

## Danish Visions

**Sometimes real change comes about as a result of teamwork, sometimes individuals with personal drive and vision change the way we think and act. The challenges we face in the 21st century call for visionaries that can push change onto a greener path. Through local, regional and global commitment, Danes are hoping to play their part.**

### **How do we ensure an ongoing focus on climate change?**

The Greenland ice cap is shrinking at an unprecedented pace. Consequently, Denmark has launched the PROMICE programme in order to monitor the ice. The monitoring is a part of the overall vision of the Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy – the first of its kind in the world, established in 2007 as a part of the Danish government's increased efforts to promote a greener and more sustainable society. Through the ministry's climate adaptation strategy, the government aims to ensure that Danish society successfully adapts to inevitable climate change. These efforts also include a governmental goal that Denmark one day becomes independent of fossil fuels.

The goals are also meant to have an impact beyond Denmark's borders. For instance the Greenland Dialogue is a first-of-its kind initiative, inaugurated in 2005. All dialogues have followed the same concept developed by the Danish Minister for Climate and Energy: a limited number of participants meeting in unique climate-relevant surroundings, hoping to inspire environment and climate ministers to engage in substantive and open discussions on future actions on climate change. These discussions have greatly contributed to advances in international negotiations and have been important events in the process leading up to COP15.

### **What superpowers does a climate hero possess?**

The answer is: willpower and the ability to inspire others. When Times Magazine named Søren Hermansen a "Hero of the environment" in 2008, he was widely recognized for his work as the driving force of the Samsø Project, resulting in the small Danish island becoming self-sufficient in renewable energy within 10 years. Hermansen has become a green hero, traveling from country to country telling the story of Samsø's success when he is not at home running the Energy Academy, a research centre for clean power.

The outcome of his efforts is striking. Wind turbines currently provide 100% of Samsø's electricity and 70% of the island's heating comes from renewable energy sources. Today Samsø is not just carbon-neutral – it actually produces 10% more clean electricity than it uses, with the extra power fed back into the grid at a profit.

### **How can visionary design make a difference?**

From public transportation, infrastructure and public design to fashion, textiles and furniture, design is an inherent part of Danish culture. Apart from stylish furniture from the 1950s, Danish Design has become known for balancing aesthetics with function and for its problem-solving, humanistic approach to design. It also represents one of Denmark's biggest fields of export.

Today young Danish designers are fusing tradition with modern lifestyle, taste and needs. However, global environmental and social issues have taken centre stage and the age of industrial design traditions has been superseded by the age of information design and design that addresses much more complex issues than before.

Take for instance Danish designer Hân Pham. She is the designer of Antivirus – a protective cap that turns an empty soft drink can into a safe depository for used needles. Vietnamese by background, Hân Pham fled Hanoi's rule in the 1980s. Rescued at sea and taken to a UN refugee camp in Singapore, Hân Pham met with misfortune in the shape of a dirty vaccination needle. The concept of Antivirus stems from this experience. The hope is that the visionary design of Antivirus can help prevent unsafe injections. In this sense Han Phâm is just one of many Danish visionary designers facing up to the challenges that call for a greener and more socially conscious way of thinking.