

Danish and foreign students are working with sustainable development on Samsø

By Project leaders Malene Annikki Lundén and Ea Svenning Zimmer

"Samsø Energy Academy has created a lighthouse that people from all over the world want to visit and be a part of. Students who want to come to the Energy Academy for a longer period of time will be ambassadors for Samsø in the world and it will be good PR for Samsø and thus attract more foreign guests to the island", says Susanne Hesseldal, owner of Hotel and Foodhouse "RumogRooms" in Brundby.

Students with a great interest in Samsø

The past few years, Samsø Energy Academy (E.A.) has focused on education. In 2012, E.A. launched a new strategy by the name Samsø 2.0. making capacity building within sustainable development the frame of our educational path. Among other things, we have established a partnership with Aalborg University (AAU) the next five years, for which we receive annual funding. This involves E.A. delivering lectures about sustainable development and local public participation processes at Aalborg University, which means we receive requests from students, who wish to go to Samsø to do field work. Unfortunately, we are forced to turn down many students due to lack of capacity, while others withdraw their proposal when they discover the financial costs of a stay on Samsø.

The search for knowledge about the Renewable Energy Island project

The Energy Academy has collected the knowledge and data of the development from 1997 until today and has launched an online Energy Institute. Go to www.energiinstituttet.dk to know more.

Universities and students that are able to raise funds come to Samsø to look into the story about Denmark's Renewable Energy Island. They all want to interview passionate people behind the project and see if the story about Samsø as a sustainable model community is true. The past seven years, the Energy Academy's department for education has received around four students a year from all over the world. In total 24 students. In addition to this, the E.A. delivers numerous lectures and workshops for students around the world. As a result of this, the E.A. does not need a sales department in order to attract more students. Different universities connect and recommend E.A. as a place suitable for interns. Therefore, the number of requests increases each year.

From one-day trips to long-term education at Samsø Energy Academy

In addition to the annual interns, the E.A. has held three courses for groups of students from all over the world during the fall of 2014. One course was with 21 students and teachers from Maine, USA. They spend four weeks on Samsø. They stayed at Ballen

Camping, they rented bicycles and did their shopping at local stores, bakeries,

fish retailer and more. This is tourism and leisure economy in a new form – it is good for the entire island and the community's business.

Susanne Hesseldal says: "The more people the Energy Academy is teaching, the more PR we will get. I met a Dutch family at a party in Denmark. The next day they were going to Samsø on vacation because their kids had read about Samsø as a renewable energy island in school. The kids had taken an interest in this and talked a lot about it, so the family decided to go there on vacation. A great story that resulted in 3 overnight stays for an entire family during the height of the season".

Academic tourism is good for the local economy

Samsø is a great place for academic tourism since the island demonstrates the real and practical example of sustainability. The fact that the people of Samsø develop opportunities for visits with a qualitative content ensures that the island continues to be interesting for a lot of people around the world. The students hold different academic degrees and engagements regarding their assignments. The staff at the Energy Academy design the courses making sure universities and students learn about Samsø as a community. Students find local accommodation and do their shopping in local stores. They visit local restaurant and even go to the movies. They use the ferry to get to and from the main land. All in all, the students benefit several businesses on Samsø.

Susanne Hesseldal concludes: *"I think the Energy Academy attracts a lot of academic tourists to Samsø. They schedule their courses in the off season, which is great for the island's rhythm, when it comes to finding accommodation. Today, the Energy Academy takes part in keeping hotels and restaurants busy in the off season. It is my impression that the Energy Academy is also trying to distribute their events to the entire island, so everyone benefits."*