprise. The compostable waste they collect in the region is being processed into gas, CO<sub>2</sub>, warmth, (condensation) water and compost. The gas is used to fuel their entire vehicle fleet and soon also many more cars of other enterprises and municipalities in the surrounding area. The CO<sub>2</sub> and warmth feed into the regional greenhouse industry, whereas the water is used for the regular street cleaning services. On top of all that, in springtime, all participating households get a free load of compost for their gardens.

[www.meerlanden.nl](http://www.meerlanden.nl)

