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RENEWAL THROUGH “COMMONALITY COMMUNITIES”

The community is on its way back onto the agenda. After decades of increasing self-sufficiency and selfishness, we have once again become aware that it pays to stand together to deal with life's tasks. That is why all the energy resources on the Danish island of Samsø are also owned by the islanders. Our vision is that we can live 100 percent self-sufficiently based exclusively on renewable energy. A 'commonality community' is a community of people who manage something shared together, i.e. a common resource such as wind energy. In 'commonalities' people share the responsibility for each other and our common planet.

CREATE YOUR OWN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

I, Malene, moved to the island a long time ago because I longed for a community and to know where my food came from. Thus, at the age of 21 I dropped the traditional educational system even though my parents were shocked, to say the least. I created a creative plan and platform for myself. The first output was a beautiful little book where I described what I thought education was. Today I call it 'induction.' I dreamed of learning about the new and the old in one and the same movement; and in the big city I could not survive. I lost my concentration and passion because the pace, the sounds and the images were fleeting. It felt as if I was experiencing much the same thing over and over again - without a break. I knew that by moving to an island my comfort zone would be challenged on many crucial levels and I also knew that the stimuli from the country instead of the city would do me good and make sense to me. I needed to learn to survive and be in control of my own household.

What could I learn from people out in the countryside with regard to 'housekeeping'? Nothing! They knew nothing

about ecology, i.e. housekeeping and thus I was just a total burden on nature - even in the countryside. Because I was looking for renewal, a thought struck me: How does one summon up the courage to admit that one knows nothing? That question became a point of reference for me and one of my most important 'drivers' in co-creating a more ecological way of life. And new questions came to me: How can you live sustainably? Perhaps I can do it by creating my own sustainable business?

I personally invested nearly 100,000 Euros in the project 'Samsø as Denmark's renewable energy island'. I have 30 shares in the local rural windmills and I have solar panels and a "stoker" boiler, which have resulted in an annual saving of 1000 Euros in a 270 m² house. Another of my major investments was to write the book 'Vingesus' which is about the transition to renewable energy on Samsø. The book focuses on 'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft' (community and society) in balance and tension. The good story was put together by all the courage the local people showed in order to transform the community on the island. The people of the island wanted to survive and save money at the same time. The power belongs to those who can move and want to be moved. We succeeded! Today Samsø is more than self sufficient with renewable energy.

Today I represent, amongst others, Energy Camps at Samsø Energy Academy. "This is what you are!" was the response when I shook hands and had my one-liner "Be the change!" ready for Jackie and three other students. Jackie came from Australia and I hosted a circle meeting set up with the students from MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who were on a European Tour and had the Energy Academy as their first priority. At the

camp, we work with issues such as: What is sustainability? How do we involve (young) people in the serious issue of sustainability? How can we focus on sustainability still being fun? How does one learn about sustainability if our parents have no knowledge or experience?

This is the question we ask approximately 2,000 students each year, and try and guess their answer? They say leadership, ownership, community and fellowship, and this helps me find the courage to keep an eye open for renewal. It has thus become crucial to my teaching on sustainability to set personal insights alongside the professional. An insight into one's own perception is pivotal to our ability to develop sustainable communities. At least that is how it is for me, and every day I am delighted that my local business is both rural and sustainable. It gives me pleasure and comfort to know that I can 'keep house'.

A NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL

I, Søren, was born on Samsø Island in 1960. My father was a farmer and so was I until it dawned on me that the island had no future in the long term unless we decided to develop the island radically. Today, one of my burning questions is how the difference between the urban and the rural can be transformed into knowledge about sustainability and new business.

In rural areas there is not only peace, but also a deeper understanding of innovation and enterprise. In rural culture work is such an integral part of life that it is not compartmentalized into contracts and wage agreements, but driven by independent thinking and efforts that are consistent with necessity rather than fairness.

Contrary to urban culture, rural culture is slow and reflective. The ability to work has to last a long time and it leads to an understanding that work is necessary, but not necessarily a matter of life and death. Here, the social aspect of life is also prioritized and, when appropriate, drinking coffee together and socializing when ever there is an occasion. We can smell it when the neighbor puts manure out in the field and we rush to take the laundry indoors, so that it doesn't get smelly, but we understand to certain degree that a sensible bit of work is in progress. We drink coffee with the farmer and talk about the animals and the plants. We understand the smell. It is work and it is resources. It stinks, but we understand!

Food comes from the countryside and materials come from the city, and with a greater knowledge of sustainability one could create a different and more intelligent relationship between country and city. When food is sent to the city, it is sent in the form of carbon, minerals and a host of other valuable elements. Then, when these valuable resources have been used for the primary purpose - food for people in cities - the valuable 'waste' ends up

in the drainage system and, eventually, it is regarded as an environmental problem. An innovative handling of this problem would be to arrange conditions in a different way. You can think about sustainability as a circuit and pre-plan how to collect the substances which need to go back to source, to the earth to become food and building blocks for microorganisms and plants, so that it may once again become food for humans and animals. If this is not already happening, what is the reason?

My personal opinion is that it is due to laziness and our deep desire to clean up. I know it sounds contradictory but, actually, it isn't. Laziness is a trait that I possess and enjoy, but when things get too dirty, I am forced to clean up and throw out. I think this is the main and also the worst reason why we have produced 'vanish-technology', which removes everything with a bad odor and which exposes us as disgusting slob. We want to be chic and sexy, to be noticed and desired by others. In the meantime, we seem to have forgotten that we are not alone on this planet.

Consider those poor bacteria and microorganisms who think that biological substances like shit and waste are great food and are a vital necessity for all living things they know. When the sewer smells, we call to the municipality, because something has to be done here! It smells and we do not understand that these are resources and tomorrow's food. It stinks and we get furious!

If we understood the value of these elements and carbons in a constructive and innovative way, we could save on the purchase of fertilizers from distant countries. We could save on expensive treatment plants and perhaps build a fertilizer factory that could remove the water from the excrement, so it could be returned to the farmer with the message that it has permission to become new carrots. It smells, and we understand!

ABOUT THE ENERGY ACADEMY. It took 10 years to get the island 'Samsø' to where it is today, producing 100% of its wind energy and even exporting renewable energy to the mainland. Samsø has amassed a great deal of practical experience with the implementation of a broad variety of local renewable energy projects, from wind turbines to CO2 neutral district heating plants, rapeseed oil tractors and solar energy panels. The next goal for the island is to be independent of fossil fuels by 2050. Read more at www.energiakademiet.dk

See the video with Søren Hermansen's presentation from the third In100Y-seminar in November 2011, where he tells the story about how he and a few others got the green energy going at the small island Samsø at www.in100y.dk/videos/video-seminar-3/