

# Start with belief

**We can't change behavior, but we can change belief!  
Building shared beliefs is part of our success at Samsøe,  
and that's also what the "From Best to Next Practice"  
symposium is about.**

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The idea behind the Next Practice symposium is education and learning. How shall humanity move on, renew itself and keep up the spirit when facing the transformation to renewable energy? What does it take for the next generations to be able to manage the commons? What choices are crucial for us to take in order to lead lives worth living? How can we share our knowledge with the rest of the world?

UNESCO is leading in the education for sustainable development and it has the responsibility to monitor and evaluate this work globally. In its latest report on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), "Shaping the Education of Tomorrow", it is summed up:

"ESD is emerging as the unifying theme for many types of education that focus on different aspects

of sustainability. ESD is increasingly perceived as a catalyst for innovation in education. Boundaries between schools, universities, communities and the private sector are blurring due to a number of trends. ESD is often at the heart of new creative multi-stakeholder configurations involving these ESD-stakeholders. With the challenge of sustainable development as considerable as ever, recognition is growing that technological advances, legislation and policy frameworks are not enough. These need to be accompanied by changes in mindsets, values and lifestyles, and the strengthening of people's capacities to bring about change."

The intention with our Next Practice symposia are to employ and develop alternative methods to learn and educate and to share knowledge about the software needed to create sustainable societies. With the Energy Academy as a platform Samsøe has

12 years of experience with local development, community power and energy democracy. We have explored and developed new concepts through our professional skills, and the use of pre-sensing arenas (presense and sensing) in order to be able to implement the changes, make the investments and harvest the lowest hanging fruits. The transformation that has taken place on Samsøe since we won the competition in 1998 to become Denmark's renewable energy island has given us a solid knowledge and practical experience concerning what it takes. This is our stepping stone for the next steps which we have already begun to take. This is the reason why we call our line of global symposia "from best to next practice."

Every second year we will host the symposium and invite our global network and partners to participate. We aim to each time invite 40 percent new contacts and lines of business that can support the interdisciplinary work we do and create new business opportunities. The purpose of the symposium is also to get feedback on our work from the outside in order to learn if we're walking the right path and to see if what we do can also be applied elsewhere in the world.

At Samsøe Energy Academy we have many different on-going and ad hoc projects, and we want to keep on track to fulfill our purpose as defined and described in our regulations. The academy is a project house, and we're a self-governing institution with a professional board.

**Testing and improving our strategy**  
The symposium "From best to Next Practice" is one of the legs of the chair we're sitting on at the Energy Academy. In business language you would call it a strategy. We often borrow new professional terms from other lines of business, and the "2.0" is borrowed from the IT business. 2.0 is meant to illustrate that we are taking the next steps in transforming Samsøe to a sustainable society. These new steps include a high awareness of how the individual is engaged. Every citizen needs to know the history and be aware of how the projects we work on at the Energy Academy can contribute to the future of Samsøe.

Our strategy 2.0 is soon to be found on our home page, and we are continuously working with the strategy in practice. This means that there is no final version. You can read more about this in the article "Samsøe 2.0", written by our manager Michael Larsen (page 18-19).

In 2012 we developed the first edition of the part of our strategy related to the EU as part of a competition with 63 participating countries. Who in the EU had the best strategy on different parameters, who could describe the best case in Europe? The Energy Academy won the **Manage Energy Award**

The concept "from best to next" is a metaphor we use both internally and externally to stimulate the individuals in our local community and in our global network. Samsøe is a hundred percent self-supplied with renewable energy, but the journey doesn't stop

here. All of us who live and work on the island must continuously improve and optimize what we do in order to create a sustainable community where we can live the good life – and show the world that this transition is possible and positive.

The core of the Energy Academy's work is to be in dialogue with the stakeholders around us. The local citizens and community are of pivotal importance to justify our survival, our continued existence on the island. It is a mix of the competences at the Energy Academy and the local entrepreneurs that enables us to reduce our energy use and implement new systems. You can read more about the purpose of our work in our regulations.

### **Why we do conferences**

What is it that we – the citizens of Samsøe and the Energy Academy – have been able to do on Samsøe? When people ask us how we did it, we usually say: "By doing it!". Samsøe is now producing more energy than we use, and we export energy to the mainland. We have invested 440.000.000 DKK in this transition. 70 percent comes from the citizens of Samsøe while the rest is national and EU funds.

During the latest years we have become still more aware of the different parts of this transformational project. We now see a strength in splitting things up and working on more than one path. Our new exhibition at the Energy Academy illustrates this. In the past we became Denmark's renewable energy island, in the present we're working on Samsøe 2.0, and in the future – by 2030 – we

will be independent of fossil fuels. All this work is behind the concept "from best to next" which – besides the technological hardware – also includes a lot of software.

In this work it is important to pick the lowest hanging fruits, and this is the main reason why we're also working in Japan, the United States, the EU as well as in Denmark. That's also the reason why we host the conference "From the best to the Next" every second year on Samsøe. The title as and the honor of being Denmark's renewable energy island is a reality, and the Energy Academy and the municipality of Samsøe are continuously developing and implementing new energy solutions that reduce the use of energy in the long run. During our years at the Energy Academy we have learned that a part of our daily job is to communicate with and facilitate all the thousands of guests who want to visit the island and the Energy Academy, some of whom also want to participate in workshops and conferences. This means that our focus today is on the "how" part of the equation and on the concrete tools that are important for the transformation of society today – "the software", with another borrowed word from the IT world.

### **A software developer**

Communication, language and symbols must be investigated and improved together with the local community and in accordance with the Energy Academy's vision and intention. The Energy Academy's way of seeing the world must be visible. We are not only experts, we are also ex-

perimenters and modern generalists. We need the engagement from every single individual, everyone should be heard. In our experience, all groups, also those who do not know a lot about energy transitions, can provide valuable insights into how we manage the change. We also know from experience how important it is to get everyone on board.

The Energy Academy works with people from all levels of society, and we need everybody to join in if we are to succeed. At Samsøe we have created an energy democracy where the local citizens have ownership and responsibility. If we are to change behaviours, the atmosphere, psychology and action must be integrated in our approach. Choice awareness is an important part of our work, and I teach the two thousand pupils who every year visit the Energy Academy that the existential and individual choice is a precondition. Changing belief comes first. Choice awareness is important for all actors in the sustainable transition, no matter whether we're talking small or large scale energy changes. We believe that our model for changing beliefs – and behaviours – can be used in many parts of the world. Japan is already doing what we taught them, and their experience is that ownership makes a difference.

Our vision is that everybody should be able to go along and join in on the development based on free and individual choice. The Energy Academy is continuously working with both the hardware, including the economic element, and the software of sustainable development and education. It is

crucial that what we have done and what we do can be measured in the form of resource plans and practical implementation of approved technological solutions.

### **More bottom lines**

It is not only the bottom lines that are measurable at the moment which are important. Many aspects are hard to measure and therefore hard to make visible to the naked eye.

Many different nationalities and cultures in our network have asked us about the way we work and what it is that makes it possible to create so trustful setups and go new ways. How did we get the local population to invest a lot of money in the transition to renewable energy? How can a society that is fairly conservative have the courage to act and invest in the future, not only for their own sake, but also for future generations? What kind of leadership is necessary to do this?

This year's symposium has already given us a great yield in the form of new project applications, and it has confirmed that we need better digital platforms for exchanging experiences and knowledge between disciplines, skills and competences. "From Best to Next Practice" is setting a new and necessary agenda. It is in the relationships between people that togetherness, leadership and ownership flourish. New commons are what we need in order to motivate the faith that we can actually change and reduce our energy use. It's about changing beliefs, not behavior – in the first place.