

Lifestyle Changes as Environmental Strategy (14)

Ditlev Nissen - Danish Network of Sustainable Communities

An ecovillage is a settlement that includes all aspects of life: All ages, culture, working life, local production etc. They strive to integrate human activity into the surrounding natural environment in a gentle way. They seek to bring down the energy consumption and the environmental impact. The goal is working towards a healthy development that ensures good living conditions for future generations. Ecovillages are living laboratories for a sustainable future.

The progress occurs in the shape of a spiral. From the individual's desire for a good life in a sustainable setting, to unfolded the vision in cooperation with others. Buying land, making a local development plan, preparing the building sites and building houses. Families with young children get involved with kindergartens and schools. The operation and self-governance is based on voluntary efforts. Self-sufficiency and enterprises hatch and grow into workplaces. It is about living and learning. Certain communities suffer from conflicts; others grow through them. Often the communities, which are impaired by conflicts, are the ones that solely focus on the ecological and financial dimension. Communities that also accommodate the social and spiritual dimension seem to grow through conflicts.

A survey from 2009 shows that that CO₂ emissions in 3 Danish ecovillages are 60 % below the national average. Studies from Germany show that the CO₂ emission of Sieben Linden is 30 % of the German average. Studies from Scotland show that the ecological footprint of Findhorn is 50 % of the British average. The Danish ecovillages encourage the universities to start an interdisciplinary action-research project, to investigate and develop the effects of ecovillages in relation to energy consumption, environmental impact, lifestyle changes and new forms of welfare. What can the World learn from more than 40 years of citizen run social experiments?

After 20 years the municipalities begin to discover that ecovillages bring resources to the local area. For example Dyssekilde Ecovillage is the 5th subject in the business strategy of the council of Halsnæs. The council of Odsherred has set up an office for settlements with the purpose of attracting green communities to the municipality. Our vision in DEN is that there will be at least one ecovillage in every municipal in 2020. We see a lot of unprecedented opportunities for local development: Tourism, education centres, job creation and new kinds of local economies.

Creating sustainable (city)green; a framework for community projects (80)

Derk Stobbelaar - University of Applied Sciences Van Hall Larenstein

A critical reflection on community-based research projects, has learned that despite the great diversity in such projects, the basic elements are often similar. This notion made it possible to develop a framework for working with communities on (city)green projects. This framework consists of an overall governance structure in which the following aspects all have its place: a pro-active attitude, coalition forming (between communities, municipalities and other stakeholders), conflict management, interventions, managing the internal organisation, integral development and expectation management. All these aspects are related; gaining insight into how these aspects and their relations work in a specific situation make it possible to create sustainable solutions for neighbourhood questions. This model has been deduced from several Wageningen University Science Shop projects with multiple stakeholders in the domain of rural and urban landscapes with at first sight often conflicting interests. The model creates awareness of the many aspects an actor in such situations has to pay attention to in order to operate successfully, with respect to both ecological and social goals. It stimulates actors to integrate different stakes in one plan. We will illustrate this with two case studies of interventions of Wageningen University Science Shop. The first case resulted in an integrated rural development plan for a former mining area in the south of the Netherlands, the second in a plan for city gardening in the city of Utrecht which was beneficiary for many stakeholders. In both cases the capacities of local groups, students, researchers and teachers were combined. This process not only led to knowledge development, but also to capacity building and empowerment. In fact, the latter was the most important aim of the intervention. This paper is based on a book: Communities creating (city) green (2012, in Dutch: Bewoners maken het groen). Often, interventions such as those of the science shop are of vital importance, but the insights of the book make it easier for communities to find their own sustainable solutions.