

## **Ambitions Influence Future Planners**

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In April of 2018, a group of Environmental Planning students from Aalborg University visited Samsø Energy Academy, which immediately got the mixed group from both the Aalborg and Copenhagen campuses to state their individual career ambitions.

Our ambitions spanned from international projects, future energy supplies on Mars, to finding at some point a meaningful business job that leads to change on both the national and international level.

That's how the first day of our three-day study trip to Samsø started, which gave us an understanding of the processes involved in Samsø's transformation, as well as a local understanding of the island – primarily by bicycle.

There's been no lack of ambitions on Samsø. Back in 1997, the island's ambition was to become Denmark's first island that was 100% reliant on renewable energy. This ambition became reality ten years later with the local residents' courage and strong community drive.

More than 20 years later, Samsø is used as a model for renewable energy, and Samsø Energy Academy partners with similar NGO's around the world – including in Japan to Hawaii. This has boosted tourism and business on the island, prompted renovation and new construction, as well as helped improve the island overall.

**Despite the island's contribution to national values and its international role in the green transition, the Minister of Transportation hasn't hesitated in proposing an automobile bridge over Kattegat that would be routed across the island, in order to create a more direct connection between Denmark's two largest cities: Copenhagen and Aarhus.**

Opinions about the bridge proposal are naturally split among the 30 students and future planners, who within a year must decide to major in Urban, Energy, or Environmental Planning.

However, right now the focus is on the interdisciplinary aspects of our studies, which are designed to equip us to participate in evaluating and planning projects, which like the Kattegat bridge project don't just affect urban mobility, but also have social and environmental consequences – not least of which on Samsø. Samsø Energy Academy offered us lots of interdisciplinarity and complexity during Aalborg University's three-day visit, and I – and hopefully all of my fellow students – left Samsø with tools and inspiration for our own individual work as planners.

The visit was an excellent example of how we all can realize our ambitions by nurturing local sparks to create a huge bonfire that can be seen by the rest of the world – exactly as Samsø has done over the past 21 years.