

The 100 Mile Energy Diet

Dining at the Table of
Community-Centered Clean Energy

Chris Henderson & Soren Hermansen



Lemvig, Denmark

The concept of a ‘100 Mile Diet’ is evocative. Source ingredients for family nutrition locally, from farmers and food producers you know, to reduce reliance on factory foods with questionable provenance that require long distance shipping, producing higher emissions and pollution.

Community energy generation ownership essentially adopts the same precepts and takes opportunities further: with co-ownership between local interests and partners. Such sustainable innovation has come far yet, we must put our pedals to the floor accelerating forward.

There is domination on the part of large corporations, utilities, and governments – often holding market monopoly positions marshaled by an army of consultants. We risk slipping into a

future of eco-domination with renewable energy projects and infrastructure controlled by mega enterprises with marginal community participation unless more inclusive policies and practices become the norm.

In an era when we value our freedoms, it is remarkable that energy dependency is still the norm, worldwide. That perspective needs to dramatically change if we are to have an inclusive and just clean energy future.

Renewable energy may be well intentioned, but it also needs to be well meaning. As we lay the groundwork for energy transition, we need to redesign electricity market structures & fiscal arrangements for the next wave of community clean energy.

Let’s consider these *Core Change Vectors for Transformative Energy* that embody the principle of “Responsible Inclusion.”

A

Profile Community Clean Energy Participation Models: The value of community clean energy partnerships with private-public enterprises and utility interests has been categorically proven by the [Samsø Energy Academy](#) and [Indigenous Clean Energy](#). We now need to capture the details of a core set of Partnership Models, demonstrating the “how’s” of integrating private/public capital and expertise with local co-ownership for the rising tide of clean energy infrastructure.

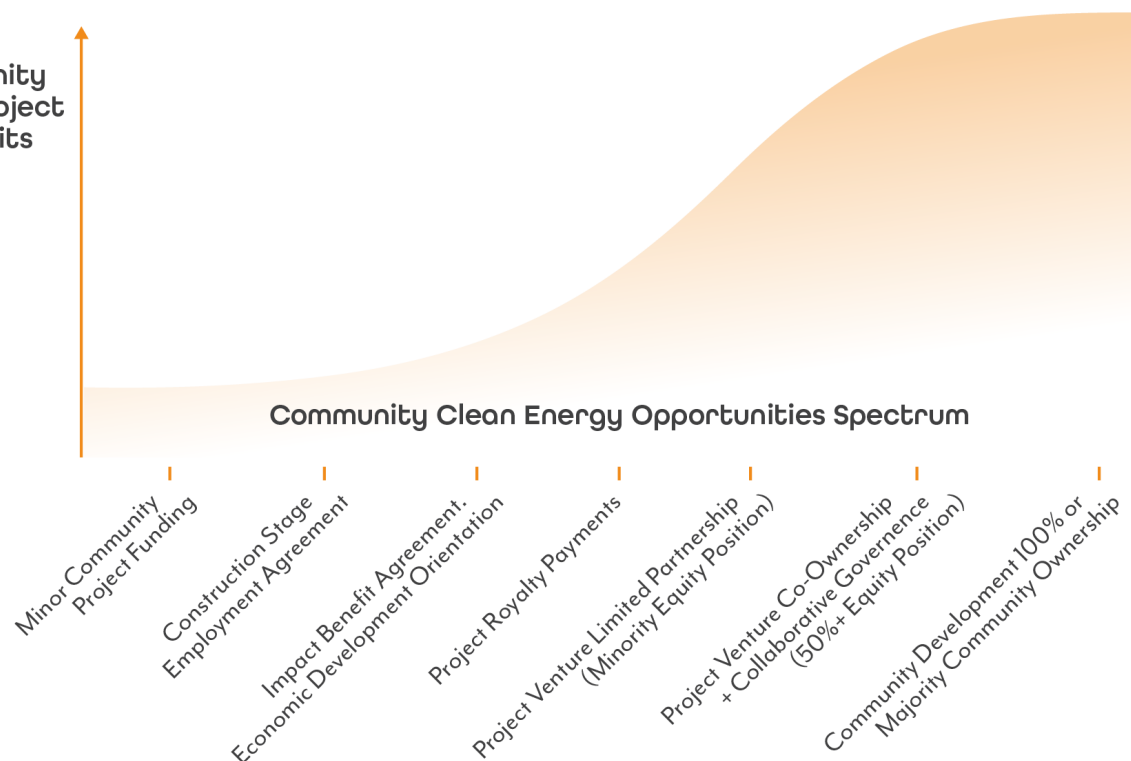
B

Design New Social Finance Arrangements: The vast scale of capital required for a Net Zero future is daunting. We need to unlock huge sums of capital and design new and augmented social finance arrangements to generate maximum value from Community Trusts, Citizen Cooperatives, Clean Energy Guilds and Labor Unions, and other innovative Social Purpose Entities. Let’s take money out of our mattresses and low yield bank accounts to earn returns from clean electrons!

C

Adopt an Inclusion Mindset for Clean Energy Policies & Electricity Procurement: An Electrification Economy must be guided by systemic change, including top-down rule-setting and market norms that unleash bottom-up community clean energy ownership. Governments and public energy agencies have been unnecessarily cautious taking the view the decentralized energy systems and social finance carries risks. The results of community energy leadership prove that would be a flawed conclusion. Community energy equity supports reliable, cost competitive and durable clean energy infrastructure.

Scale of Community
Clean Energy Project
Life Cycle Benefits



These *Core Change Vectors* will amplify more equitable and enduring economic dividends. Consider the infographic above which illustrates how greater community clean energy participation generates large economic outcomes.

Does community power work? Categorically, Yes! Vestas, the wind energy behemoth is installing among the world's largest wind turbines of 15 MW in Lemvig, Denmark. Yet, the project has a "small is beautiful" mindset – owned by 2,800 members of a local guild, a cooperative. This means that every fifth citizen in Lemvig over the age of 18 has invested in the project. Not one objection to the wind turbine has been raised.

Chris also shared this story with Søren: "Recently, one of my sons and I had a short vacation in Bilbao part of the Basque Region, Spain. One of our excursions was to the football museum of Athletic Bilbao. A team which can only be comprised of players with Basque heritage, supported by over 44,000 local members of the Club. We were there a couple of weeks before the Spanish Championship, Copa del Rey finals game. The community's spirit was palpable. The Team went on to win!"

Can we learn from the experiences of Lemvig and Bilbao?
For local community leadership and participation generates substantive and sustained shared benefits from clean energy – a prime pillar for a Net Zero economy.



"We are at a pivot point. We can tap into community owned and generated clean energy in abundance. To do so, we will need to radically re-think and re-engineer electrification policies and markets. The benefits of this sustainable energy approach are more and more definitive."

– SØREN HERMANSEN, SAMSO ENERGY ACADEMY

Søren Hermansen has been the manager of the Samsø Energy Academy since 1997. Some 6,000 people visit the Samsø Energy Academy every year. Søren won the Göteborg-award in 2009, also known as the environmental version of the Nobel Prize for his work with sustainable energy on Samsø.