

Danish experience in transition to circular economy and other aspects of sustainability

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Focus of presentation

- Social justice and sustainable transition in the acceleration society
- Transition towards a more circular economy
- Transition towards more renewable energy
- Sustainable transition and workers / employees

The acceleration society (Hartmut Rosa, 2014)

- The self-inforcing acceleration cycle:
- **Technological acceleration**
 - Acceleration of production and transportation processes
 - Acceleration of innovation
- **Acceleration of social change**
 - The shrinkage of the present: Norms, values and knowledge lose value faster
- **Acceleration of the speed of life**
 - The (paradoxical) constant lack of time



Environmental initiatives shaped within the society: Social justice?

- Acknowledge existing inequalities in society
- Environmental initiatives shaped by/within existing inequalities. *Electrical cars? Good products expensive?*
- Avoid reinforcing existing inequalities
- Social justice challenges for:
 - **Social groups:** Low income groups
 - **Professions within 'black' sectors:** Meat industry, oil drilling
 - **Local areas:** Esbjerg: Oil and gas => wind turbines
 - **Internationally:** Impact of consumer demands and changes in consumer practices on working conditions and employment?

Circular economy

Circular economy principles

- **Slowing resource flows:**
 - Through the design of long-life products and product-life extension through repair, upgrading etc.
- **Narrowing resource flows:**
 - Increasing resource efficiency by using fewer resources per product and by covering needs with fewer products through sharing strategies
- **Closing resource flows:**
 - Closing the loop between post-use and production through recycling

Circular economy principles

- **Slowing resource flows:**

Waste - new resources
or lost resources?

- Through the design of long-life products and product-life extension through repair, upgrading etc.

- **Narrowing resource flows:**

- Increasing resource efficiency by using fewer resources per product and by covering needs with fewer products through sharing strategies

- **Closing resource flows:**

- Closing the loop between post-use and production through recycling

Consumer survey 2020 in The Capital Region of Denmark: Repair practices: Electrical and electronic products

Product group	Share of households with repair need 2019-2020 (per year)	Share of "broken" products being repaired	Share of repair needs where the product was < 2 years old	Share of repair needs where the product was 2-5 years old	Share of repair needs where the product was 5-10 years old
Mobile phone	18%	45%	32%	56%	9%
Computer	10%	50%	16%	41%	32%
TV-set	4%	14%	9%	17%	40%
Refrigerator or freezer	6%	24%	6%	18%	31%
Washing machine or tumble dryer	7%	37%	9%	19%	35%
Dish washer	5%	26%	7%	19%	36%
Kitchen machines	11%	13%	22%	35%	27%
Tools	3%	14%	13%	23%	37%

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Repaired:
Cheaper than new product

Not repaired:
More expensive than new product
Could not be repaired

It is not new to repair household products....

But new that 'modern' citizens organise their own pop-up repair facilities **because** repair has become too expensive and too difficult to access

Denmark: Around 85 local repair cafes within 5 years

International network with > 1500 repair cafes developed =>

'Right to repair' movement => hard lobbying necessary



<https://reparationsnet.wordpress.com/>

Local civil society repair cafe

Governance in the acceleration society

- State – reluctant to regulate
- Market – trust in ‘spontaneous coordination’
- Civil society – expecting the knowledgeable consumer
- Lock-in governance
 - Reluctant to regulate the basic system dynamics
 - Suddenly: The power of urgency
- *From reluctant recycling to urgent liberalisation of the waste sector*
 - *Claiming incineration capacity will be reduced*

Renewable energy

- Public or market-based transition?

Fast green transition versus local democracy? (recent Danish governmental programme)

4.6 Increase the expansion of renewable energy and transition away from fossil heating:

Initiate an analysis of whether the current **distribution of tasks** between **state authorities, regions and municipalities** can be made more efficient, with a view to **ensuring a high pace in the development of renewable energy on land**

The government will work for the state to play an active role in the planning of energy parks as a supplement to the municipal planning of renewable energy projects. The expansion of the energy parks **must be market-driven and handled by private actors**

6.1 A coherent Denmark....

Investigate how neighbors and local municipalities can best gain economic benefits by 'offering' land for onshore renewable energy

Maybe: Establishing local energy communities. Expanding a current bonus scheme

Sustainable transition and
workers / employees

National plan for green transition from the Danish national trade union association (FH)



Trade union confederation survey among employees

- **Positive expectations to green transition (>50%):**
 - Can improve environment, nature and biodiversity
 - Improved conscience in relation to future generations
 - Can improve health
- **Negative expectations to green transition (>20%):**
 - Goods and services become more expensive
 - Inequality is increased
 - Might create conflicts and reduce social cohesion

Demands to green transition from the Danish national trade union confederation (FH) (greentransitiontogether.com)

- 1) Denmark must be a leading country
- 2) The green transition must create more good jobs
- 3) The solution is collective decisions and binding international cooperation:
 - Society must finance the green transition
 - The individual can take on co-responsibility, but it cannot be left to the individual to solve the challenge of climate change
- 4) The climate crisis and the green transition must not increase inequality in Denmark