

# NORDIC

**Success stories in Sustainability**



## THE IDEAS BANK FOUNDATION



For over 20 years the Ideas Bank Foundation, based in Oslo, Norway, has had the task – and the pleasure – of charting and documenting success stories in sustainable development from Norway, the Nordic countries, Europe and beyond. Our focus is sustainable community development and social innovation – especially local but also at national and international level. Target groups are politicians, researchers, municipal administrators, educational institutions both formal and non-formal, citizens and civil society organisations.

Core activities are:

- Courses and presentations about sustainable development - local as well as the broad global perspective - involving both ecological, economic and social dimensions
- Practice and development of methods for democratic dialogue and citizen participation
- Network building on a Nordic and European basis, promoting cross-sectoral bridge building in particular.
- Also links and activities with developing countries and Eastern Europe
- Information and policy advice to and cooperation with national and local authorities on sustainability topics, as well as on conferences and other activities.
- Documentation and dissemination of state of the art

programs and projects that lead the way to a sustainable future. Our databases represent best practice in resource conservation, global responsibility and developing of vibrant local communities

- Dissemination is by seminars, reports, our website, newsletters, articles and publications as well as by various democratic and participatory processes, such as futures workshops and our Dialogue Workshop where all stakeholders - professionals, NGOs, politicians and others study and evaluate best practice as a contribution to issues and projects related to sustainable development.
- The Ideas Bank Foundation represents a uniquely cross-sectoral approach, focused on promotion of practical, local action for a sustainable world.

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# NORDIC

Success stories in Sustainability



The Ideas Bank Foundation, Oslo, Norway  
- a national and Nordic resource centre for  
Agenda 21 and local sustainable development



# FOREWORD

The two decades since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio 1992 have seen some improvements integrating environment and developmental concerns in promoting sustainable development. In the Nordic countries, lessons learnt have shown how paying the right attention to these concerns contributes to a better future for all. In our region of the world, air and water quality has improved, less waste ends up in landfills and some reductions have been made with regards to climate emissions. Better protection and management of ecosystems have helped preserve important plant and animal habitats.

But this does not mean that the job is done. Poverty and hunger are still among the greatest human challenges worldwide. Our overall ecological footprint is rising, and issues of sustainable lifestyles and consumption have to be addressed. Broad-based action is needed to make the transition towards sustainable development - based on an economy that is both green and fair. All sectors must step up to maintain vital ecosystems and address global injustice. Businesses, civil society and public entities must work together to promote sustainable practices and solutions.

Municipalities and local authorities have played a unique role in making sustainability a reality in the Nordic countries. This book reports on impressive examples from frontrunners in our region, showing great potential for new policies and the creative and practical

solutions we need to see more of! The examples are many - improved energy efficiency, integrated planning processes and partnerships among cities have proven to be important drivers for sustainable development. International cooperation between local authorities, through capacity building, exchange of information and experiences are examples of how the local level is asserting global responsibilities in demonstrating the crucial link between environment and development.

The Norwegian Ministry of the Environment is a long standing supporter of Stiftelsen Idébanken, The Ideas Bank Foundation, and their important role in documenting and promoting sustainable practices at the local level. I hope this book, based on experiences in the Nordic countries, will inspire governments and local authorities to work together and take ambitious action on key issues for the 21st century - starting with the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20.

**Bård Vegar Solhjell**  
*Minister of the Environment, Norway*

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# THERE IS A BIG AREA OF OPPORTUNITY WAITING TO BE EXPLOITED

Future generations may see the 1992 Rio summit as a historic crossroads. Humanity recognised the need for fundamental changes. World leaders offered no firm recipes, but in the Agenda 21 document they urged all communities to seek their own solutions to move towards sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most will agree that efforts during the two decades since then have been too fragmented, too noncommittal and too few. This is a worrying message for the UN, world leaders, and all of us.

**REMARKABLE RESULTS**

Yet we, like ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) and many researchers, note that municipalities and local communities – in all parts of the world – have achieved some ambitious and remarkable results. The role of municipalities (chapter 28 of Agenda 21) has provided the most successful response to Rio-92!

These remarkable results are surprisingly little known. They demonstrate that there is a big window of opportunity – for action and for success – which most politicians have not yet recognised.

For 20 years the Ideas Bank Foundation has been documenting and disseminating examples of good practice – as well as building networks and creating meeting places for exchanges of experience – in the Nordic countries, Europe and beyond. The “frontrunners” show us that the main barriers to a transition to sustainability are neither technology nor money. The key factors are learning and knowledge about alternatives, combined with the will to take action and make choices.

**FOUR AWARD WINNERS AND 12 “RUNNERS UP”**

This booklet presents some Nordic successes: real “good news” achieved at the local level by cities, municipalities and communities. They contain inspiration as well as useful learning about pitfalls and barriers.

Firstly we present the four winners of our 2011 “Balance Award”, and then, in brief, 12 additional examples. Whilst these are selected to illustrate a spread of approaches, themes and sizes of community, let’s not forget the many other deserving examples. Experience confirms that there are many ways towards sustainability. This variety itself bears an important message – that sustainability works, and the impossible becomes possible, when it is anchored, shaped, and led at the local level. The keyword to success is “local”.

A few key points emerge from two decades of experience and need to be considered seriously. The essays in the last part of this book discuss some of these. One lesson

from our Nordic frontrunners is the need for *long term policies* and *cross-sector processes*. It is tempting to go for immediate concrete results, such as pollution reductions or a program of wind turbines; but many sustainability processes are of necessity long term, with little “payback”, economic or political, in the short term. It is important to avoid frequent shifts in policies, which tend to demotivate the public and discourage investors.

**SKILLS FOR PRACTICAL ACTION**

In 2002, the Rio+10 Johannesburg summit recognised the slow tempo of progress towards sustainability. Greater eph and breadth were also discussed. To increase capacity for action, the UN announced the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-14). Its intent is to add energy to the challenge of “education, training and public awareness” as stated in chapter 36 of Agenda 21.

The Ideas Bank has seen that one commonality in all the success stories is their focus on building knowledge and skills; they mobilise people by broad participation, on the basis that “attitudes develop through action” – and by civic formation at its best, through both formal education and adult education channels.

The combination of good examples and action-oriented skills has formed the basis of our pedagogic approach for 20 years. It creates the necessary arena for discussion and action that can balance and integrate our ecological, economic and social goals. This goal of *balance* is symbolized in our “Balancing Act” campaign with its sculptures, symbolic of Nordic local community efforts in the UN decade for sustainability education.

**ENABLING LOCAL ACTION**

International agreements and macroeconomic policies are important but cannot have real effect unless they build on, and incentivise, the potential for action at the local level. And the most important message which we believe this booklet delivers – and it is *good news* – is that there is a large, unexploited arena of opportunity.

This *arena of opportunity* lies in the energizing potential of local communities. Happy reading!



Kai Arne Armann  
director, the Ideas Bank Foundation

**THE NORDIC COUNTRIES (NORDEN) ARE:**

Denmark,  
Finland,  
Iceland,  
Norway,  
Sweden,  
the Faroe  
Islands, Åland  
and Greenland.



**GLOBAL MILESTONES:**

- 1972** First UN conference on world environment, Stockholm
- 1987** Brundtland Commission Report on Sustainable Development
- 1992** First Rio conference, presenting Agenda 21
- 2002** Rio+10 in Johannesburg, confirming Agenda 21
- 2012** Rio+20

**THE BALANCING ACT**

is a Nordic campaign for education for sustainable development. The visual symbols for the campaign are a series of eye catching sculptures, created by the Danish sculptor, Jens Galschiøt. The organizers are Ekocentrum in Sweden, Eco-net in Denmark and the The Ideas Bank Foundation in Norway. See: [www.thebalancingact.info](http://www.thebalancingact.info)

**THE BALANCING PRIZE**

is a Nordic Sustainability Award, awarded every second year by the Ideas Bank Foundation to Nordic municipalities and local communities who have excelled in creative contributions towards sustainable development. The four communities featured in this book received the 2011 award at the Ideas bank Foundation’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference in Oslo in November 2011. The next award will take place at the Nordic Sustainability Conference in Umeå, Sweden in 2013.

The Prize consists of small versions of a series of large bronze sculptures specially created for the Balancing Act campaign by the Danish sculptor Jens Galschiøt, as a symbol for the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD-10). They highlight the task of achieving a good balance between people and planet – ecology, economy and society – to ensure sustainable development. The sculptures have been exhibited in many places including outside parliament buildings and towns halls.





# FOUR NORDIC WINNERS

Four very different municipalities in Norden; and four approaches to sustainability. Common to all is a vision and will for change – an intergenerational and global perspective – work integrating all sectors and interest groups – and broad mobilization through civic participation and education. Achieving concrete results today is thus combined with building long term awareness and skills for the future.



*The Balancing Act award, 11.11.11: The four award winning municipalities and Ideas Bank staff.*



# CHANGE THROUGH CONTINUITY

Visions – Cross-sectorial approach – Deep foundation

«We found ourselves in the deepest  
crisis imaginable... together we came up  
with a bold vision for the future of the city»

– Ilmar Reepalu, mayor for many years







**The Swedish city of Malmö** (population 300,000) is acclaimed as a world leader in sustainable development. The initial impetus was a local crisis - and growing unemployment. Crisis is often the key! It led city leaders to start a process of vision building, involving everyone. A derelict industrial brownfield site, the Western Harbour, became an international test bed for sustainable solutions, not only environmental but equally a social vision; with new processes working right across sectors and disciplines. Leaders emphasize how the project led to new routines, innovation networks and cooperation in the city administration as well as the private sector. The city has managed to spread this vision and practice of sustainability to all sectors of its activity.

Malmö's approach has been exceptionally holistic; ecology, economy and community. A key success factor has been continuity. This is rare; only a patient, long term approach - and lasting political commitment - can give results. Transforming today's cities is a long, messy and complicated process. Only this continuity has made possible such impressive progress.

Sweden as a nation has succeeded in making sustainable development the accepted goal from the top levels of politics down to the grassroots. This has led to ambitious efforts in cities like Malmö. Long term groundwork and public incentives stand out as two key characteristics of success; two decades of progressive work with sustainability research, policy and incentives. This highlights the role of authorities, playing a very active role, not however by central decree but by *enabling* local activity.

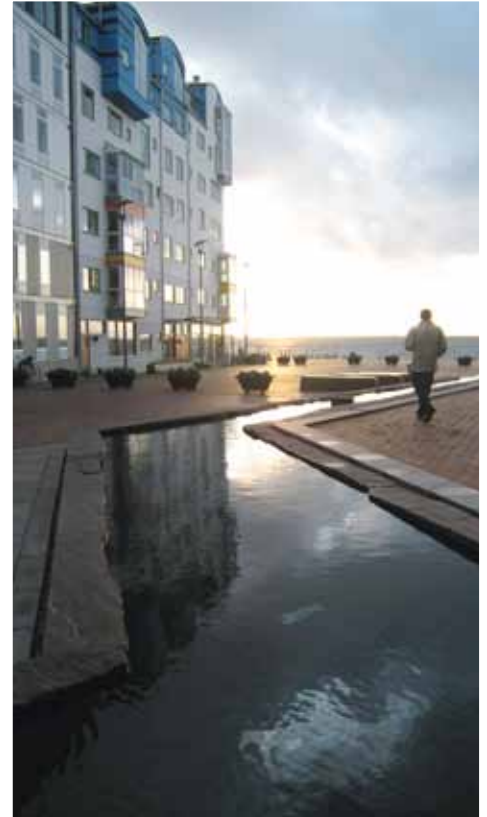
Like many cities Malmö has problems of ethnic minorities and criminality. The pioneering Western Harbour development is combined with regeneration of

old city areas - including Augustenborg and, now, social and ecological work in tough areas like Rosengård. They focus on awareness, education, solidarity and identity.

Recognizing that sustainability is more a socio-cultural task than a purely technical one, the city is now placing new emphasis on sustainable consumption. This includes green procurement and sustainable events - including the annual Malmö festival which attracts more than a million visitors and is said to be one of the most sustainable events in the world. Health is also in focus: in addition to being a Fairtrade city, 1000 city employees now work in the field of ecological food for schools and health centres. The goal is 100% ecological food by 2020. As of today the figure is already 50% in the schools and 35% in Malmö as a whole. Interestingly, the city is also initiating cooperation with the surrounding rural municipalities.

Malmö is also aware of its responsibility to contribute to others; the city is very active in outreach activities and networking, in Europe and beyond, was an early Fairtrade city, and has extensive cooperation with cities including Swakopmund in Namibia, Caofeidian in China and Hong Kong.

To describe Malmö's work would require a whole book. We highlight a few examples here; suffice to say that the city is constantly improving its educational campaigns, including new sectors, raising its environmental targets, and cooperating with more networks worldwide. Pollution, renewable energy, green procurement, sustainable mobility ... with results that would not have been possible without broad mobilization and awareness building. This is Local Agenda 21 at its very best.



*Below: the pioneering Western Harbour sustainable city area has become very popular. Top: mayor Reepalu receives another award for the city*





## 1. INTEGRATED TOOLS FOR CHANGE: THE QUALITY PROGRAM

The Western Harbour pioneered sustainable solutions for water, wastes, transports and low energy architecture. It became the first city area in Europe with 100% renewable energy supplies. New planning methodologies such as the “Quality Program” broke new ground in combining ecological, economic and social goals in one document and communicating these to all stakeholders including developers. This document then formed part of design contracts, ensuring that goals were implemented and monitored. Developers were awarded projects on the basis of showing high ambitions. In addition, the city developed research programs with regional universities to ensure critical feedback on results as well as identifying weaknesses; one learns as much from failures as from successes, they say. Honest assessment has been a feature of their approach.

A Quality Program has separate sections devoted to the ecological, economic and social goals for a project. Environmental qualities such as peace and quiet, territory, meeting places, variety and sensory pleasure are included alongside environmental targets. The QP then becomes the basis for quality control throughout the design and construction period. Similar methods are now used in other cities, but even today they are seldom as holistic – or ambitious – as those developed by Malmö.



*More and more people are swiching to cycle*

## 3. TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY

Most of our efforts will have to be aimed at transforming existing cities. This is far more challenging and complex than designing new areas. In renovating old districts Malmö has set ambitious targets of 50% reductions in energy use, coupled with increased supplies of renewable energy to replace fossil fuels. But the ecological goals are dependent on being able to reinvigorate urban communities; hence programs include education, jobs, health and culture. A key lesson of Malmö and others is that *ecological* sustainability cannot be achieved without healthy *community*.

These programs are based on close cooperation between city, local associations, residents, commerce and builders, with processes of user involvement including local schools and children. Local democracy is a key factor. The program in the socially challenging Rosengård district has included green areas and vegetable growing, with excellent social results and a new organisation dedicated to sustainable lifestyle.

## 4. CONTACTS:

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[www.Malmö.se/sustainablecity](http://www.Malmö.se/sustainablecity)



## 2. CLIMATE AND RESOURCES: BIG STRIDES

Malmö city has reduced its energy use and climate emissions drastically over the past 20 years. And the goals are constantly being raised. Climate emissions have been halved already, the current aim is to be climate neutral by 2020 and 100% renewable energy based by 2030.

In contrast to many municipal initiatives, Malmö’s climate goals do not only target the activities of the municipality itself but the whole city – including for transports.

Renewable energy supplies include a large component of wind power, the most plentiful resource in this region, as well as solar and biogas. Passive and even zero emission buildings are being commissioned. Achieving a lower ecological and climatic footprint in the area of transports is the most difficult task. Initiatives for sustainable mobility include new public transport routes, lower fares, biogas vehicles, incentives for electric cars, a new city tunnel, “superbuses”, car pooling, free cycle parking at the station and other measures.





# STAVANGER

## PARTNERSHIPS

Long term perspectives – Public participation  
– North/South-dialogues

“It takes time to introduce broad participatory methods, but given good energy and follow up, people turn up next time .....”



**Despite being Norway’s “oil city”,** Stavanger (pop. 126,000) has focused on sustainable development for many years. Stavanger’s achievements are based on the ability to build creative partnerships between sectors and interest groups – well assisted by committed and visionary individuals.

The city was an early pioneer in implementing some of the important, if less visible, measures needed to transform cities: integrated waste and sewage management systems, regional traffic coordination, environmentally benign urban development, green procurement, and not least, good information and participation processes. The latest town plan reinforced this by conducting visioning workshops in every urban district. The city also participates in many regional and international networks, including the Norwegian “future cities” program, an “energy cities” network and north-south exchanges.

Whereas Malmö exemplifies transformation inspired by crisis, Stavanger exemplifies forward-looking leadership based on plentiful resources from the petroleum sector.



*Global responsibility: Pictures from Stavanger’s North-South cooperation with Antsirabe, Madagascar...*



There have also been challenges typical of cities in rapid growth, such as unsustainable trends in urban sprawl, climate emissions, transports and consumption.

Stavanger was an early starter with a climate plan, was the first with a hydrogen fuel station and a recharging station for electric cars, and is now developing biogas rapidly, in particular for public transport. Innovative low energy buildings are spreading. Having won awards in Environmental City programs, Stavanger became a Fairtrade city in 2006 and all municipal departments are now environmentally certified. Ecological food is being introduced in all municipal canteens, schools and health facilities. Notably, their climate plan included the issue of indirect energy use and sustainable consumption right from the start. Social and cultural programs are also high on the agenda, strengthening local identity, arts and innovation.

After a boom during the era of shipping and fisheries, Stavanger was rescued from serious decline by the advent of North Sea oil and gas. Now, like many regions, it faces the difficult issue of how to transform an economy largely based on fossil fuels. How? There are no easy answers, but despite the recent introduction of some gas heating, Stavanger deserves high praise for its efforts to confront this issue - how to prepare for “life after oil”?

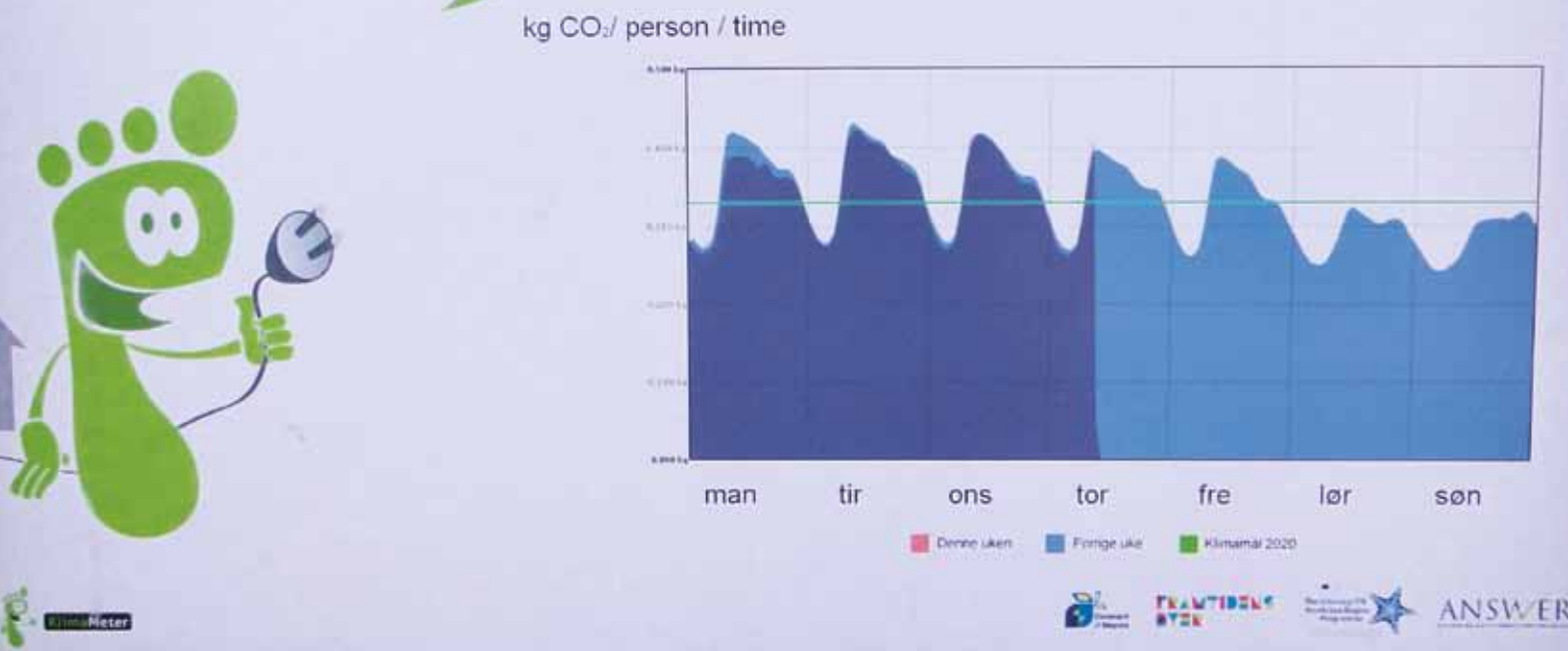
### 1. THE “GREEN CITY STAVANGER” PARTNERSHIP

Through this major initiative three forces have combined: the city authorities, citizens, and the business community. For over a decade these three together have planned and implemented Stavanger’s Agenda 21. All are represented on its board – including all political parties. The citizens’ initiative has been led by the organization “Green Everyday”, which promotes and assists “green living” for participating families; the business forum, “Green City Stavanger”, was founded with sustainability as keyword from the start. Regional research developed for petroleum activities has been diversified intelligently and is now active in many sectors – providing skilled knowledge-based employment. It has been a dynamic catalyst for innovation and cooperation amongst the leading business interests in the whole region.

*...and receive their Balancing Act award from former Oslo Environmental Director Guttorm Grundt*



# CO<sub>2</sub>-utslipp fra alle bygg i Stavanger



Stavanger provides web updates on emissions from all buildings in the city

## 2. PARTICIPATION

It takes time to introduce broad participatory methods, but given good energy and follow up, people turn up next time they are invited because they know it is important and will be inspiring. Environment director Olav Stav and his colleagues sum up many years of experience thus. A recent venture was extensive scenario processes with workshops in the urban districts. This is in line with the goals of the new Planning and Building Act, which requires increased participation.

Consultants prepared three scenarios, based on past and future global and national trends. The comprehensive material was communicated through a dramatized description entitled "Camilla and the others", to show what life would be like in each of the three futures. The futures seminar was attended by 110 people including political leaders, administrators, the business community and civil society. Groups were formed by

mixing these interest groups together. In the first phase they were asked to consider how best to reduce the gap between hopes and reality and which services should be prioritized. Next they looked at each theme area: Diversity and participation – Effective organization – A good city to live in – A regional centre with international connections – Robust and creative business. The politicians acted as group leaders and administrative staff as group secretaries. The seminar proceedings were then published on the municipality's website.

Over the next month, 11 workshops were conducted in each of Stavanger's seven districts plus special ones for youth, for immigrants, for primary school children and for "groups that are specially difficult to reach". The workshops followed a proven model and were located in places that were "home ground" for the participants. Municipal staff acted as process leaders, having received prior training.

In 2001 Stavanger received the Synergy prize for cross-sector cooperation. The jury stated: "Stavanger is one of our most ambitious and active municipalities in Local Agenda 21 work. The city has combined visioning work and civic mobilisation with concrete action toward sustainable practice." Cooperation between the municipality, the business sector and the residents led to many initiatives to realize the visions, including a new secretarial job to promote local democracy, new green pedestrian streets and meeting places, "The Futures Newspaper", and new partnerships between the municipality, businesses and civil society.

## 3. GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

Stavanger has been active for many years in international networks, not least friendship cooperation with the towns of Nablus on the West Bank and Antsirabe in Madagascar. Main themes for this cooperation have been climate emissions, water, ecology and local democracy. This form of cooperation is widespread in the Nordic countries and contributes to development as well as to understanding of sustainability issues. A national organisation for this is the Friendship North-South Association - founded partly on initiative from the Ideas Bank. A network of communities, municipalities, schools and other local institutions link Norway and developing countries. Through dialogue, cooperation and exchange, this promotes development, human rights, international solidarity, democracy, and mutual cultural understanding. Partnership is based on mutuality and the principles of equality. Involving young people especially, it provides a window to the world and has a strong educational value. Not only Stavanger but many of the examples in this booklet have such forms of exchange, reinforcing the educational and global aspects of the work for a sustainable world.

## 4. CONTACTS:

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*The huge Condeep oil platforms were constructed for many years in Stavanger*







TINGVOLL

## THE ECOLOGICAL BASIS OF COMMUNITY

“Sustainable agriculture – Cross-political understanding  
– Living local economy”

“We want solutions that  
are better for the people  
and for the planet”



**Tingvoll municipality** (pop. 3100) in Norway's fjord region is typical of many outlying rural communities; endowed with great natural beauty and resources, but fragile as regards population, employment and services. This community was determined to confront the future. Tingvoll was one of the leaders in setting up the "eco-municipalities" movement. For 20 years it has been developing sustainable agriculture, local crafts and organic food, in close collaboration with the local Bioforsk Centre, which is the national centre for research and development of ecological farming.

The commitment of the population has been central. The municipality pioneered a unique approach: "education for politicians", whereby courses on sustainable development are organized for the local councillors after each election. And at the start of each new period, the council has re-committed itself to the *Ecomunicipality Declaration*, signed many years ago – so sustainability goals are ensured in all planning processes. Tools for environmental accounting have also been used for many years in the administration.

North-South solidarity has for 20 years been another feature of Tingvoll's work. A friendship agreement was started in 1992 with Bunda i Tanzania. Some 20 local organizations participate in this cooperation which includes educational projects in the schools, cultural exchanges, study tours in both directions and collecting money in Tingvoll for various small projects in Bunda. The Bioforsk Centre arranges exchanges with farmers from Bunda and has a volunteer working with the Tanzanian organisation ENVIROCARE. In 2007 the municipality decided to compensate for all climate gas emissions caused by their air travel, not by buying quotas but by paying into a fund to be used for reforestation and renewable energy in Bunda.

It is a cause for concern, however, that the proportion of ecological food in Norway is still only around 5%, despite government targets, and there are few municipalities that show the same vision as Tingvoll.

The often repeated fact that the majority of the world's population now lives in cities should not make us forget the importance of the rural world. Rural communities face particularly tough challenges. But in a future sustain-

able world, there is the prospect of a real revalorization of the countryside, with increased need for food production, wastes recycling, water supplies, biodiversity, and recreation. In addition the rural areas may well become the leading producers of renewable energy - which can only in a very limited way be provided within cities. All the above suggest the potential for a genuine rural revival – not least in economic terms. A world built on new cooperation and synergy between town and country. Communities such as Tingvoll are concrete indicators of this trend.

## 1.ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE

The Bioforsk Centre, employing around 40 persons, is the national centre for ecological farming and land use research. It has recently also been designated as regional centre for renewable energy, with special responsibility for solar and bioenergy. This gives added impetus to Tingvoll's efforts towards sustainable resource use and rural liveli-



*Tingvoll receives the 2011 Ideas Bank Balancing Act award*

hoods. The recently established Tingvoll Ecopark already has a pilot biogas plant, and a municipal woodchips heating plant is under construction. The cooperation between the municipality and the research centre is a fine example of synergy effects providing inspiration, new skills and concrete results.

The centre with its beautiful "Star Garden" receives many visitors as well as school classes, and runs active courses on soil, plants, food and nature. The old buildings are to be remodeled with exhibitions and educational functions and the whole site is being redeveloped to strengthen Bioforsk's educational role – learning by doing.





## 2.ACTIVE POLITICIANS

The “environmental education for politicians” is a unique initiative. It was conceived by the Tingvoll Resource Centre at the local college; the Ideas Bank has participated in this program which has since been run in several other municipalities too – but only in Tingvoll has it been run for each new council for over 20 years. It comprises a series of seminars and workshops including themes such as the Fredrikstad sustainability declaration (see page 36), local industry and resources, energy, biological diversity and ecological land use; using methods for involving citizens and role playing where the council members change political parties. Here again continuity has been a key to success. As a new method of local empowerment, this is important not least because small rural communities often lack the knowhow to make skilled decisions in the complex matter of sustainable development.

## 3.HOUSEKEEPING LOCAL RESOURCES

Some years ago Tingvoll played a key role in getting home composting accepted as an alternative to conventional waste policy. A special model of composting bin, the “hagakompen”, was also developed in Tingvoll. The municipality was first in the Nordmøre region to introduce comprehensive waste recycling. The Resource Centre at the local high school played a large part in these developments. There are now many initiatives aimed at good housekeeping of local resources. In energy these include mini hydro projects and a growing focus on bioenergy. The municipality is now the lead partner in a regional energy efficiency program, and has initiated a program to reduce local energy consumption including car use.

## 4.CONTACTS:

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# SAMSØ ISLAND

## 100 % RENEWABLE

Pioneer individuals – Local ownership  
– Education/building competence

“Think local – and act local”

- Søren Hermansen, Director of the Energy Academy







*Wind energy as well as solar made Samsø 100% renewable in 10 years*

From the fossil fuel age to full self-sufficiency in renewable energy in 10 years? In 1997, Samsø (pop. 4300) won a competition to become Denmark's "Renewable Energy Island". Samsø was not promised special funds beyond existing Danish and EU funds for energy conservation and renewables. Although initial public meetings were mostly concerned with typical problems of rural decline, the exciting energy project soon attracted broad support. It has led to a whole new identity for the island. It was backed by the municipality, the local energy utility, the Farmers' Association and the enthusiastic members of the local "Energy and Environment Office". Together they established the "Samsø Energy Company". And the target was achieved!

Samsø maintained its momentum even after a new Danish government sharply reduced subsidies for renewable energy and support for organisations such

as the Energy and Environment Office. Its manager, Mr. Søren Hermansen, now director of the Samsø Energy Academy, attributes continuity to the broad local backing it has achieved. "People here regard this project as vital for the future of the whole community", he says. It has given a whole new sense of self-belief to a rural community in decline.

This project once again relates closely to the goals of ESD-10, the UN decade of Education for Sustainable Development: it has led to new knowledge amongst the public, then to the founding of the Energy Academy, and further – so that Samsø is now a regional centre for expertise and dissemination of skills.

Here too transport is the biggest challenge: it was not realistic to have all cars running on electricity from windmills by 2008. The Energy Company chose the

interim goal of exporting as much surplus wind energy as the cars consume in oil. This was achieved in 2002 through the erection of ten 2.3 MW windmills off the south coast of Samsø. 80 % of the large investment cost was found locally, with Samsø Council paying half the cost, and 30%, as in the case of the onshore windmills, split between a few major and hundreds of minor local investors.

Barriers to success included the initial difficulty of mobilizing people, and changing priorities on the part of central government. Success factors include the inclusion of many shareholders thus creating really wide ownership of the projects; and, not least, the choice of a no-compromise target: 100% !

Vision, pioneer individuals, and the ability to engage everyone; those are key ingredients of success. The

island now has a range of follow up targets, including more organic agriculture. The project has been hailed as a major success story, and has also created new local jobs. Energy savings however have proved harder to achieve; the challenge of changing people's consumption patterns is thus a high priority for the next phase. Still, in addition to international acclaim and a reinvigorated social community, the island now has a negative carbon balance – a huge and inspiring achievement.

## 1.UNCOMPROMISING TARGETS:

In 1998, only 8 % of the island's electricity and some 15 % of its heating energy was from renewable sources. The goal of 100 % was achieved mainly by 11 large windmills, plus bioenergy fuelled district heating, heat pumps and solar collectors. By 2000 the island was already self-sufficient in electricity. Many houses are



also now equipped with solar collectors and new wood or straw-burning stoves. Citizen groups worked to mobilise support for district heating in the villages. In some, 70-80 % of residents were positive. The first, which uses solar collectors and a straw-burning furnace and serves 190 households, was opened in 2001. By 2005 the renewable share of heating energy was already 65%. The remarkable achievement of this “100%” goal has provided inspiration to many others, not least to island communities all over the world, who are heavily dependent on imported energy supplies yet often have great potential for wind, solar and wave energy.

## 2.SHARING OWNERSHIP

Full self sufficiency has been achieved by involving the whole community. A remarkable feature is that no less than 440 of the roughly 2000 households own shares in the windmills. A series of public meetings and broad dialogue created the impetus for this; it takes skilled participation processes to engage all groups and this is another important aspect popular of ESD-10 education. The Danish word “felleskap” means “community”, but the related word “fælled” refers more broadly to “commons” in the sense of shared property, grazing areas or other goods within a local community. Local pioneer Søren Hermansen says that this concept is a key to sustainability. It combines the idea of using natural resources for the good of all, with the economic advantages of cooperative structures and, equally, a very important notion of responsibility and shared values. Hermansen says: with ownership come understanding, connection, and belonging.

## 3.THE ENERGY ACADEMY: PRACTISING ESD 10

The energy project led to the foundation of the Samsø Energy Academy in 2005 – naturally housed in a new, innovative low energy building. Here researchers from Danish and foreign schools and universities study renewable energy. The inspiration lies just outside the door: wind turbines, solar collectors and district heating based on straw. The academy acts as a conference centre where companies, researchers and politicians discuss energy and sustainability. Throughout the summer it serves as an experimentarium and showroom for tourists. At the Energy Camp - established in 2007 - children, youth and teachers participate in innovative learning sessions,



*Public participation on Agenda 21 in Samsø*

*The Samsø Energy Academy – sustainability skills in a sustainable architecture in a sustainable community*

building on the Nordic tradition for civic formation. The story of how Samsø became self-sufficient through local cooperation and commitment is combined with practical exercises and experiments. Through dialogues and performances, participants reflect on their own contribution and choices for sustainable living. Both the municipality and the Energy Academy are continuing their efforts for education for sustainable development, through participating in network and spreading information – to adults and children, public and authorities, in Scandinavia and far beyond. The project has led to co-operation with the small Pacific island of Niue, Uleoung Do in Korea, Chongming in China and a number of European islands in an EU network called Islenet. The know-how developed has also made the staff attractive as consultants, for instance to island communities in Japan and the US.

## 4. CONTACTS:

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# TWELVE “RUNNERS UP”

12 Nordic stories that illustrate various themes and aspects of action for local sustainable development. A common factor here too is broad mobilisation and the use of creative, skilled methods for civic formation in its best sense. Technology, organisation, good leadership, public participation and value choices all play their part.



*In Albertslund municipality (see p.56), citizens made a large wall mural to remind world leaders at the 2009 COP climate summit that we have only one planet, not four*





## FREDRIKSTAD, NORWAY: GLOBAL VISION AND FOLLOW UP

The “Fredrikstad Declaration” (1998) marked a key step for sustainable development in Norway. It has since been signed by two thirds of all Norwegian municipalities. It inscribed itself into a well established pattern of environmental and cultural policies in this southern Norwegian town. A key feature of this story is the dedicated work over many years where a municipality clearly sees its role of “community developer”; as in other successful cases, by building many fora and processes for cooperation and citizen education.

After Fredrikstad amalgamated its administration with smaller neighbouring municipalities, a “local model” was

organized where many smaller local committees each have a voice and are involved in planning decisions.

The city is participating in the national “Future Cities” program which is developing ambitious climate targets as well as broader sustainability goals. Fredrikstad was also amongst the first to assume a global responsibility, setting up twinning and exchange networks with towns in Guatemala, San Martin and Patzun, from 1985 onwards. This also later took the form of fair trade agreements as well as concrete support. The range of support shows how broadly this has been taken up in Fredrikstad; it includes volunteer groups and church congregations

*Nobel Peace Prize winner  
Rigoberta Menchu thanks Fredrikstad*

– funding for water supply – the gift of a fire engine – support to schools – a laboratory – and more .

All this work relates to global sustainable development and has an educational aspect, with valuable learning on both sides. One heartwarming outcome of this solidarity work came in 1992 when Guatemala’s Rigoberta Menchu came to Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. She asked specially to visit Fredrikstad in order to convey the thanks of her people for the many years of cooperation.

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## GRÄSTORP, SWEDEN: ENJOYING SUSTAINABILITY

The small municipality of Grästorp in Sweden (pop. 6,000) has become famous for its original and entertaining approach to Local Agenda 21. Through theatre, events and even pranks, they have been making it fun for everyone. This has even resulted in five entries in the Guinness Book of Records for garbage collection and other feats, arranged with the public.

The record attempts are always chosen to highlight a real issue. For instance, the mountain of light bulbs was collected to bring the attention of the Minister of

Environment to the fact that the lead at their base makes them a toxic waste problem. It succeeded: the Minister did in fact come to Grästorp, and later announced the introduction of a national separation scheme for light bulbs.

Grästorp has a clear strategy: the message must be easy to grasp and fun, but still deal with serious issues. Children's theatre performances, an "eco-relay" in which people compete at green shopping and sorting their waste, and "environmental fairytale walks" are amongst

the creative ways used to communicate Local Agenda 21. During the annual festival, the municipal Chief Engineer has to climb onto the roof of the Town Hall, dressed as "Karlsson on the Roof" - a figure known to all Swedish children - with a propeller on his back, and shower the children below with organic sweets.

The serious side of Grästorp's effort to build a more sustainable world appears equally in the twinning link it has established with Maruppa - a community in one of the poorest parts of one of the world's poorest countries,



Grästorp's two "sustainability clowns" are making it enjoyable for everyone. Above left: the mayor of Maruppa, Mozambique, in Graestorp, and the Swedish Minister of Environment being made to join the fun

Mozambique. The Agenda 21 association also cooperates with the association "Närproducerat mitt i Västra Götaland" which unites producers to increase production as well as processing of local agricultural produce. Much of this is from organic farming. Together with the municipality they also organize "Food from Far Away", an initiative that enables immigrant women to prepare exotic dishes from local produce. This also stems from a previous agricultural project run in collaboration with Maruppa.

The efforts have also yielded important results at home. In eight years the amount of unsorted waste in Grästorp has been halved, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have been reduced by replacing district heat for heating oil, train traffic has increased by 50 % just in the last three years, and an effective market for locally produced food has been established.

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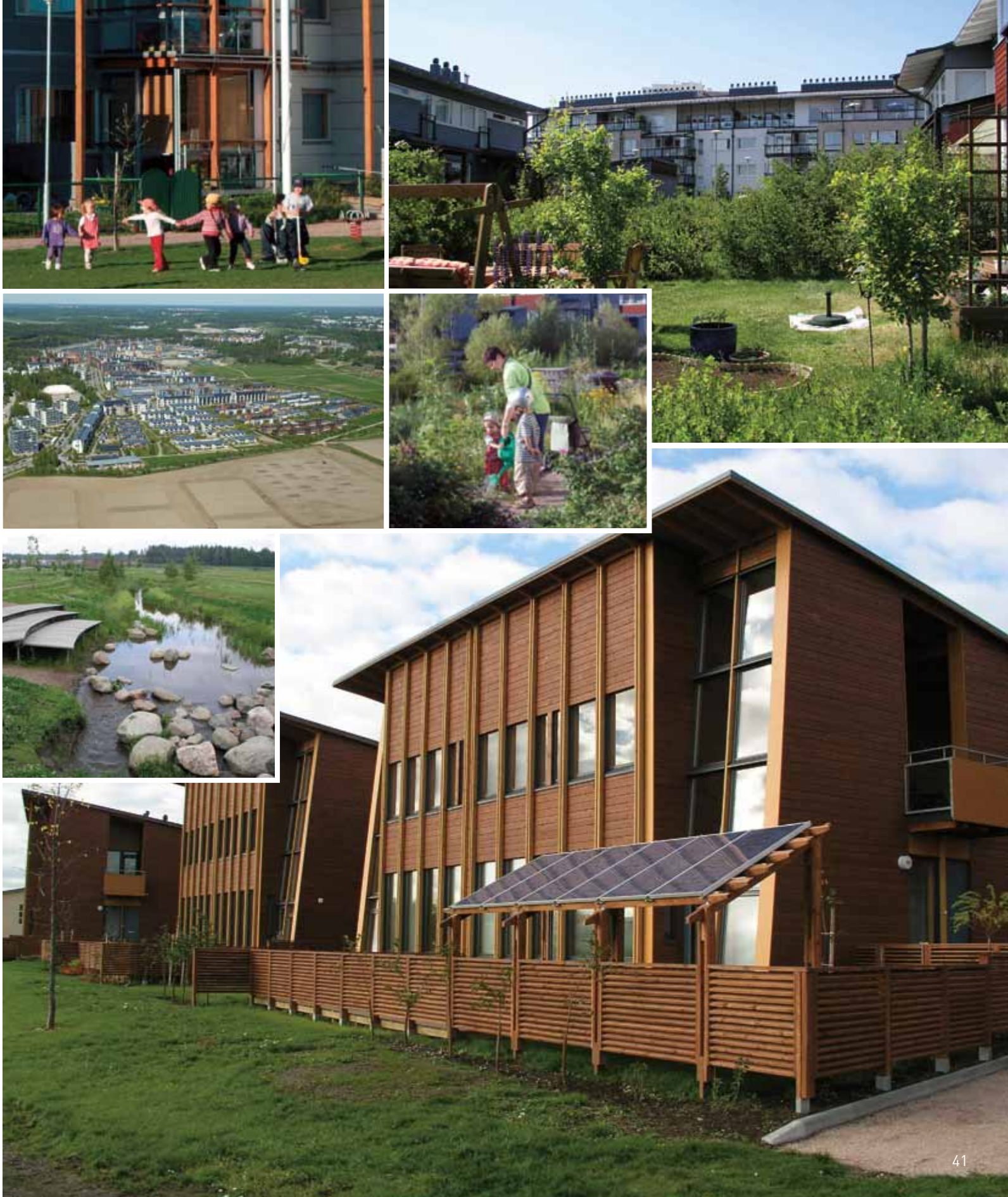
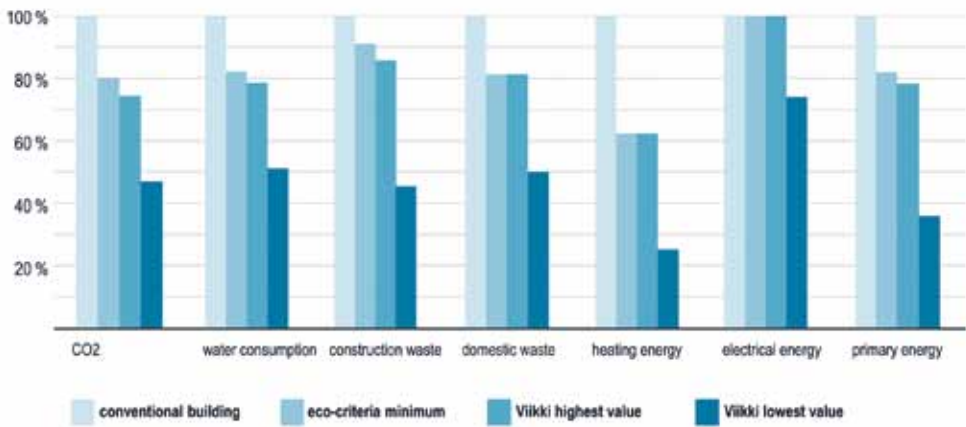
# Viikki, Finland: SUSTAINABLE URBAN FUTURES

One of the big sustainability projects in Norden is Viikki, a new urban area on the outskirts of Helsinki, capital of Finland. As well as soon housing some 15,000 people it has colleges, a science park and a range of activities with some 6,000 workplaces. More than two thirds of the 1100 hectare site is open space with important landscape features, biological water treatment, wetlands, allotment gardens, a botanical garden, and a teaching farm which is part of the university campus.

Based on competitions the project initiated in 1994 combined high ideals with pragmatism. It reached beyond the utilitarian approach to environment: “the human-centered mentality sees the environment only through its use value ...”, signaling a real desire to work for profound changes and in a holistic way; yet at the same time being pragmatic: “instead of attempting to outline an ideal future, an attainable direction is set. The level will change with time and be set by the political climate as time goes on”. The development of Viikki was geared to involve many different architects and others, in order to encourage a diversity of ideas as well as to raise the sustainability skills of all professions. As a sustainability project it ties in with national goals: Viikki was deliberately organized so as to be a source of national research and innovation.

Viikki includes high energy and environmental targets, efficient new public transport, water and waste management. It was also one of the first projects to drastically reduce private car parking, and to make the costs of the car parking visible to buyers. The special assessment system PIMWAG developed for Eco-Viikki was innovative in placing a strong focus on social and urban qualities: the disabled, design for future re-use, food production, noise, and flexibility for users. Housing even included a self-build area. This is a useful idea: the area brought forward some of the most interesting solutions.

The “green fingers” planning layout has proved successful and similar concepts can be seen in other ecological projects. The allotment gardens as well as the shared facilities, such as saunas and laundries, have proved popular, strengthening social contacts as well as saving both space and money. The Gardenia centre is an attraction that adds botanical and ecological value to the area. The university campus, which also selected high environmental targets for its planning, provides many workplaces as well as life sciences research. There has been extensive follow up and resident participation programs focusing on topics like green consumption.





# The Ecocommunity Hjortshøj, Denmark:**MODERN LIFE WITH 1/3 RESOURCE USE**

**Denmark** is a pioneer of ecocommunities, inspired by a common vision, in most cases deeply ecological as well as social. Many are rural but some are urban; some are quite experimental, but others cater to conventional families, with modern, high quality sustainable living – including growing healthy food, ecological water and wastes recycling, renewable energy, car sharing and home workplaces. Good forms of organization and co-ownership are a key element in getting such communities to succeed.

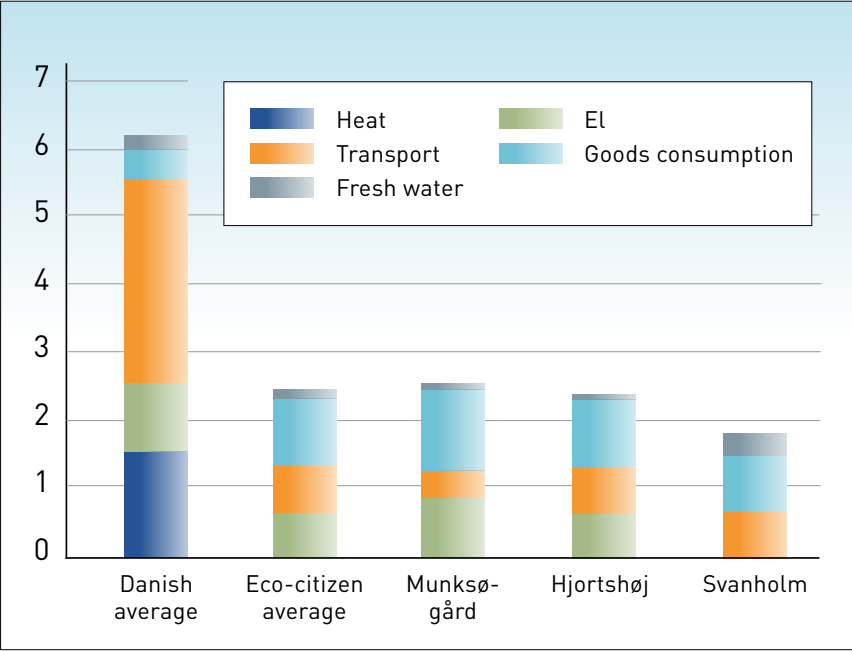
Hjortshøj, near Aarhus, was founded over 20 years ago and now comprises 250 adults and children. It is organized mainly as housing cooperatives, with increasingly advanced ecological solutions. Energy needs are a minimum and energy supply is almost entirely renewable, including solar energy and biomass heating. Community and socio-pedagogic goals include integrating people with disabilities in some of the eight housing groups. Farming is on quite a large scale so that the community has achieved a good degree of food

self sufficiency and also sells some products. There is car sharing and many of the residents now have at least part of their work within the site. This includes farming, baking, ceramics, teaching, handcrafts and jobs online. There are many artistic, pedagogic and cultural activities.

Ecocommunities illustrate a lifestyle that is ecologically and socially very positive. Perhaps these, far from being “idealistic dreamers”, are more realistic than most of us? Analyses of ecovillages have shown that their ecological footprint is well under half the national averages. This is a big step on the path towards Agenda 21 – modern, sustainable societies of tomorrow.

[www.andelssamfundet.dk](http://www.andelssamfundet.dk)

Research shows that ecocommunities including Hjortshoj have less than one third of the average Danish resource use



**SUCCESS FACTORS** – a socially and ecologically responsible vision of living – cooperation and human supportiveness  
– realism and practical skills  
– support and tolerance from public authorities

**BARRIERS** – lack of patience or too idealistic ambitions – conflicts – unsuitable location (sometimes too isolated) or land/facilities – bureaucracy – difficulties with permits or bank loans for ecological proposals



“Living responsibly, a social vision for people, plus lots of hard work”





Historic occasion for 100 mayors signing the Aalborg+10 commitments in 2004

# Aalborg, Denmark: MAKING A SOLID FRAMEWORK

**The Danish city of Aalborg** (pop.125,000) became a leader in the field of Sustainable Development with the 1994 Aalborg Charter, a statement on the role of municipalities and their citizens. It has been signed by nearly 3000 municipalities across Europe. Developed in collaboration with the European Commission and ICLEI, it was adopted at the first conference of the Campaign for Sustainable Cities held in Aalborg in 1994.

In 2004 progress was assessed and this resulted in the creation of the Aalborg Commitments. The Aalborg Commitments were adopted at the Aalborg +10 Conference in 2004. Now signed by over 650 municipalities, they commit signatories to set concrete goals and actions within the following 10 themes:

- Governance**
- Local management towards sustainability
  - Natural common goods
  - Responsible consumption and lifestyle choices
  - Planning and design
  - Better mobility, less traffic
  - Local action for health
  - Vibrant and sustainable local economy
  - Social equity and justice
  - Local to global

The city itself is pursuing the commitments in its own planning. Both the current and the upcoming sustainability strategy are based on the Aalborg Commitments.

One focal point of the Municipality's strategy has been entering into public/private partnerships, which has proved especially successful. For instance, the newly established Network for Sustainable Business Development in North Denmark, targeted the local industry, is already showing great promise. Another example is the "Green Shops" program (picture Gravensgade) targeted the smaller businesses, where close to 100 shops are participating and where the focus is on environment and energy in connection with store operations and product assortment.

Some of the concepts may seem well known to us now, but frameworks such as these were seminal in establishing policy guidelines for cities and local governments worldwide. Amongst the key principles formulated were that sustainable development must incorporate social justice as well as economic and environmental sustainability; that the effective sphere for

action must be at the level of towns and local authorities; in cooperation with their regions as well as with an eye to global implications. Sustainable development was understood as not a product but a process, which needs to be incorporated into all levels of decision making in society. The Aalborg Charter and Commitments have been seen by many as "the most important tool for local governments in their work to promote sustainable development".

**www.aalborgplus10.dk**  
 Anders Du Mont-Thygesen **adm-teknik@aalborg.dk**  
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 Local Initiative for Sustainable Development –  
 Sustainability Strategy 2008-11 pdf





*Pictures of Uusikaupunki, the Yara factory and the LED street lighting project in Finland*

# CANEMU, Finland: AMBITIOUS MUNICIPAL ENERGY PARTNERSHIPS

**Five pioneer Finnish municipalities** are committed to curb greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2030 – far more than required by EU objectives. They have already taken over 70 measures for energy efficiency, renewable energy and environmental investments. Many more are planned. The Carbon Neutral Municipalities (CANEMU) are Kuhmoinen, Mynämäki, Padasjoki, Parikkala and Uusikaupunki. Uusikaupunki has an even more rapid objective: a 30 per cent reduction by 2012. And six more towns have now joined.

About one third of the target is to be reached by energy efficiency measures, the rest by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. Urban district heating based on renewables has proved the fastest way of reducing emissions. The municipalities have identified a huge potential in local renewable energy sources, and in improved energy efficiency in buildings. This is seen as an investment opportunity, whilst renewable energy and environment-friendly technology is seen to create new jobs.

Authorities, residents and business work together, with expert support from research institutes. An example of the active involvement of residents is a working group to analyse and reduce emissions from holiday homes. The CANEMU project has also devised a Climate Diet calculator for assessing one's personal climate impact. Uusikaupunki's innovative atmosphere is attracting new enterprises to the city; the pro-environmental approach is a competitive asset. The biggest private sector measure there involves the Yara fertiliser plant, where investment in catalyst technology will cut emissions by 90 per cent. Another remarkable initiative is a closed circulation energy solution devised by Sybimar Oy. This facilitates the utilisation of nutrients, water and carbon dioxide in energy and food production.

The aim is to continue concrete measures and to disseminate experience to others. Key success factors identified include the need for real commitment of municipal management, and opportunities for local economy and business. Both enterprises and citizens

need tools and concrete information on solutions. Local media can play a major role. Municipalities can give momentum to emission-curbing measures, based on relatively small resources; however, it pays for small municipalities to pool their resources. Improving energy efficiency is profitable and cost savings can be used to cover the wage of extra staff or a consultant.

Collaboration between local authorities also strengthens a spirit of innovation and friendly competition. CANEMU receives strong support from the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes), a group of companies offering climate-friendly technologies and services, and the Finnish Environment Institute. This again highlights the importance of action "across sectors"; and the crucial enabling role which central authorities need to play.

[www.environment.fi/canemu](http://www.environment.fi/canemu)



# Øvre Eiker, Norway: YOUNG PEOPLE MAKING THE FUTURE

“You have to be out there, where people are, meeting them and talking face to face. Some people think that setting up a Facebook page on the municipality’s website is the way to change the world. That’s a complete misunderstanding”. – Town planner Anders Stenshorne in Øvre Eiker.

This small municipality near Oslo asked young people to participate in shaping their future. From surveys, in-depth interviews and a workshop what emerged as a clear priority was for informal outdoor meeting places. Empty plots awaiting development always seemed to be converted into parking lots! Why could one not create temporary social spaces? It is important that participation processes be followed by quick action. The municipality acted immediately, setting up a “container park” on an empty site this summer. It was to be open daily, and the local library was setting up some of its activities there; other ideas included simple catering run by youth themselves, internet access and a sand volleyball court. Quick planning, cross-sectoral cooperation and volunteer help soon made it a reality, and the process was documented on a DVD by students from a nearby high school: “How to make a meeting place in 24 hours”. At the opening celebration all members of the Local Council were present. “It has been a great success and we hope to do something similar next year. We don’t want our young people to be invisible, they should be in the heart of the town”, says Stenshorne. This continues a tradition of citizen participation. Various forms of dialogue have been used, creating arenas for partnership and cooperation. In 2000, local associations, clubs and the citizen initiative “Øvre Eiker shows its face” developed a manifesto of values titled “Together for an inclusive community”. The municipality endorsed this. One motive

for this was a reaction to the emergence of a local neo-Nazi group. The overarching values are to “promote human understanding, mutual respect and tolerance towards what is foreign”. A few other examples:

The **Citizen Academy** is an annual event where the municipality and the population meet, build networks and foster a sense of belonging. Creative workshops are combined with talks from both insiders and invited speakers. The **Flower Parliament** is a venture involving the municipality, the Chamber of Commerce and volunteers. The central pedestrian street is transformed as spring approaches; all meet to allocate funds and tasks to prepare flower planting and street decoration for the coming season. A spinoff has been school based entrepreneurship producing flower seedlings that are sold to the project. In the **Grandparents Conference** senior citizens use their skills and experience in the service of the younger generations. It is held every second year in the local kindergartens. Many grandparents come to provide support including talks, guided walks, maintenance tasks and reading.

Many small actions that together shape sustainable communities!

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*Young people workshoping and creating the future*







## Lidköping, Sweden: ANCHORING SUSTAINABILITY

**Lidköping's main strategy** document is titled "A welcoming and sustainable community" and opens thus: "Sustainable development is to be the guiding perspective for all activities and long term planning". The municipality's commitment shows in their definition. Often defined as development that gives equal weight to ecological, economic and social aspects, theirs is even more ambitious on behalf of nature and future generations: "The three aspects are equally important, but it is the ecological dimension that *sets the limits for* both the social *goals*, and the economic *means*." This provides a clear hierarchy that can make a real difference when communities or enterprises confront value choices.

Continuity has been a key. Environmental strategist Yvonne Träff has worked in this community of 38,000 people for 20 years; gaining gradual commitment from all. A system for environmental management in the municipal organization was set up in 2006, and is now linked to ISO 14001. Continuous improvement of performance is a requirement, and there is a clearly defined chain of responsibility at the top level of all units. In addition there are some 200 environmental coordinators and ombudsmen. Yvonne's comment is simple: How could we set goals for others if not together with them?

It is, really, almost all about communication – including an information officer and the top management in the municipality, some 20 leaders including the business

director. The head office has thus become an "office of sustainability". And the local politicians are increasingly giving their backing too, especially through the newly established Environment and Climate Committee.

Knowledge is also a key. Lidköping is proud of its dialogue with the inhabitants. It has also been a focus on dialogue with and education for associations and businesses. A key figure in this work is the municipality's energy and climate adviser. In Lidköping, all pre-schools and schools are Green Flag certified, or is certified under the National Agency "Education for Sustainable Development". Both awards are all about the kids working with and learning about the environment and sustainable development. The municipality is now also working to develop guidelines for sustainable urban planning, which should provide guidance for planners. Everything that is built on land owned by the Municipality should comply with the Green Building Council.

This story attests to a gradual shift from specialised environmental action to sustainability integrated into all decision making processes in municipalities. This is exactly the shift that has often been a goal of government policy. Lidköping's journey has reaped success; already in 2002 with the prize as Sweden's Eco-energy municipality, and in 2009 the European award, the "ManagEnergy Award". The Lidköping Biogas project was appointed "Special-mentioned", a special acknowledgement under the initiative Nordic Energy Municipality 2011.

*Biogas facilities in Lidköping, winner of the Eco Energy Award – ecology as the only acceptable framework for all social and economic development*

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*Since 1930: from a centre for disabled children to the world's oldest ecocommunity. Taking real care of those most in need, and of the planet.*

## Solheimar, Iceland: **PIONEERS IN TIME**

**Our goals of a fair, sustainable world** have been pioneered by many, including far away in Iceland where Solheimar, probably the world's first intentional sustainable community, was founded in 1930. The visionary leader was Sesselja Sigmundsdottir, whose social and pedagogic ideas were well ahead of her time. The community was originally founded for children with disabilities, on the basis that "special" groups should be nurtured by all of us and integrated into society, not placed in institutions or treated as "outsiders". Today Solheimar numbers over 100 people, of whom about half have various disabilities. Following the same caring ideal, other special groups such as unemployed and prisoners are also integrated into the community.

The concern for nature has developed over the years to include a wide range of practical environmental activities, including organic agriculture and forestry, renewable energy, and innovative ecological buildings using local materials and natural (as opposed to

mechanical) ventilation. In this way the local soil, microclimate and conditions for living have been slowly and steadily upgraded. Solheimar shows how even a rather barren environment and hostile climate can be not only sustained, but even improved over time.

In economic terms the community aims to be largely self sufficient, with many activities including agriculture, a shop, crafts, art, a bakery and six workshops. As a social and educational project Solheimar cares for many people, runs many courses, hosts many volunteers, and the two guest houses now receive some 30,000 visitors annually. At times Solheimar has had to struggle; alternative visions are not always approved of or given support. But it is an outstanding example of care for both people and planet – of the locally rooted vision and will that we need.

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<http://solheimar.is>





# Stockholm, Sweden: SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY... AND EVERYTHING ELSE



**Stockholm, capital of Sweden**, has about 2 million inhabitants if one includes the outer city areas. The city has taken many groundbreaking environmental and sustainability initiatives over the past 15-20 years; and was crowned "European Green Capital" in 2010.

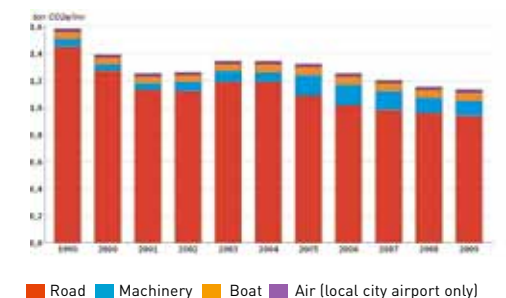
Hammarby Sjöstad waterfront is well known, as are early eco-housing projects such as Understenshöyden. Priority areas for action have included wastes, pollution, water management and energy – the city has reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita by over 25% since 1990 and aims to be completely off fossil fuels by 2050. Progress is documented in comprehensive reports. Here we highlight the transport sector, where Stockholm along with Rotterdam in the Netherlands are recognized European leaders in their policies for restructuring urban mobility and introducing sustainable alternatives.

It's recognized that reducing our transport footprint is the most difficult task. In technical terms, city infrastructures require complex and expensive remodeling; on the sociological side, attitudes to transport have

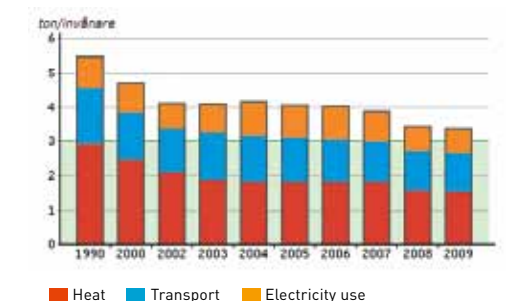
to be altered and this cannot be achieved unless alternatives are made attractive. And there have to be good "eco" options such as biofuels and hybrid or electric vehicles. All this creates the "chicken and egg problem": which comes first? An attractive electric car is not enough by itself; there have to be refueling stations and parking incentives. Even with priority lanes a bus will only travel fast when the number of cars has been reduced. One must provide these new options before there is any market; but the benefits – less traffic, less pollution, quicker commuting – will not be apparent to the consumer until much later – with the market growth one really needed at the start to get things going.

In addition to re-planning for sustainable mobility, Stockholm decided that the city should lead the way with its own vehicle pools. Vehicles running on ethanol and biofuel mixes proved to be successful more quickly than electric vehicles. The population were much involved in discussions and even referendums on traffic measures; eventually a big majority were in favour. Success did take time to appear. Public transport as well as cycling are now increasing steadily. Only one third of trips in the city are now by private cars. The first environmentally friendly vehicles were tried out in 1994, but they now make up 11% of the total vehicle part. And 40% of all new vehicle sales. These figures illustrate the time scale needed – though they say little about the excellent administrative, legislative and awareness efforts behind.

[www.stockholm.se/miljoforvaltningen](http://www.stockholm.se/miljoforvaltningen)



**MILJØBAROMETER**  
"Stockholm's 'Environmental Barometer' gives its citizens excellent continual information on total city emissions and traffic emission. See [www.miljobarometern.se](http://www.miljobarometern.se)





# Albertslund, Denmark: PUBLIC OUTREACH: MAKING OUR FOOTPRINT VISIBLE

**"Stopping growth is not enough.** Major reductions in energy and resource consumption are needed ...” The words are those of the Mayor of the Copenhagen suburb of Albertslund (pop.30,000), introducing the municipality's "Green Accounts". This groundbreaking local eco-auditing system, started in 1996, won "The European Sustainable City Award". It includes an annually updated Local Agenda 21; data on the emissions, wastes, energy and water consumption of all municipal departments; and for all businesses and residential areas in the municipality. Citizens can not only compare their own energy use, wastes and emissions to last year's, but also to that of other neighbourhoods. This reveals surprising

comparisons, creates "friendly competition", and stimulates improvements.

Consumption varies by factors of 5 to 10 times in identical houses. In this way every family sees where it stands. People see the enormous potential for savings, simply by changing behavior – and directly saving them money. Advice on improvements is given. Local schools include sustainability in many activities. The annual award presentations have become a great educational and festive event. And the project is evolving over time; Albertslund is now moving into a new phase where the high consumers in particular are being targeted.

Communicating the concrete picture about our consumption is essential if we are to make good decisions. Often we do not really know what resources we consume, or how we compare with similar families. Social research has shown that consumption can be greatly improved by clear information. The Green Accounts web site presents information in a remarkably clear way. Given today's data systems this is not too difficult. Probably one of the most interesting local initiatives geared to inform and influence consumption. It deserves to inspire many others.

**Povl Markussen,**  
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www.agendacenter.dk



## VARMEFORBRUGET

### Varmerforbrug på linje og under gennemsnittet

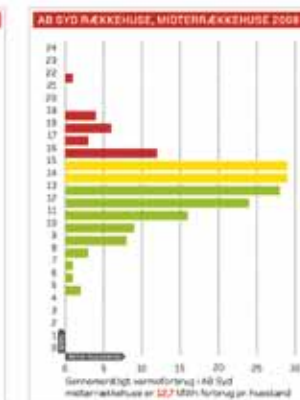
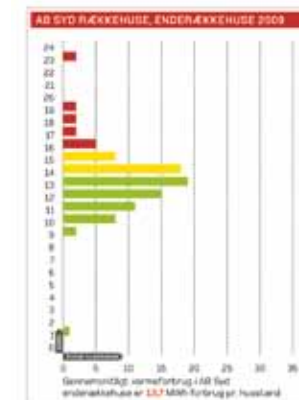
I 2009 var det gennemsnitlige varmerforbrug for midterrækkehuse i Albertslund Syd (Rækkehuse) 13,0 MWh pr. bolig/husstand svarende til 12,7 MWh pr. 100 m<sup>2</sup>. Enderrækkehusenes forbrug var tilsvarende 13,7 MWh pr. bolig/husstand svarende til 14,0 MWh pr. 100 m<sup>2</sup>. Det gennemsnitlige varmerforbrug i 2009 var 14,1 MWh/100 m<sup>2</sup> for tæt/lav liggende i Albertslund. Albertslund Syd har således et varmerforbrug, der for midterrækkehuse ligger under og for enderrækkehuse ligger på høje med det gennemsnitlige forbrug for denne type boliger i Albertslund.

### Sammenligning

Alle boligerne i området er af samme størrelse, og du kan derfor direkte sammenligne dit varmerforbrug med tallene i grafen. På din årsopgørelse over forbrugsafgifter for 2009 under afsnittet "varme" kan du se, hvor meget varme du brugte i løbet af året.

### VARMESPARERÅD

Få uddybende energispareråd via [www.energitjenesten.dk](http://www.energitjenesten.dk). Overvej du forbedringer, - er du også velkommen til at kontakte Varmeværket og få rådgivning om både varmeisoler [43 64 86 92], bygningsisolering [43 68 68 58] samt beregning af energibesparelser og tilskud.



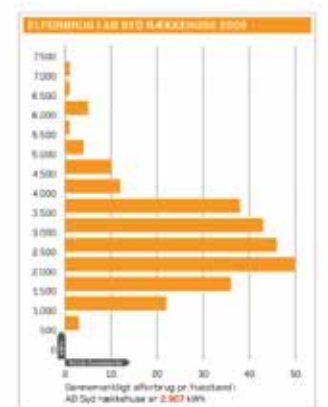
## ELFORBRUGET

### Elforbrug under gennemsnittet

I 2009 var det gennemsnitlige elforbrug i Albertslund Syd, rækkehuse (AB) 2.907 kWh pr. husstand, svarende til 1.089 kWh pr. person. Det gennemsnitlige elforbrug i 2009 i Albertslund var 1.225 kWh pr. person. Albertslund Syd, rækkehuses beboere har således et elforbrug, der ligger under det gennemsnitlige forbrug i Albertslund.

### Sammenligning

Elforbruget afhænger af dagsindsiddelse, familiens størrelse og især af forbrugsvarer. Dvs. hvilke og hvor mange elektriske apparater husstanden har, og hvor meget apparaterne bruges. På din årsafregning fra elforsynings-selskabet kan du se dit elforbrug. Du kan sammenligne dette med det øvrige forbrug i dit boligområde, som fremgår af diagrammet.



Brilliant information for citizens: figures show how many households in every housing area use the most, average or least amounts of heating, electricity, water and wastes – a concrete annual reality check and educational program

### ELSPARERÅD

Få elspareråd via [www.sluknu.dk](http://www.sluknu.dk) eller [www.elspareranden.dk](http://www.elspareranden.dk). Du er også velkommen til, at kontakte Agenda Center Albertslund på telefon 43 62 20 15.



# Halkær Ådal, Denmark: DEMOCRATIC ECOLOGY



Over the past decade this valley in Jutland, Denmark has undergone a remarkable process of social and ecological change. Environmental protection can lead to strong local resistance, but in Halkær a process was initiated that led to sustainable management with the full support and active involvement of the local people.

The local ecology of the bay, fishing, streams and former wetlands were all seriously damaged due to many years of agricultural runoff and other “modernisation”. There was little local progress and rising unemployment. Proposals for nature reserves met local resistance, and the local “environmental group” was perceived as extreme and not widely supported. The three municipalities in the valley did not have very good relations with each other either.

Then an “action research” program was initiated, in which the citizens were asked for ideas about the whole future of the valley - not about environment as an isolated issue. Future scenario workshops were organised. Outside expertise was drafted in, but with the roles reversed: the “experts” were there not to present their own plans to citizens for comment but on the contrary to assist and give advice on ideas proposed by citizens themselves. Out of this arose a proposal for “Returning the Valley to Nature”.

The workshops then looked specifically at potential conflicts; for example farmers risked losing land to the conservation areas. This was resolved through a process of land swaps. In this way the outside experts helped

to find solutions that had been tried in other places. Public events were then arranged to spread the ideas, which were initially seen as unrealistic but slowly gained appreciation and support – including from the local politicians.

As a result, a significant part of the valley has been “returned to nature”, including a lake and new wetland. The Halkær Valley Citizens Association has become widely accepted as leader for the process. The project has had many added impacts, including vibrant local dialogue, innovation by local farmers, new voluntary associations, and a variety of new activities such as building of low energy houses, and a consumers and producers network with the local merchant as the

“go-between”. The overarching principle is local food produced in a way which is healthy for both people and nature. Local “honest” food is provided at the Halkær Inn together with many cultural events. These initiatives are excellent examples of the kind of learning process desired by the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. Futures workshops and the “inverted consultation process” where experts listen to people, break down traditional hierarchies and foster public enthusiasm.

**Folkeforeningen Halkær Ådal,**  
**Peter Søndegård,**  
petrus@mail.dk







# DIRECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In this section, we present articles that together show the link between the practical results achieved (chapter 28 in Agenda 21) and education (chapter 36) which has been concretised in the UN's Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. It is very important now to establish the feedback loop between these two; so that these concrete results of action form the basis for education in the action-oriented skills we need to continue and strengthen local practice.

More than 100 Regional Centers of Expertise (RCEs) have formed around the world. These RCEs work across the entire education community to achieve the goals of the DESD by implementing ESD in the environmental, social and economic contexts of the local communities.

*Charles Hopkins, professor and senior advisor for the UNESCO DESD-committee*

The contribution of municipalities is essential if the world is to achieve sustainability and a new economy that balances social, ecological and economic goals.

*Frode Lindtvedt, Project Manager, "Livable Municipalities", Norway*

Sustainable development has been successfully localised and is no longer a distant, theoretical concept but one filled with meaning and evoked in everyday activities.

*Stefan Kuhn, ICLEI Director for Urban Governance*





The "Flower Parliament" in Øvre Eiker, see p.48

# LOCAL ACTION HAS MOVED THE WORLD: 20 YEARS OF LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY

In June 2012 all eyes will be on Rio de Janeiro where the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, better known as Rio+20 to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1992 Earth Summit, will take place. Local governments play an extremely active role in the Rio+20 preparatory process and are ready to tell their own story of progress towards sustainability.



By **Stefan Kuhn**, ICLEI Director for Urban Governance

The success of local sustainability processes, inspired by the Local Agenda 21 mandate and today taking place in thousands of cities around the world, is widely acknowledged as one of the most remarkable outcomes of the Earth Summit. Even though global sustainability remains a distant goal, it is clear that local initiatives have changed profoundly the way we think about sustainable development, making a lasting mark not only on local but also on national and international governance systems, and pushing the boundaries of what is achievable.

To capture the changing role of local governments in the last two decades of global action for sustainable development and propose recommendations for the future, ICLEI has undertaken a global review. Entitled *Local Sustainability 2012: Taking stock and moving forward*, the report draws on the knowledge and experience of people supporting local sustainability processes, representing ICLEI and UN-HABITAT offices worldwide, as well as civil society and academic partners.

In recent years there has been significant growth in the number of cities involved in sustainability initiatives. Local sustainability has been mainstreamed, as reflected in the growing number of organisations and international processes that regard the local level as key to achieving sustainable development. However, even though many cities work on sustainable development issues, not all use the term "Local Agenda 21". Instead local sustainability processes are referred to as Local Sustainability Plans, Sustainable Community Strategies or even Local Green Growth Plans, as is the case in South Korea.

The variety of local sustainability processes that have developed in countries and continents all over the world is striking. ICLEI's review focuses on the main driving forces behind local processes and identifies **five key types of local sustainability processes**. By discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each type, the report adds to the global debates on the need for a new, multi-level governance framework. According to the typology presented in the review, a local sustainability process can find its way into a city in the form of:

- Local Government Strategy,
- Civil Society Initiative,
- Concerted Action,
- National Policy, or
- International Cooperation.

Illustrated with numerous examples of local initiatives from all over the world, the Local Sustainability 2012 report documents the variety of local processes for sustainability that have emerged around the globe, across most diverse political and economic cultures. Changes in terms of how local sustainability has been understood and governed over the last two decades are described, from an enhanced culture of public participation to the recognition of local governments on the international scene.

## Building the future we want: how to use the potential of local action?

Local governments have shown that they are able to drive the implementation of sustainable development and to initiate respective local processes - sometimes much more effectively than national governments or international organisations. Sustainable development has been successfully localised and is no longer a

distant, theoretical concept but one filled with meaning and evoked in everyday activities.

The Local Sustainability 2012 report acknowledges that much more needs to be done in order to escape the impending environmental and social crisis and ensure wellbeing for all within the limits of planetary resources. Amongst others, the following conclusions and recommendations form the essence of the review:

**Local consciousness about global and future impacts of today's action has never been as high.** However, in order to fully exploit this awareness, information on global trends and the impacts of any local activity on future generations and other places must be made available as a standard basis for political and economic decision-making.

**A good local sustainability process uses various driving forces.** One of the key lessons learned from the review is that the effectiveness of local sustainability processes as well as of programmes designed to support them could be enhanced by combining the strengths of the five process types identified.

**Local sustainability processes are hubs of social innovation.** By combining classic methods of consultation and participatory policy development with new forms of spontaneous and collective action, local sustainability processes can strengthen their role as testbeds of sustainable innovation.

**Greening the economy is a chance to address the crisis.** However, for the Green Economy to become a serious contribution to sustainable development, it has to be linked with social - not only technological - innovation. Decentralised solutions and public control over common goods will be key.

**Sustainable development needs a multilevel governance system with a multi-sectoral approach.** Any global governance framework for sustainable development should include local governments as equal, governmental partners and at the same time initiate national and international legislation that supports their efforts.

**Cities in the spotlight: The Local Sustainability 2012 case study series**  
Accompanying the Local Sustainability review, ICLEI has



also compiled a series of 14 case studies, entitled **Local Sustainability 2012: Showcasing Progress**. The cases portray a broad mix of contemporary themes, and an active and strong involvement of local governments in pioneering greater urban sustainability. From Portland (USA) to Cape Town (South Africa), from Rizhao (China) to Melbourne (Australia), the examples included in this collection confirm that every city can embark on the journey towards urban sustainability. What is needed is a sustained political commitment, a certain degree of ambition, as well as creativity and courage in stretching the traditional limits of their jurisdictional role and in finding new ways of dealing with urban challenges.

### Don't forget to add your city to the Local Action Counter!

*Launched a year ahead of the Rio+20 Conference, the Local Action Counter is an opportunity to demonstrate how many cities from all over the world are working for sustainable development. It only takes a minute to add a city, and anyone can do it! The Counter website offers also live-generated Local Sustainability maps and rankings per continent and per country. For more information, visit: [local2012.iclei.org/add-your-city](http://local2012.iclei.org/add-your-city).*



Both the Local Sustainability 2012 global review report and the case study collection are available in print and electronic form since March 2012. In addition, full versions of the case studies are available as part of the ICLEI Case Study Series that now offers over 150 examples of local initiatives for sustainable development.

Download the full versions of both publications at: [local2012.iclei.org/local-sustainability-study](http://local2012.iclei.org/local-sustainability-study).

### Save the date: ICLEI World Congress 2012

*The ICLEI World Congress 2012 will be held in Belo Horizonte, Brazil from 14 to 18 June 2012, just days before and an hour away from the Rio+20 Conference. The programme will be based on ICLEI's eight strategic goals and will showcase the vast work of ICLEI Members on advancing sustainability. It will be enriched by global strategists and leaders sharing their vision on the opportunities and challenges for local governments in the coming decades. The 2012 World Congress will be held together with the International Urban Research Symposium. For further information, visit: [worldcongress2012.iclei.org](http://worldcongress2012.iclei.org).*

### Global Town Hall: Where cities meet countries at Rio+20

*The Global Town Hall will be a vibrant common space for dialogue and interaction in the middle of the Rio+20 conference venue, providing local government actors with a forum where they can interact with the national negotiators, debate the conference proceedings with their peers, and demonstrate their commitments and achievements. It will host an exciting, rich and diverse programme in which important actors from all parts of the world report about how local sustainability advanced over the past years, share and debate visions, launch initiatives, sign cooperation agreements and get involved in the Rio+20 themes. All those who wish to get involved in shaping the Global Town Hall – as participants, partners, endorsers or sponsors, contact the ICLEI World Secretariat: [rio20@iclei.org](mailto:rio20@iclei.org).*

### ICLEI led the way towards LA21

Director Stefan Kuhn on ICLEI's work leading up to the Rio summit in 1992:

*What part did ICLEI play when Agenda 21 was given a separate chapter (28) dedicated to the role of municipalities as drivers for sustainable development?*

- ICLEI was founded in 1990 and was a key player when the 1991 IULA conference adopted the "Oslo declaration on environment, health and lifestyle". This was a milestone on the road to Rio in 1992 where all the world's municipalities were asked to formulate their own Local Agenda 21.

*What was the role of civil society in that process?*

- The most ambitious and dynamic local communities have a long tradition of active cooperation with civil society, and both parties have an interest in promoting the arena of opportunity which such cooperation represents. The preparation of Agenda 21 included several fora with representatives from the population as well as local administrators. One of these was the SEED conference, which was part of the regional UN summit in Bergen in 1990 and contributed to the formulation of chapter 28.

### ICLEI and the Ideas Bank

At the IULA conference, both ICLEI and the Ideas Bank submitted proposals regarding the role of municipalities. The Ideas Bank launched a catalogue of Nordic best practice examples of local communities, and led a workshop about them. In the years since then the Ideas Bank has made good use of ICLEI's documentation of best practice, and has participated in a number of ICLEI events.

In 2011 ICLEI contributed to the publication of the booklet "Signals", produced in part for the Nordic sustainability conference in Turku, Finland, as well as for the ICLEI Congress in Brussels in 2012, copies being distributed to all delegates at both of these major events. The booklet you are reading now presents Nordic experience with local sustainability for Rio+20. This is also the topic for our cooperation with ICLEI in 2012.







# RIO+20: WHAT CAN THE LOCAL LEVEL CONTRIBUTE?



**By Frode Lindtvedt**  
Project Manager, "Livable Municipalities" 2006-2010, The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)

**The contribution of municipalities** is essential if the world is to achieve sustainability and a new economy that balances social, ecological and economic goals. Mutual trust between citizens and authorities is a prerequisite for local mobilization. Norden has experiences that can be useful – though not necessarily copied directly.

Twenty years ago the Rio summit identified local authorities as key actors in the global partnership for sustainable development. One of the main challenges has always been to make the global challenges of environment and sustainability relevant for local action. The challenge now – at Rio+20 – is to make the accumulated wealth of local experience relevant for global action.

**The Nordic model: trust and local democracy**  
The world is looking for examples illustrating how

welfare goals and environmental goals can be combined. The examples presented in this booklet by the Ideas Bank Foundation show how leading Nordic municipalities provide much valuable experience as to the great potential for action that exists. But there is another valuable lesson: the importance of trust. Trust is essential in order to confer responsibility and a mandate to act.

The Nordic model is often described as a tripartite cooperation between state, market and organizations representing employees. But we must add *civil society* and *local authorities*. The municipal sector is to a large degree the hub in the Nordic model; and the keywords are trust and cooperation. Municipalities have wide powers and are a bit like the state, they are the authority that is closest to the people as well as to voluntary organisations and to business; but the prime basis for their authority is the local population.

The Nordic welfare state is thus first and foremost a collection of well coordinated welfare municipalities. Their legitimacy is founded both on good services and on the premise that all are empowered to participate and have an influence.

In short, it can be said that in the Nordic model, municipalities have experience with what is necessary to

provide both welfare and environmental tasks. Trust and local democracy are two essential, though not the only, conditions for successful changes towards sustainability:

- The *inhabitants* must be able to participate, influence decisions, modify the development path and provide bottom-up control
- The locally elected *councillors* must have the freedom of action to make priorities and adapt policies to the local context, and arenas where they can explain and discuss issues with the public, and thereby build legitimacy and trust in the political system
- The *municipal administration* must have access to sufficient knowhow and capacity.

## More knowhow and capacity

The five year program "Livable Municipalities" showed that the greatest challenge municipalities face in their work with environment and community development is the shortage of available capacity; and the next greatest challenge is knowhow. The program has however strengthened municipal capacity through networking cooperation. The networks functioned with workshops as learning arenas, providing inspiration, professional development and exchanges of experience. Between the workshops the municipalities continued their work either separately or in the form of intermunicipal cooperation. Each network consisted of 4-7 municipalities who chose to work together on common issues of sustainable development. They focused on politics, planning and practice; it was seen as important to involve the political leaders, the administrative leaders and relevant expertise.

Results of the program include the following:

- Energy and climate policy has been established as an important topic in Norwegian municipalities
- The program attracted typical municipalities, which experienced increasing benefits from the networks as time went on
- The participating municipalities had very varied starting points; some with considerable capacity would have conducted the activities in any event, whereas others were in need of more assistance than the networks could provide
- Results improved as the program progressed, with increased participation of stakeholders, more capacity and knowhow, new working methods and generally more proactive policies for environment and community development. In 2010, 9 out of 10 municipalities reported significant or major results.

## A Message to Rio+20 on green economy and sustainability goals

Trust and local democracy are essential factors in order to create a *green economy*. It is clear that local authorities have a coordinating role to play in climate policy. Given increasing urbanization, the planning and executive capacity of urban authorities will be decisive. Many Norwegian municipalities have good quality planning, with a long term perspective, good dialogue with their citizens, and cooperative implementation. Closeness to nature is seen as important for town environments. Frontrunner Nordic municipalities know that when one formulates *sustainability goals*, indicators and management information must be integrated into the whole planning and administrative system, so that environmental and community issues become part of the mainstream of their activities and focus of attention.

The experiences confirm that local *authorities are the most important ally* of both national states and the UN in creating the conditions for a sustainable society where welfare and environment go hand in hand.

## Networking municipalities

*Norway ran the program "Livable Municipalities" from 2006 to 2010. The aim was to anchor sustainability better in local communities. More than 200 of In all 430 municipalities worked within networks on six themes: Climate and energy, land use planning, quality of life and public health, North-South linking, future ecological production, and cultural heritage. The main focus was on climate and energy. Politicians, municipal staff and local resource persons participated in network activities that also drew on external expertise to discuss local experiences and proposals.*

*A key factor was to study best practice examples from each other and other places. Both large and small municipalities stressed the value of exchanges of experience, and some stated that they would not have had the capacity to develop climate and energy plans without the support of the larger municipalities. Fredrikstad, a town with the longest track record of environmental work in Østfold County, was given the role of "climate coach" to some of the others. Some developed joint plans and the program led to some joint projects. It has thus led to joint climate and energy efforts in several regions.*





# 12 WAYS TO PROMOTE CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION



**Jeppe Læssøe,**  
Ph.D., Faculty of Education and  
Pedagogics, Aarhus University,  
Denmark

"In essence, if we want sustainability it will need a radically new kind of politics, where the deciding factor must be that actions here and now have consequences in other places and in the future; that what I do here, for myself, my loved ones, my time, my world, can have negative consequences not for me but for someone else, not here, not now, but far in the future."<sup>2</sup>

The following is a resumé of an article commissioned and published by The Ideas Bank for the 2006 Nordic sustainability conference<sup>1</sup>, with critical reflections on Nordic civic participation as well as proposals for effective ways to achieve broad engagement for sustainability.

**The challenge of broad participation in sustainability**  
Given Nordic prosperity as well as values, sustainable development should be achievable; even though our present ecological footprint is very high. We are hardworking, technically advanced, nature loving, and well managed both socially and economically. But: there is something radically new and problematic about this challenge.

The usual way to engage people is to appeal to self interest; and show them concretely what they can do here and now. With sustainable development the opposite is the case; to help the interests of someone else, somewhere far away; as well as to deal with complex interconnections. For example, it's not enough that people understand and follow simple conservation measures, they also need to understand that saving in one area can mean waste somewhere else – if they are constantly upping their lifestyle with new activities that increase their overall material consumption. Hence, citizens must on the one hand be encouraged to participate, based on their own interests and a very concrete daily world, yet on the other hand to transcend these motives and embrace a far more abstract and complex way of thinking.

Sustainability is difficult, because it is about uncertain risks, prioritising global ideals or one self, choices with different social and economic consequences, conflicts of interest, compromises. It's not something exact that we can simply tell people about and then implement. Sustainable development is a continual process – a learning process that must be democratic and widespread through popular participation.

How to achieve this? My first answer is that it is essential not to start off with a narrow idea about participation. In the text boxes I "expand" the concept in various ways.

our history: a unique feature of Nordic societies has been that civic formation, and hence participatory democracy, has been led by social movements that have created the arenas for this at Folk High Schools, in study circles and evening classes – and that this has been done *with state support*. Given today's focus on New Public Management, is there a will to continue that tradition? If so, there are three possible main directions we can look at.

We can carry on with business as usual but increase the quantity and quality of the efforts; we can discard the ideal of consensus and revitalise civic debate; or we

## 1: The participants' perspective:

Popular participation has two basic perspectives:

- Citizens' ability to influence political decisions
- The learning process achieved by citizens through participation processes

Participation seen as a learning process is the civic formation perspective. This can be understood in two very different ways:

- Civic formation as *information* aims, by specific knowledge, to encourage certain attitudes and behaviour
- Civic formation as *formation* aims, by developing a broad base of knowledge and understanding, to foster personal values, commitment and decisions.
- The first of these offers answers, whereas the second poses questions.

## 2: Themes for participation:

Popular participation is typically linked to local issues:

- One's home and housekeeping
- One's neighbourhood
- One's municipality.

In daily life there are two main areas of activity that stretch *beyond* the local level:

- Consumption, which has an aspect of participatory, political choice
- The workplace, where participation can involve both the workplace itself and the world outside
- Political participation can also have influence well beyond the local level even if it is exercised locally, affecting both regional, national and global conditions.

## Possible ways forward

The starting point is that there is no single "right" way. Instead of linear, causal thinking, we have to think how different types of action can work together in dynamic constellations.

Whatever the path chosen, there must be adequate resources with the task and the goal. At times, paradoxically, sustainability is portrayed as a luxury, something we may spend a bit of time and money on if we have some left over after everything else. Let's remember

can do something new and connect people across local communities through the new social and mass media.

## Business as Usual:

The first of the above implies a trust in ecological modernisation and support for the best ideas by engaging citizens in concrete environmental improvements, those that attract easy consensus. This means to strengthen and give more support to an evolution that is already under way. Within this path one can see five main elements:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.idebanken.no/Tilbud/Synlige%20maal,%20synlige%20skritt.pdf> and in this English version at: [www.thebalancingact.info/12ways](http://www.thebalancingact.info/12ways)  
<sup>2</sup> Claus Heinberg: "Det begynder med hinanden", Nyhedsbrevet Øko-net 2, Denmark 2003



**Follow the pioneers, and carry on!** Many Nordic municipalities and local communities have managed to involve citizens and enact change. This “best practice” should be disseminated to all, with carrots and sticks from the state.

**Make it attractive and visible!** Citizen participation must be made attractive and pleasant, because we all lead busy lives. In addition, results must be communicated well, so that citizens both see and experience the benefits.

**Make the good alternatives widely known!** All over Norden there are enterprising and dynamic people who have helped to develop and spread environmentally friendly solutions in homes and local communities. Pilot projects – sometimes with public subsidies – have spread these good examples to others.<sup>3</sup> This can be strengthened in future by increased focus on the social dimension: how today’s desire for self-fulfilment and life quality can be combined with good ecology.

**Support civic creativity with well qualified evaluation and debate!** Top-down participation initiatives can easily spark resistance whereas supporting citizens’ own bottom-up initiatives usually leads to projects that are anchored in their own skills, values and local interests. One way to overcome this dilemma is to give the responsibility for creating dialogue between local authorities and citizens to neutral third parties. This can provide quality control to both the local projects and the civic learning processes.

**Enhance citizen influence by means of cooperatives!** Initiatives promoting civic participation often assume an idealistic form that is not taken seriously. Here the Nordic tradition of cooperative organisation could be given new life and strengthen the economic empowerment of citizens. The tradition would gain added meaning

by its non-profit based goal of sustainable community development. Existing examples of this include local wind energy cooperatives.<sup>4</sup> In England there are now hundreds of local ‘development trusts’ which involve citizens in projects for sustainable community development.

**Revitalise public debate:**

The second main path does not exclude the first, with its above five elements, but it does seek to go further – from specific practical solutions to a broad focus on solving some of the deeper dilemmas and barriers that hinder sustainable development. The idea is in other words to revitalize civic formation as an institution of democratic discussion, lively debate and awareness. This path could have the following three elements:

**Replace green missionaries with democracy mediators!** The green pioneers and environmental academics are not necessarily the best organisers of public participation for sustainability. It can result in activities only for those who already share the same views. Instead, the state could support training and use of professional mediators, whose core skills lie in facilitating democratic and formative dialogue. This implies a shift from seeing civic participation as a question of environmental information, based on known science, to understanding sustainable development as a continual, sociocultural process – in which the mediators’ role is

to ensure comprehensive reflection and dialogue about uncertainties, risks, dilemmas and ethical issues – for that is the real nature of the issue.

**Play devil’s advocate!** If one addresses only questions there is consensus about, then enthusiasm is likely to fade, since key issues such as growing material

consumption will tend to be avoided. To give the process deeper force and meaning, the mediators need to stimulate controversy, not in a negative sense but as constructive provocation. Sustainable development entails many conflicts of interest, barriers, different values, risks, and dilemmas with conflicting goals; it thus demands difficult choices. Civic formation has always had the role of confronting challenges. The key is to create arenas for constructive and well informed debate, so as to involve citizens in the task of finding good solutions.

**Give citizens political responsibility!** Citizens are often invited to participate far too late in the process. This puts them more in the role of consumers than of responsible agents; being simply asked to say yes or no to solutions that have been thought out by others. One can rather start by generating various scenarios and alternatives, which the participants then have the task – and the responsibility – of evaluating, refining and, ultimately, selecting.

**Use the new social media:**

The third path, finally, can be combined with the first two, but changes current thinking about the local community arena as the main forum for civic participation; focusing instead on the new social and virtual media as both a necessary condition and a great opportunity. This leads to four more suggestions:

**Civic participation in cyberspace!**

Rather than seeing today’s IT and media as a hindrance to participation, it may be time to revise yesterday’s ideas about democracy and local community. Civic formation could be updated in accordance with the ever more global, mobile and virtual nature of reality. The interactive potential of television, films and internet offer radically different possibilities for outreach, democratic debate and creation of common interest groups across sectors and geographical limits.

**Strengthen the global perspectives!** A focus on local community tends to push the global dimension into the background; whilst a global focus is often too abstract in relation to our everyday. This can be resolved by focusing instead on the relationship *between* the local and the global. In other words by focusing on how local choices and global consequences are interwoven: ecologically, economically, socially and politically. Good examples of this exist, such as the North-South Friendship projects and exchanges that have sustainable development as their core theme. Personal contacts with people in developing countries is another. Fairtrade is a third. The internet offers huge opportunities for this kind of interaction between schools and others, and for seeing processes of production.

**Prioritise the elderly and immigrants as target groups!** Local activities and services often target all citizens, in an undifferentiated manner. But some groups may be reached more effectively *across* local boundaries. The elderly, for example, are more active today, and have time and money. They have their own organizations, but none that directly address their involvement in sustainable development. Or immigrants: ethnic frictions and cultural differences naturally attract huge media attention, and this tends to overshadow issues of sustainable development; instead, however, more could be done to see how these two perspectives relate to each other.

**Make Education for Sustainable Development a huge priority!**

UNESCO declared the decade 2005-2014 as the UN’s Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. Education is indeed the key. Some progress can be seen, but Norden still has a long way to go in order to genuinely integrate the sustainability perspective into education – not just in subjects like natural science but in all subjects and all forms of education.



<sup>3</sup> The databases of Norway’s Ideas Bank Foundation are full of such examples – as this booklet indicates.  
<sup>4</sup> See the Samsø project described in this booklet.





Left: "Civic Formation" pioneer N.F.S. Grundtvig, Denmark. Right: From the Energy Camp, Samsø, see p.30

# CIVIC FORMATION THROUGH ACTION

- a contribution to the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development



**Kirsten Paaby,**  
The Ideas Bank Foundation

Most people in the field of Life Long Learning in Europe are familiar with the "Grundtvig program". But who is this man who gave his name to this program and why exactly him? Few Scandinavian words have entered other European languages since Viking times, but two exceptions have social significance. One is *Ombudsman*, a social institution with the task of ensuring fairness that has been adopted in many countries. The second is '*Folkehoegskole*', translated as *Volkshochschule* or institution of civic formation (popular education) – literally, people's high school, created to enhance the education level of ordinary people. Since the early 1800s, democratic formation and empowerment have been central goals of the Folk High School (FHS) pedagogy. Their founder was that man - Danish priest N.F.S. Grundtvig

(1783 – 1872). He saw dialogue between equals as the basic principle of civic education: "Not telling people what to think, but stimulating them to creative reflection about life and thus qualifying them to become real participants in democracy".<sup>1</sup> Grundtvig's concept of "civic formation" addresses the deep connection between formation of the individual and formation of the community; the pedagogic platform therefore embraces formation as an individual, as a member of society and as world citizen. It would be hard to find an approach better suited to addressing today's goals for a sustainable world – from individual life quality to sustainable local communities to global and intergenerational equity.

And civic formation was to be for all – high and low, old and young. Grundtvig also called his Folk High School a "school for life", where "life skills" were to be developed both as an individual and as community member. In his «The Land of the Living», American

anthropologist Steven M. Borish describes the FHS as having an important role in the Danish history and as a "Development with a human face; Denmark's non-violent path to modernization".<sup>2</sup> Civic formation in this Nordic tradition continues today both in the many FHS and in study associations, local NGOs and other important groups, and still plays an important role in cultivating a valuable formation for democracy in our societies. The approach combines theory and hands-on learning with essential value decisions. In Norway there is a special law for both FHS and study associations, specifying their purpose in particular as: developing active citizens, creating a foundation for sustainable development, and strengthening democracy. Similar formulations are to be found in the other Nordic countries.

Norden today is at a crossroads as regards sustainable development; ranking very high internationally in terms of economic growth, welfare and education, yet far less impressive in terms of our very high ecological footprint. Global equity will require drastic changes in consumption in the rich countries. This will need real, open democratic debate about what we mean by good life quality.

Agenda 21 identifies civic education and public participation as prerequisites for sustainable development. How can the Nordic tradition of civic formation help? How can we apply Grundtvig's concept of "school for life" today? UNESCO's goals for ESD-10<sup>3</sup> state that education for sustainable development is for people in all phases of life, in both informal and formal arenas, in civil society, NGOs, higher education, workplaces, authorities – in short, for all.

As this publication illustrates the Ideas Bank Foundation documents and disseminates examples of outstanding practical action; of how individuals, local communities, cities, businesses and others are solving the challenges of sustainability through partnerships and dialogue. This is a task of civic formation at its best.

In particular this booklet presents local communities that have worked over an extended period – not without resistance and conflicts. They show equally a strong will for learning. Examples where local actions go hand

in hand with systematic analysis and capacity building are invaluable for educational purposes. They build Grundtvig's "life skills". The "school for politicians" and ecological demonstration centre at Tingvoll is a fine example; as is the "energy camp" on Samsø, where young people meet the adults who are behind the work for energy self-sufficiency; instead of threats about future climate disaster, they are learning about what they themselves can do about it.

The Ideas Bank welcomes ESD's focus on learning that is geared towards practical action. Different national strategies for sustainability at the local level provide important empirical knowledge that stimulates learning processes and cross-sectoral approaches. Part of our job is thus to create learning arenas and build bridges between formal education institutions, local administrations and civil society organizations; assisting both formal and informal learning arenas to learn from the inspiring local examples. This is in other words a "great marriage" between Agenda 21's chapters 28 and 36.

The following are some examples of arenas to which we have contributed.

## The Balancing Act: Nordic campaign and pedagogic project

Connecting chapters 28 and 36, this campaign and its pedagogic intent created a Nordic meeting place between civic formation groups and people active with local Agenda 21 in Nordic municipalities. Participants combine theoretical and practical skills to make key value decisions related to the triple bottom line of sustainability.

The goals are:

- Educational programs should embrace sustainability in its full sense
- The schools and institutions should be operated in an increasingly sustainable way
- They should contribute to civic formation and debate in their local communities about solutions, challenges and ethical dilemmas associated with sustainability decisions.

<sup>1</sup> Læssøe, J., "Folkeoplysning om bæredygtig udvikling – en historie om afradikalisering og bagvedliggende uklartheder" [Civic formation on sustainable development – a history of de-radicalisation and the underlying lack of clarity], in: Holm, J. (ed.), *Økologisk modernisering på dansk – brud og bevægelser i dansk miljøpolitik*, Copenhagen: Frydenlund 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Borish, Steven M, "The Land of the Living. The Danish folk high schools and Denmark's non-violent path to modernization" Blue Dolphin, Nevada City 2004

<sup>3</sup> The UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-14), described elsewhere in this booklet.



The series of “balancing” sculptures created by Danish artist Jens Galschiøt have become an important visual symbol for the campaign. The Balancing Act is the work of three Nordic organizations: Norway’s Ideas Bank, Swedish Ekocentrum and Danish Eco-Net. These three together possess a unique wealth of documentation and experience from work with sustainable development at the local level. These include experiences of local administrations, civil society as well as local business stakeholders.

With their tradition and methods, the FHS are uniquely suited to deliver sustainability education. The campaign therefore took its starting point in the FHS, documenting

*Balancing Act sculptures in front of the Danish parliament*



the best examples as inspiration for other schools. We arranged networks between some of the partners, which confirmed the value of exchanges and led to further interest for what others were doing. Participating schools stressed the value of seeing their own work in a wider context, and wished to learn new communicative methods for cross-sectoral work. As a spinoff from the above, we are now developing a course in cooperation with some Danish “Afterschools” and Norwegian FHS. The title of this course is: “One earth – heart, hands and head. Towards participatory pedagogy”.

In summer 2010, music loving youth participated in the Balancing Act’s “Climate Camp” at the Roskilde festival. Their task was to investigate green solutions and describe how this famous annual event could in future become the most sustainable music festival in the world. They learned about leading Nordic examples of best practice described in our book “The Balancing Book”. This gave them good preparation for their meeting with four well known environmental leaders, and the camp was rounded off with a large public debate in a circus tent at Roskilde between these four and the youth. The four were: Søren Hermansen, leader of the Samsø Energy Academy; Steen Møller, a leading Danish expert in ecological building; Ole Dedenroth, rector of the Brenderup Folk High School; and Trevor Graham, environmental director of the city of Malmø.

For The Balancing Act we have also developed an internet portal in English: [www.thebalancingact.info](http://www.thebalancingact.info) which provides links to ESD activities all over the world – in addition to news and information on relevant campaigns, methods and conferences.

### Nordic sustainability conferences

In collaboration with the Nordic municipal sector, the Nordic environmental authorities have hosted a series of major Nordic conferences on sustainable community development:

- 2004:** Gothenburg, Sweden: “Nordic Agenda – Earth Agenda”
- 2006:** Oslo, Norway: “Future-com.no – mobilizing for sustainability”
- 2008:** Odense, Denmark: “One Small Step”
- 2011:** Turku, Finland: “Solutions – local, together”.

The next is to be held at Umeå in Sweden in 2013. With support from the Norwegian Ministry of Environment, the Ideas Bank has produced publications in collaboration with the organisers, presenting state of the art examples and methodologies as well as futures debates. The most recent of these booklets, “Signals”, was produced in English. (lenke)

The Ideas Bank has also been a co-organiser and run workshops at these conferences – where Education for Sustainable Development and Life Long Learning have come increasingly into focus. This has been in cooperation with experts from both adult education and civic formation. Combining challenges with concrete examples has successfully highlighted the real opportunities that exist for moving from policy to reality. Each conference has resulted in recommendations regarding education for sustainability. The following points should be noted.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has a central responsibility for promoting ESD-10 – especially so seeing that Norden has such a big ecological footprint. ESD needs to be anchored locally, both politically and administratively. Politicians need information and inspiration. Experience shows that it is both important and possible to engage local populations, and to involve both the formal and informal education groups in ESD work. Pedagogic methods should be tied more closely to practical action – as has been done at many of the Nordic FHS by including sustainable management and procurement in the educational tasks.

There is a general need for examples of civic formation and methods on the theme of sustainability. Examples need to be tailored to different groups, show opportunities for action, and stimulate value-based discussion. Examples also need to be presented within a long term perspective; they must provide a sense of direction.

### Civic formation is working!

Since 2006 The Ideas Bank has been collaborating with the Nordic Network for Adult Education (NVL) on the program “Civic Formation is Working”. In a series of seminars, we have combined educational inputs, practical examples and interactive dialogue. As part of a long term strategy for adult education in sustainability we ensured that the voice of civic formation has been clear at the Nordic conferences. NVL has, with our assistance, used its own internet site to promote good examples of civic

formation. In our activities the examples are combined with important reflective articles – such as that by Jeppe Læssøe, “12 Paths to Civic Participation”.

### The Nordic ESD 10 conference in Odense, 2010

While Denmark was chairing the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Danish Education Ministry and UNESCO committee arranged a conference on International Climate Day the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2010. The theme was ESD and the title “Norden – a sustainable region with focus on Life Long Learning”. It was held at the studio of sculptor Jens Galschiøt. The Ideas Bank assisted in planning this, commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Education. A central issue was how educational institutions and civic formation groups interact with local communities – and how sustainability can be incorporated into all kinds of learning, both formal and informal. This created new “bridges” and dialogue, focused on sustainability, between formal and informal educational sector. Organised like a large workshop, the conference discussed future scenarios, methods, and potential for action – all within the perspective of recognising the special value of Nordic education and civic formation for sustainable development.<sup>4</sup> (On the way to this conference,

*The 2010 international Roskilde music festival, occasion of the Balancing Act “Climate Camp”, with Balancing Act sculptures in place*







*The Garden of Wonder – ecological education at Vestjylland Folk High School, Denmark*

the Ideas Bank also had meetings with leading politicians – four of the Balancing Act sculptures are mounted outside the Danish parliament). The following is an extract from the conference and workshop proceedings. (<http://www.thebalancingact.info/norden/start.html>):

“There is a need for increased cooperation across sectors and between levels. Local science centres (such as the Samso Energy Academy) can be important bridge builders, supplying practical examples for research and teaching. Networking is important, to exchange both experiences as well as methods – wherever possible across sectors. Cross-sectoral work needs to become better established. National strategies for the UN ESD decade, as well as “seed money”, are vital as a supplement and support to the local initiatives in schools and other educational forums. ESD-10 should also be structured with close ties to local communities so that the education is strengthened by participation in one’s own local environment.”

4 The Ideas Bank also collaborated on the proceedings and recommendations, see <http://www.thebalancingact.info/norden/>

## Permanent structures for education for sustainable development?

The setting up of the regional RCE’s – Regional Centres of Expertise – accords well with the recommendations of the Odense ESD conference. The UN University initiated this idea in order to stimulate awareness and knowledge regionally within both formal and informal education. An RCE constitutes a regional network involving many actors – educators, researchers, environmental organizations, local representatives, business, the media, students and others. To date there are over 100 RCE’s world wide. Amongst these at Skåne in Sweden, Espoo in Finland and one in Denmark. Several more are being planned in Sweden. In Norway, various ideas are being discussed. One idea is based on the pedagogy of civic formation, another on forms of civil society participation. The Ideas Bank is in a process of dialogue with relevant pedagogic circles both in the theoretical and applied fields. Both are important to ensure that the RCE’s generate skills for action.

At Galschiøt’s studio again in January 2012, The Balancing Act asked Charles Hopkins, professor and senior advisor for the UNESCO committee about the way forward for ESD-10. Noting that the wrapping up conference will be in November 2014 in Nagoya, Japan, UNESCO urges all countries to arrange national conferences and prepare national reports for Nagoya. These will be expected to answer three simple questions:

1. What was accomplished?
2. What did we learn?
3. How to continue in the future?



## Interview with Charles Hopkins, UNESCO chair in Education for Sustainable Development – on Chapter 36 of Agenda 21

*As one of the drafting committee of Chapter 36, what were the important program areas?*

It was (a) access to and retention in quality basic education, (b) reorienting education towards sustainable development, (c) increasing public awareness, and (d) promoting training. The idea was to engage all of the world’s education, public awareness, and training systems to work to create a more sustainable future.

*The Decade for Education for Sustainable development (DESD) was recommended during the Johannesburg summit*



*Charles Hopkins, UNESCO’s chairman for the Education for Sustainable development, and the Secretariat of the Balancing Act campaign*

*in 2002; what would be the most important educational outcome for Rio +20?*

Education is important for a more sustainable future; however, education alone does not carry the entire responsibility for sustainability. At Rio+20 education should be recognized as an important element on its own. Additionally education in its broadest sense including public awareness and training should be seen as part of every other sustainable development effort.

*What have been some of the successes so far?*  
There are many successes at many levels. The DESD is different than other UN Decades in that all teachers, educators, administrators, trainers etc. can be and are involved. The activity level is immense. The number of ESD publications is impressive. The number of nations with ESD or forms of ESD in primary and secondary curriculums is growing. Teacher education institutions in more than 65 countries are working to reorient teacher education to address sustainability. Additionally, more than 100 Regional Centers of Expertise (RCEs) have formed around the world. These RCEs work across the entire education community to achieve the goals of the DESD by implementing ESD in the environmental, social and economic contexts of the local communities. The UNESCO World Conference on ESD in Bonn 2009 and the important messages in the *Bonn-Declaration* marked the midpoint of the Decade and gave pathways forward. Lastly ESD is being recognized by school systems not only as morally correct but also as an emerging crucial contributor to quality education.

## The Ideas Bank and ESD

*The Ideas Bank foundation has been active in promoting the DESD in the Nordic countries and worldwide. Together with Eco-net in Denmark and Ekocentrum in Sweden the Ideas Bank launched the campaign “The Balancing Act” – dedicated to the DESD. A catalogue of best practices from the Nordic “Peoples High Schools” was launched in 2009 and led to a number of workshops about them. This has resulted in drafting a study program aimed at strengthening competence of action for sustainable development: “One Globe – heart, hand and head. Roads towards a participatory pedagogy”.*





# A thought experiment: HOW TO SAVE THE PLANET, COST FREE, BY NEXT FRIDAY



**Chris Butters**

The Ideas Bank Foundation

*Why are sustainable solutions not spreading far more rapidly? Don't we need to admit that without a radical re-think, our promised reductions in climate emissions are extremely unlikely? Or global equity?*

Communities all over the world are building a better, fairer future - right now. The common factor, in all the success stories, is human will and vision. Even some of the poorest communities are achieving inspiring results. Why do we think only lots of money and technology can save us? Or that sustainability means we will have to reduce our standard of living drastically? What if we could achieve it for free? By, say, next Friday?

A tough message for politicians? Many political leaders still seem to believe that technology is the answer. But more and more voices are saying that we need deeper changes, in economic systems, and in lifestyle - that sustainability is impossible without these. This message is unpopular, so politicians tend to avoid it. The experience in this booklet confirms that change can *only* be achieved with education and civic formation - in other words with popular engagement and support ... and votes. We need strong leaders more than ever!

A tough message for business? A profound rethink of economics, with greatly reduced consumption in particular, is unattractive to industry and to supporters of material growth. As for "green growth": organic beef, electric cars, solar panels and windmills also entail resource use and environmental effects. To put it simply: if everyone in China, India and Africa achieves our lifestyle including lots of electric cars, organic beef and so on, can the world possibly become sustainable? The answer is simple mathematics, and the answer is NO.

A tough message for us as individuals? Do we have to go back to the cave, then? Fortunately, *standard of living* is not the same as *quality of life*. There are simple ways to achieve progress - if we refocus. We need to look at our real goals - health, welfare, happiness - rather than, as today, choosing home and leisure activities that need big inputs of technology and resources. Others can give as much welfare. To quote the Bhutanese: our real goal is not Gross National Product but Gross National Happiness. It can be reached in ways that are also happy for the planet.

It is widely accepted that the rich countries must reduce resource use by 80-90% to avoid the probability of serious climate change. We are now at the stage where governments are making commitments to emission reductions of 30-50% within a few decades. This is seen as mainly a technical task; the three main components

are carbon capture and storage (CCS), renewable energy (RES), and energy efficiency measures (EE). But is this realistic? The numbers simply don't add up. Any gains we are likely to achieve in emission cuts will be eaten up by increased world population and increasing consumption. The only likelihood of large global emission reductions is if the poor stay just as poor as they are now.

Unless we not only become much more efficient, but also *decrease our overall consumption*. We need to remember that *energy efficiency* is not the same as *energy reductions*. It's no use buying the most efficient fridge, or car, or house, if it's twice as big as our old one. Our *total* energy consumption will still be going up! Consumption is about lifestyle. Technology exists - and more will come - but that's the easy part. Energy and material consumption is a *sociological and cultural* problem. So, let's forget about the technology for just a minute.

The three main components of our resource use are what we eat, what we drive and how we live - about one quarter each - which can be summed up as "cow, car and castle". There are ways we can reduce our footprint to about one third, for free, overnight.

## Living car free

This saves us a packet - so that we can easily afford a few taxis or a rental car for the odd weekend. Most of us live in towns, where there is public transport and good alternatives such as car sharing. It's fair enough to have a car if we live far out in the country, or when we have small kids. But we do have to cut out excessive air travel. More walking and bicycling means better health too.

## A partly vegetarian diet

This can reduce our food footprint by about two thirds. It also saves us money, mainly from buying less meat. It assumes that local ecological food becomes widely available. Which depends on demand from us consumers! And it's healthier; also meaning better, not worse, life quality.

## A zero energy home

Zero emission buildings, and even plus energy buildings, already exist. They cost a few percent more (soon paid back by low energy bills). This can't be done overnight, but quite quickly. It would help if state and banks provided more incentives. But the easiest step of all is to reduce the size of our house. This saves resources in all ways - immediately - and it saves us big money.

## The world in 2050 TECHNOLOGY FANTASY?

*Helge is an optimistic engineer. His "techno-fix" vision of 2050 is as follows:*

*"After breakfast I pack, switch my zero energy house to standby mode and drive my electric car to the fastlink station, where I leave it plugged in to recharge. The high speed rail takes me 500km down to Oslo in just two hours. After my business meetings there, I decide to spend the weekend in Paris. Scandinavian Airlines has full carbon offsets and runs 100% on biofuels, but I prefer the high speed rail which takes only five hours to Paris. I eat dinner at a restaurant that has wonderful ecological beef. All French wines are ecological now. I spend Saturday at Neuilly water park, where the solar powered wave machine is just fantastic. Before my return flight I buy a set of linen shirts, a new, recyclable 5 terabyte Mac Greenberry for my son and two of those super cheap Fairtrade hemp carpets made in Laos. A good weekend! On my way home I send an sms to reset my house temperature, and buzz my interactive smartfridge to check what I need to buy on the way home."*

*All of which, Helge, is quite possible - technically speaking.*

*But ... how much high speed rail has Norway, one of the richest countries in the world, built over the past 30 years? None. And how did those cheap carpets get from Laos to Paris? And that great eco beef from Argentina, wasn't that where there used to be a rainforest?*

*So, Helge - your dream future is terribly efficient, a whole lot of fun, and there are endless new products to consume. Is this what it looks like now in Peru, Kenya and Laos too? High speed rail all over the world! Solar powered water parks in Bangladesh! Wow! Fun for everyone!*

*Well ... actually, no, there's not much high speed rail anywhere. Peru, Kenya and Laos are still trying to pay off the highways they built in 2020. And we ran out of copper to make solar collectors in 2035. And, actually, since global warming led to sea level rise, the whole of Bangladesh is now a water park. Seawater, that is...*

*Time for a reality check, Helge. Do you really believe that fantasy?*



State and services

The other main components of our footprint are the resource use of public amenities and services, and all the “stuff” we buy, such as clothes, furniture and technical gadgetry. The services are something every good society should have – hence this footprint must grow bigger in developing countries. But their impact can be reduced. And perhaps a more healthy and sustainable society would need less police, dentists, psychiatrists, hospitals and waste dumps?

Stuff

As for all the stuff ... well, that’s something we can decide on right now. Less bling also means direct savings. Easier said than done? The poorer half of the world is just discovering the joys of “stuff”.

The above choices – *they are choices, not technologies* – reduce our total footprint to around one third, as good as

overnight. Without any more global conferences. Without any “breakthroughs in technology”; mostly without any technology whatsoever. And without costing us, or the state, a cent. On the contrary we have *saved* a lot of money.

The **techno-optimist** dream sees all the world achieving high lifestyles, with a full array of consumer goods, cars, large dwellings and air travel – by economic growth, efficiency, renewable energies and vast technological progress.

The **pessimist** picture sees us having to accept more primitive lifestyles without many of today’s amenities and individual freedoms.

The **sustainable** vision is of a very positive but *different* life; with a high level of satisfaction and welfare but in ways that use far less resources. The key lies in choices. Many of the amenities of a “modern” lifestyle, such as computers, education, culture, health services, consume relatively little resources. Just a few – such as large houses, cars, a high meat diet and frequent air travel – do.

How can we bring consumption and lifestyle into the discussion? To really handle ecology, economy and society as a whole, not just as three separate words, we need new ways of thinking. Engineering and life quality, “hard” and “soft” issues, must be evaluated together. For this we need new tools – such as the Sustainability Value Map (see box). All the stories in this booklet, whether they focus on energy, nature, democracy, or business, have the additional quality of **learning** and of strengthening human bonds – building community. Perhaps the politicians don’t really have much to fear. They might gain respect for courage and plain talking.

Thus there are two rather different approaches to sustainability. On one hand the technology driven climate lobby and market forces; on the other, the voices of community development, cultural values and quality of life. The technocrats seek new ways to manipulate the planet; but we need, urgently, to supplement the narrow

technical approach with an agenda of real lifestyle shifts – *positive downscaling*.

So, perhaps there are ways to sustainability that are people-focused , better, cheaper, and far quicker? Isn’t saying that “the engineers will save us” a way of avoiding our own responsibility? Technology alone is not the answer. We need, urgently, to talk about consumption and lifestyle choices. It’s understandable, though unhelpful, that most of industry dislikes the idea of reducing material consumption. It’s also understandable that many politicians prefer to avoid such issues and not raise them either.

But the frontrunners presented in this book show the will to take the responsibility.

A tool for integrated thinking: THE SUSTAINABILITY VALUE MAP

The **Sustainability Value Map** is a tool which includes all parts of sustainability – ecology, economy and society. This gives decision makers, planners and stakeholders a unique way to avoid specialist thinking and see *the whole picture*.

It provides a genuinely holistic method of planning, evaluating and comparing sustainability in projects; it is now being used in several countries. Many “ecoprofile” systems only assess the *ecological* issues, and require complicated calculations. But in real-life decision making, exact “scores” are often less important than the process users go through to arrive at decisions. In its simplified version it can be used without extensive calculations; it is the process of using the Value Map that stimulates whole thinking and brings out the key sustainability issues.

Ecology, economy and society each occupy one third of the circle, and all

parameters are given an equal area. The basic set of 3 x 8 criteria shown is not fixed; the SVM is a flexible tool that can - indeed should - be tailored to different purposes. Users develop “ownership” of it, adapting the criteria to their own context and specific project types. By assessing the different areas and filling in the SVM, one arrives at a “star” – a bigger star meaning better. One sees at once if there are any “holes” or weak areas; whether the result is notably one-sided or if it is fairly balanced.

The SVM is for experts as well as user participation processes. It is also used for “before” and “after” evaluations. One of its unique features is that it integrates objective and subjective issues – quantities as well as qualities. Whilst the *Ecology* factors are largely objective, *Social* ones are largely qualitative. The word *Economy* means not only money but housekeeping – the management and organization

of society as a whole. Is this like comparing apples and oranges? Yes! These very different factors – quantities and qualities – both can *and must be* weighed together.

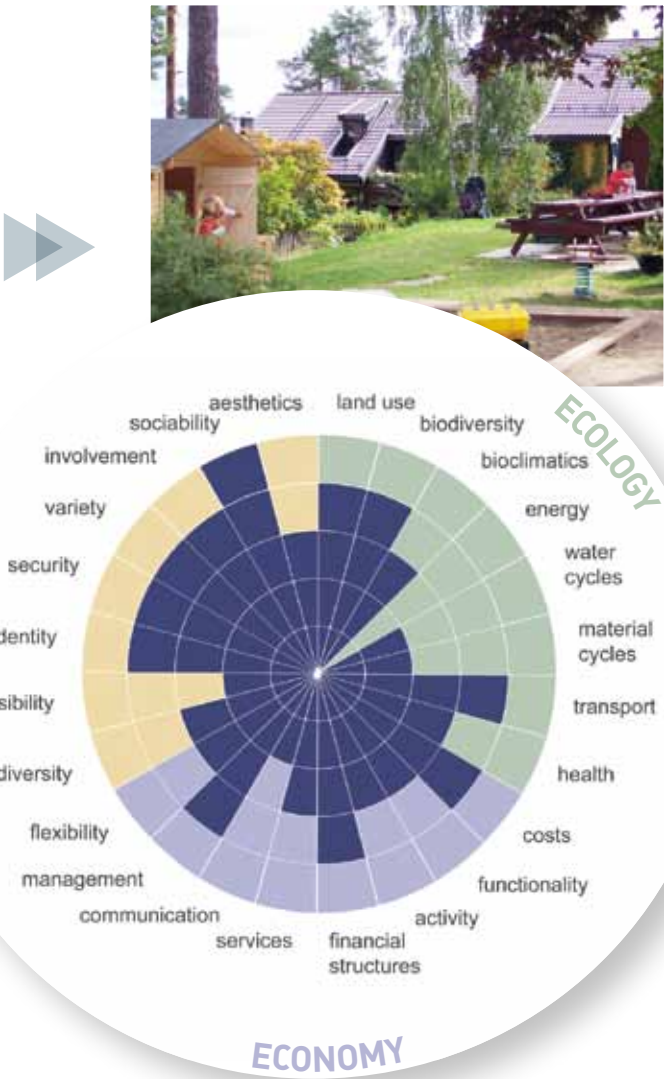
A zero energy house (good ecology) may be expensive (economy) or ugly (society). If so, it’s just not an interesting product! This shows how sustainable solutions must be good in *all three* areas; a better result in one area is often at the cost of another. With the SVM it is easy to notice win-win connections as well as tradeoffs.

The Value Map visualizes the goal that all city plans, buildings, and development initiatives should fulfil the three conditions of sustainability: it is a powerful practical tool for working with each other and integrating all three parts into our thinking.

Exampel: Norwegian cluster housing: Blaabaerstien, Nesodden, Norway

**Great social qualities**, play areas, car free, low costs, integrated into nature, schools and services nearby, compact space use (Rosland architects). Excellent in most areas. This is a fairly well balanced diagram; the few “holes” in this Map reflect the relatively poor energy standards of the 1970’s when it was built. But those eco-technical aspects can be retrofitted. The overall layout is the key to sustainability.

The Value Map is scaled in a demanding way. Value 0 means a very poor standard; the second ring, value 2, corresponds to average quality; the outer ring, value 5, corresponds to what we could call fully sustainable. For example in the energy sector, a low energy building will score 3, a passive standard building 4 and a zero energy building 5. Few projects will reach the outer rim at more than a few points. The message, and it’s important, is that sustainability is not a matter of 15% or 30% improvements but of big changes in the world. Our goal or horizon is far away; this must be communicated graphically.





# THE IDEAS BANK IS AN ECO-LIGHTHOUSE



Eco-Lighthouse is a rapidly growing environmental certification programme in Norway, which is administered locally by municipalities. Businesses as well as public institutions may be certified as Eco-lighthouses. There are specific certification criteria for each type of business or institution. The scheme has been adopted by over half of Norway's 429 municipalities and over 3.700 certificates have so far been granted. The Ideas Bank Foundation was certified in 2007.

**The Eco-Lighthouse program** was initiated by the city of Kristiansand, and was initially supported by the Ministry of Environment but has succeeded in becoming entirely self-financing. Requirements are designed along four important principles: all actions should be profitable – concrete – relevant – and simple. The program is mainly designed for small to medium size enterprises, whereas large ones are advised to certify according to ISO or EMAS.

The Eco-Lighthouse scheme has succeeded because it is a simple and user friendly system, and addresses day-to-day business at the same time as ethics. It is a “low threshold” green approach, which encourages greater awareness and more profound action towards sustainability as time goes on. It is an easy, and therefore

accessible first step for many, because it requires little new knowledge or money.

The municipality of Nedre Eiker near Oslo, was the first to reach the target of getting all municipal activities will be certified. This was planned together with employee representatives. Rather than hiring external consultants, the municipality let employee representatives in each workplace take charge of the qualification process, thus building up local networks and internal competence. This also reflects how sustainability and quality of working environment go hand in hand. In addition to increased awareness and mobilization, large savings due to reduced waste and energy were quickly apparent.

[www.miljofyrtarn.no](http://www.miljofyrtarn.no)

[www.idebanken.no](http://www.idebanken.no)

The Ideas Bank “Sustainability Arrow”  
– a tool for education and strategic  
thinking about sustainability.  
The Ideas Bank also offers courses,  
study tours, consultancy and  
futures workshops.



# CHANGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY!

On the 27th of April 1987 the UN Commission headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland presented the report “Our Common Future”. It documented the need for global strategies for environment and development, and gave hope for bridge building between industrial and developing nations in order to achieve a transition towards sustainability – development through which future generations may also fulfill their needs.

**Most will agree** that efforts since then have been too fragmented, too noncommittal and too few. This is a worrying message for the UN, world leaders, and all of us. Our own, largely positive experience over 20 years documenting and evaluating good examples leads us to propose the following strategies which can help raise our ambitions for this transition:

## 1. Use the arena of local opportunity

Municipalities and local communities in all parts of the world have proved that profound change is possible. The potential for action at the local level is very big. Use it!

## 2. Create local solutions with global effects

Sustainable production and consumption can only be achieved starting at the local level, with global effects – this is where change can and should happen.

## 3. Strengthen the links between local and national levels

Ambitious, measurable results require better cooperation between levels. Shared goals provide a basis for stronger measures.

## 4. Combine changes in technology, organisation and behaviour

Both national and local authorities need proactive strategies that combine technical measures with determined leadership and citizen participation.

## 5. Create sustainability departments

National Finance ministries should be provided with the skills and capacity to ensure integration of the ecological, economic and social considerations. This in turn provides a basis for integration of the work into all sectors.

## 6. Create a sustainability fund

Sustainable practice does not require big funds, rather it means using funds in new directions and across traditional budget lines. Relatively small “seed money” funding is essential to stimulate and support new, cross-sectoral work in particular.

## 7. Build skills for practical action

Make a major effort in the final years of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) to enhance knowledge and practical skills, through cooperation between the education sector and local communities.

## 8. Make the ethical issues explicit

Sustainable development raises fundamental values issues both for individuals, business and authorities. Encourage debate and support for these values by actively using the principles laid down in the “Earth Charter”.

## 9. Disseminate best practice far more widely

Spread awareness about successful examples throughout administrations, business circles and civil society, and use them as an educational tool in as many arenas as possible.

## 10. Make sure that the good examples are seen and praised

Good examples both need and deserve to be “seen”. Good leadership should reward and spread them, thus spreading hope for the future on the basis of proven results.

**Reflect – Rethink – Reform**



# LOCAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKS!

This booklet presents inspiring examples - cities, municipalities and neighbourhoods - of innovative and successful sustainability results in the Nordic countries. These success stories suggest that there is, given good networks, learning processes and support, a large potential for achieving faster progress towards sustainable development in towns and communities world wide.

For 20 years the Ideas Bank Foundation in Oslo, Norway has documented, promoted and disseminated sustainability in practice. Our work, with its key focus on participatory education and capacity building, includes extensive Nordic and European networking, as well as North-South perspectives.

Moving from the local to the global: This booklet is published in the context of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development and of the Rio+20 summit in June 2012 - a milestone in an ongoing global process, to which we hope to continue our Nordic contributions.

