SUSTAINABILITY INVESTIGATION
IN SCANDINAVIA

Brief Introduction to project (2 min)
A social impact fellowship titled “Sustainability Investigation in the Scandinavian Countries”
Met with 24 different people or organisations
Across 7 cities in 3 countries in Scandinavia: DK, SW and NW over 4 weeks
Worked 9 days on an organic and biodynamic farm

These countries, which have been well recognized for their sustainability initiatives
Decided to adopt an Anthropological perspective
Examining their cultural norms, attitudes and best practices in the area of sustainability
But first, why sustainability?

We will not go into its complicated definitions at the moment but Sustainability is a crucial topic at this time because we are in a situation where effects of climate change start to become more apparent, and there are a wide variety of responses to promote sustainable development.

We look at Singapore - Efforts on sustainability in Singapore have been centred on infrastructural changes. Is that sufficient to attain sustainable development? What does a culture of sustainability entail - is it merely the infrastructure or are there other reasons such as culture? Are the Scandinavians really world leaders in sustainable practices? If so, why is it the case?

Key Question: What creates and builds a culture of sustainability? History? Norms?

MORE INFO

the puzzling concept of sustainability - The ‘S’ word: What does it truly mean? There are multiple definitions of sustainability and sustainable development.

Brundtland report 1987 Our Common Future:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
3. So we went to three countries and this is what we saw (slides, 5 mins):

<<What We Saw>>

Food. An increasingly health conscious consumer market with an increase in the consumption of organic foods (organic, link with lifestyles and agriculture system)

Consumers are demanding and questioning the sources of food

Understand that food and agriculture are inextricably linked - presence of a significant ag sector across all three countries

Data: organic food market is growing by 5-7 per cent a year in Sweden

The demand for organic food is so high in Sweden that producers report that they are struggling to keep up with demand.
An immense number of bicycle lanes and people cycling on them with unique codes of conduct (link with transportation and energy)

In line with city and nationwide agendas
Copenhagen for instance hopes to become carbon neutral by 2050
40% of current traffic is made up of bicycles alone (bicycle congestion)
On the roads: safe cycling infrastructure that appeals to all walks of life to take the bike - young and old (to school, work), disabled
Trends towards adopting healthy, active lifestyles

People enjoying quality time with their friends and family in parks - young and old.

Pre-school Children in Sweden are taken camping outdoors by their teachers
Children in Copenhagen learn Biking safety from a young age,
(Link with Education and Access to Nature)
Citizens recycling taking the trouble to bring their recyclables back to the store for recycling (link with waste management)
Stores are equipped with machines that provide a refund for a deposit upon the return of a bottle

In Sweden 88% of all aluminum cans and PET bottles return to the recycling system and are recycled.
There are also large recycling facilities where people drive to dump their recyclables.

All voluntarily.
Employees in offices sort their trash into different categories, all voluntarily
Met with passionate and vocal leaders in the grassroots environmental movement who are able to collaborate closely with the state and other organizations to achieve their goals. (Link with collaboration, dialogue and egalitarian society)

e.g. Hurdal eco-village (scientists, engineers, and architects to talk together)
“I hate it when small countries say that just because they are small they can’t do much. It’s like saying that I should just stand still and not clap at the end of a concert because clapping won’t make a difference.”

– OLOV KALLGARN,
PRESIDENT OF NATURE CONSERVATION SOCIETY,MALMÖ, SWEDEN

Idea that even efforts at the individual level do contribute to a larger cause
WHAT CREATES A CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY?
And we found several answers to our questions that weren’t quite simple to decipher. It turns out that it is a combination of many intertwined factors that created this entire culture of sustainability.

HISTORY
CLOSENESS TO NATURE
EDUCATION FROM YOUNG
EGALITARIAN SOCIETY - care for the common good
Sustainability is an ingrained ethic, a fundamental value in society. Citizens don’t ask whether something is sustainable. They ask how sustainability has been incorporated.

**SCANDINAVIAN VALUES** are fundamentally different
Questioning assumptions of typical Singaporean lifestyle
“Typically someone in a position like mine would have a car or even a driver. But I don’t need one. I bike to work every morning.”

—DR HANS BRUYNINCKX, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Our experience here empowers us to think of ways to promote values of sustainability in our own community. We hope effective sustainability and environmental education can be inculcated in children from a young age. We hope to drive a shift away from spending time in the world of consumerism towards more quality time with families and friends in nature. And these would definitely require us to collaborate with key players in our community to unify the voices of other environmental organizations in constructive dialogues.
A. Enhance the role of educational institutions like Yale-NUS and its students in leading environmental education

In the line is an environmental education accelerator workshop for students in JCs/High Schools in Singapore and we serve as a platform for them to come in with ideas and we provide guidance and link them to industry partners/other collaborators who would be able to help propel their ideas forward

*importance of agricultural sector in singapore in our own education

The journey ahead requires strong leadership and collaboration to navigate obstacles, build consensus and inspire a shared vision.

*importance of values and care for the common good, civic participation

*TIMELINE for ACTION (concrete details) - next March

*What can people do in Yale-NUS and Singapore (relay to average person)
give strength to argument
Create Key Recommendations for Key Stakeholders
Broad level (what do we want Singapore to become and who should be involved)
Governments - Recommendations on Paper
NGOs - Sustainable Solutions Network - * COLLABORATION
Educational Institutions - integrating ideas into Sustainability Blueprint that we are working on in Yale-NUS as part of I’dECO

*TIMELINE for ACTION (concrete details)
Why is sustainability a crucial topic at this time? consumption? traffic?

Qn: Most often developed nations will find ways to preserve their own backyards but find ways to ‘pollute’ another’s backyard.

Qn: How does this relate to the economic system?
1. Capitalism is a main driving force but they are creative in using capitalist solutions to solve environmental problems (transiting to a green economy) e.g promoting renewable energy by driving demand (using large consumers to drive down prices)

2. Even with a capitalist system people respect the common good. People consume services vs materials. Circular economy.

Closeness to Nature?