



Innovation: designing for a sustainable future

The road to renewable energy in Samsøe.

Søren Hermansen

The other aspect is that we in the '70's said 'no' to nuclear power. We saw that the development craved more energy, more and more energy, and the little, the small sources couldn't keep up with production, so we had to do something, either to develop more coal-fired power plants or do something else, or to get into the nuclear business. And there was a big public demand for an open discussion. People were very much afraid of this nuclear development. They've seen the accidents in England, and in America, and the Four Mile and whatever has happened, and we eventually got the impression so strong that the politicians they didn't dare to start up the process. There was no election or nothing like it, but suddenly the opinion in the government turned and they rejected the proposal from the utility companies, and we didn't have any nuclear power. So from that day you could say there was a big demand for development, and the politicians they supported schemes where you could get support for developing wind power, solar energy, and also so you could utilise whatever available. And that politic has been very active and very much in favour of renewable energy ever since, so you could say that, that is one of the main backgrounds for this process of development in Denmark. And the last one is that we don't have much resources in Denmark. We haven't got a lot of oil, we haven't got a lot of coal, so we could just lean back and say we've got enough energy. We are already, always looking for, for energy, we need energy all the time, so for that reason we also needed to be more independent. We are also a proud people in Denmark and we want to be independent from sources coming from abroad.

We have a lot of co-operation with European partners in island development, and we see a significant difference between Danish development and, say, Italian or Spanish development. I don't know if it's interesting. They talk a lot and they have a lot of big plans, very fancy, glossy plans, and they do absolutely nothing about it, not on a local level. They have some big investment projects where you could say it's in the hands of big business people and banks, and they'll do the development, and the public people will never be, they'll never have the opportunity of being asked a simple question as do you want to participate? In Greece if they want to develop renewable energy on an island it'll be a national scheme and they'll come and install solar cells or PV plants and they've never asked installation. I asked a Greek politician once and he said well, the public on the island, the people on the islands they just want to have electricity, so when they switch on their electricity there should be electricity in the bulb, and if there's not they'll call a utility company, so it's always the utility company that is responsible for electricity. So if we can see any positive development in changing to renewable we will just do it, and for the benefit of the population. Well, I said, why don't you ask the population to participate and invest money in the project – no, well that's not a tradition in Greece.