

Resume of the first meeting in the Climate Assembly at SAMF – 10. October 2023

1. Welcome

The Dean of the Faculty of Social Science – Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen – opened the assembly, welcomed the assembly-members, and thanked them for joining. He emphasized the importance of testing new forms of democracy and his hopes for using the format of an assembly in other areas of the university. Finally, he promised that the Faculty and the Deanery will take the recommendations forward and do their outmost to ensure that they are used in both the practical and strategic work to make the university more sustainable.



2. Introduction

We do Democracy – Sofie Puntervold Kristensen and Simone Klint - introduced the program for the whole process, the core question, the mandate, the sortition strategy. They also introduced how We Do Democracy work with deliberative democracy and how assemblies like this one can be used as an additional route of democratic influence. Assemblies are used to get a thorough dialogue with representatives of a population to get well-considered recommendations on a difficult issue. An assembly like this does not replace existing structures but can supplement them by bringing topics and well-considered recommendations from a representative group into the decision-making rooms.

3. Why is it time to act and why is SAMF crucial?

Peter Ditlevsen, Professor in Physics of Ice, Climate and Earth, University of Copenhagen and Anne Jensen, Senior Scientist at Department of Environmental Science, Aarhus University in a discussion facilitated by Zakia Elvang from We do Democracy:

Peter and Anne both emphasized that we are in the time of acting now as it is now widely agreed that the climate-crisis is existing. Peter suggested that the university could be more ambitious in their goals, commenting on the 50% goal.

Anne pointed that the role of a university is to produce new knowledge and at SAMF we know a lot about people, structures, power, and politics, which is important knowledge in relation to the green transition. The combination of the research in these core fields and the assembly is important and the human factor is crucial for the change needed.



A participant asked how they defined the green transition.

Peter answered that it is when you can separate economic growth from CO₂-emissions and that the biodiversity crisis is another decoupled problem.

Annes answer was different. She finds that the biodiversity-crisis is closely connected to the green transition and defines the green transition as a fundamental change in how we make societies. It is not just a change or a decoupling, but it is a post-carbon-society, where we can still travel and do other things, but in different ways for all to thrive.

Another participant asked why the change does not happen when we de facto have all the solutions? A big question, and the short answer from Anne was that climate tends to always come in as the second or third crisis on a list – there is always something more urgent to handle - a war, a famine or an earthquake where the result is much more visible. Also, democratic legitimacy always needs to be a focus-point and people therefore define the pace.

Finally, Peter and Anne were asked to give their best advice to the assembly when working with recommendations:

Peter emphasized the overall societal challenge that we simply have to emit less, while Anne urged the assembly to remember that we here in Denmark are the privileged ones and that when working with the recommendations, we should think about the future for all and that we should remember that there are always losers and gainers.



4. Panel talk on SAMF's climate target and work.

Zakia interviewed Sara Hageman, Associate Dean for education, Tomas Refslund, Sustainability Lead and Rune Heiberg Hansen, Director of the Faculty about the sustainability work at the faculty, the dilemmas and how the assembly and the recommendations fit into the rest of the work at the Faculty and the University and what

Rune started by explaining that there are competing interests at stake when we want to become more sustainable. Currently, we have the discussion about travelling less with flight and at the same time ensuring high quality international research. His hopes, for the assembly is that the assembly can help us make the right support-structures to support the needed behavioural changes.

Tomas pointed out that it is a matter of balancing the needs. The University, with about 50.000 people, is a society in itself with people with different opinions.



We need systemic and behavioural changes, and we need to look at the data and start with the areas where we have the largest footprint. Tomas hopes that the assembly can help challenge the decisions – both those already made and those on its way (for example strategy and administrative reform) - and be that extra push that leads to new decisions.

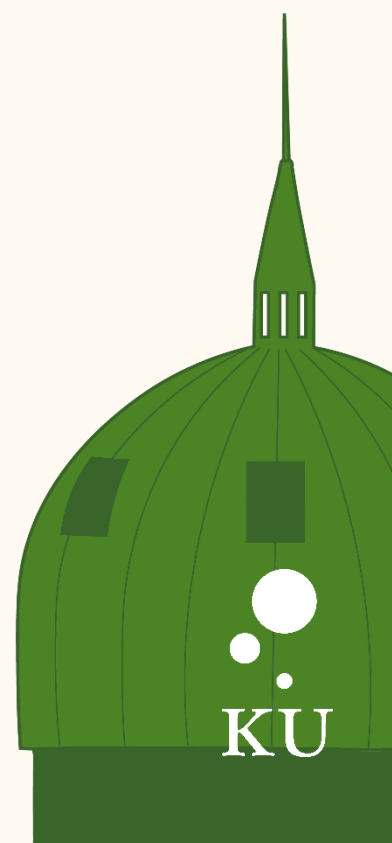
Sara stated that the biggest impact we as a university can have in relation to sustainability is to ensure that the people who graduate from this institution are well-equipped with knowledge, tools, and methods to work for a sustainable and balanced society. Today we have courses within sustainability, but we also have a selective bias as it is currently only the already interested who choose these courses. Sara hopes that the assembly can present strong recommendations on how we can actually change education.

How do we bring the knowledge related to sustainability into our programmes as a core value and not just as a topic? This was questioned by a participant, that explained that when students have pushed for more sustainability knowledge in the educations, they have been met with the answer that it is limiting academic freedom. Sara acknowledged this dilemma and emphasized that we cannot overrule the democratic decision-making structures about content, but that strong recommendations from this assembly might help creating more ownership to the ideas of more sustainability at the institutes.

Participants asked how we can keep the spirits of change that comes out of this assembly, also when faculty leadership is changing, reforms are coming, and the faculty is moving to Søndre Campus?

Rune underlined that we don't need to rely on individuals because we have policy-structures that keep us going. He encouraged the assembly to challenge faculty and university leadership and to forget all the other things going on (administrative reform, kandidatreform, move to Søndre Campus) and not let them overtake the recommendations that are to be produced. Tomas suggested that the assembly can also provide recommendations on how sustainability can be incorporated in the reforms and Sara explained that there is an attempt to make the move to Søndre Campus a green move.

All three panellists expect that the recommendations will be equally important in new settings, under new leadership and in new educational programmes. There might even be better opportunities for implementation when things are changing, in particular, if recommendations are both short-term, medium-term and long-term.



5. Rules of the room

Assembly members worked individually and in groups to define the rules and secure a safe space for people.

6. What do you want to succeed with? And what worries you?

The members of the climate assembly looked at advantages and disadvantages of the way we handle the green transition both in our own organisation and on a societal level today. And furthermore what advantages and disadvantages we can imagine of a faculty that has reduced its Co2 emissions and more actively contributes to society's green transition.



7. Our values of the faculty

Assembly members reflected individually and discussed in groups.

8. Next meeting is 25. Oct. 16:30 in room 35.3.12

