

INTERVIEWS IN DANISH ECOVILLAGES

THE BEGINNING

DYSSEKILDE

Dyssekilde was started as a group in 1983, inspired by the philosophy of 'Martinus' the group wanted to create a living community built on the main principles of this philosophy. Apart from the philosophy, the group had some different criteria to the physical property. They wanted to have a max. 1 hour drive from Copenhagen, be close by a shop and a bus- or train station, and have the opportunity to have their own water management system. It took 7 years of meetings before the community had purchased a property. In the meantime, the group tried to purchase different properties. In 1987, the work to process the zoning started, and the final property was found in 1988. Socially, the 7 years meant a lot of changes in the group and a change in the overall vision of the project, to one less focussed on the 'Martinus' philosophy. Some important helpers in the process were the municipality, especially the technical department, the previous owner of the property who endorsed and helped the project, a series of architects and various local 'neighbours' who supported the project.

SVANHOLM

In 1977 two couples living in Copenhagen formulated the first vision of the ecovillage and published it in a local newspaper while calling for a meeting to start a group that could realise the vision. A group formed quickly and met every 14 days to continue to work with the vision and take practical steps towards realisation. One of the couples knew about the mansion/estate of Svanholm, and that it was for sale, and after just one year the group decided to buy it. It was a quick decision to keep the group together and in May 1978 the contract was signed. The main difficulty was the legal work, both for the right to buy the land, the legal status and the maximum number of inhabitants. They had a lawyer assist the purchasing of land and to create the proper legal structures.

FRI & FRO

The creation of FRI & FRO came from an impulse to create an Ecovillage similar to the Ecovillage of 'Friland' in Jutland on the island of Sjælland in Denmark. The ideas of the community (principles, mission and vision) were first laid out in 2002. A group of 20-30 people from Copenhagen started meeting, the statutes were written and the association was created. They also spread the idea of the community through the channels of LØS, the Danish Ecovillage Network. The community was first blocked by a rejection from the municipality that they were looking to create the ecovillage in. Then in 2003 they started collaborating with another municipality. In 2004, 16 families bought the property together, through the association. The price for a plot of land in the community was 200.000 DKK per family. In 2004 they started planting the first trees on the property, including an oak tree symbolising the start of the community. In 2005, the property was made ready for building. Many families lived in caravans in the first 3 years as they built their houses. Only in 2017 the common house was finished.

SOLENS HJERTE

The spiritual co-housing 'Solens Hjerte' (Heart of the Sun) was started slightly by mistake. 5 individuals who all knew each other moved in together. After two years of successful cohabitation, the rental contract at the time expired and the group needed to find a new place to live. They found the current property of Solens Hjerte, a large property with several big houses that had earlier served as a nursery and nursery school. In order to buy the property the group created an Association that allows members to co-own property and housing and they opened the group to new members. A lawyer assisted the purchase of the property, and in 1994 27 individuals moved into the new cohousing/ecovillage. The basic value of the community was living in compassion with one another. The common house/spaces were built after 5 years. Today 50-55 people live in Solens Hjerte.

HALLINGELILLE

The community started as a dream of one person. She wanted to make it big, like 100 houses, with kindergarten and hospice. But it ended up with 24 houses, as that was what the municipality would allow, at that time. Later, when they found out the inhabitants were good tax payers and the houses very good, the municipality encouraged Hallingelille to expand to 30 houses. In the beginning, the existing village was not so pleased. They are said to have feared what kind of hippies and 'city people' would move in. Nowadays they gladly use the premises of the ecovillage to walk their dogs, show their families around and let their children swim in the lake. Interestingly, the resistance towards the new ecovillage gave rise to the existing village to get together in a way they never did before! Some people in Hallingelille ended up spending up to 2 years in temporary housing on the plot while awaiting municipality permissions. Those years for many represent the best years of Hallingelille - living a simple life. In 2005 the common house was built where everybody could meet, eat and take showers, while the houses were being built. A small kindergarten was established, for the children to be at home watching the parents build. After the building process, the children started attending nearby kindergartens - which was good for integration. Nowadays around 50 adults and 30 children form the community and since its take off, around 5 families have been replaced. Nobody really wants to leave the place they have built up, together.