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Sustainable Urban Design

By: Charlotte E. Henriksen, EnergyMap.dk

Published: 5/15/2009

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A newspaper bag with integrated solar panels providing power for a cell phone makes life just a little easier for the homeless. Meet Faktor 3 – the company behind the product – on EnergyMap.dk

Faktor 3 is a young design and development company focused mainly on integrating energy-efficient technology, such as solar cells, into industrial and urban design. The three factors of Faktor 3, are: Design, Technology and Sustainability.

For owner Barbara Bentzen sustainability has always been a key issue:

- Our society is extremely consumeristic; and I was really seeking some higher purpose for my craft. The whole idea of incorporating a renewable, free power source, such as solar power, into industrial design intrigued me.

Barbara Bentzen has been promoting the idea of eco-design for some years. She believes that integrating design with sustainability is the way forward:

- In Denmark we have a tradition of innovation, and we have the resources. We just have to remember to consider alternative methods every time we create a new design. We all want to make a difference, but at the moment it is difficult and expensive, so it is a lot easier to just continue as usual. This is a paradigm shift that requires both political and financial backing. It's going to take time, but we have taken the first steps, says Barbara Bentzen.

Power to the homeless

The four-man team of Faktor 3 are working on a wide range of projects ranging from building materials, to office furniture and paving stones.

One project, which has just been launched, is a solar-powered bag for homeless vendors in the street paper organization "Hus Forbi". The bag enables the paper vendors to charge their cell phones, which are vital for keeping in touch with friends, family and authorities.

The idea originated from a homeless man and is now a project sponsored by several Neighbourhood Councils, Agenda 21 Centres in Copenhagen and the Merkur Bank – in addition to being carried out as charity work by the project partners Miljøpunkt Bispebjerg, Hus Forbi and Faktor 3.

During the summer of 2009, all 500 of Hus Forbi's street newspaper vendors will be supplied with a solar cell bag. A prototype of the bag will be presented at the International Street Paper conference taking place in Bergen, Norway, in May 2009.

- This is a great project, says Barbara Bentzen. Usually the homeless have to literally steal power for their cell phones wherever they can. The challenge has been to create a solution that is durable, has a fast charging time and at the lowest price possible; and I think we have succeeded, producing these bags at 1/3 of the usual price.

Faktor 3's future challenges include designing office furniture with efficient indoor solar cells, solar powered waste collection and compression containers; and cost-efficient, easy-to-use solar lamps. The latter is a project in collaboration with the Risø DTU National Laboratory for Sustainable Energy aimed at providing lighting for African school children as an alternative to traditional, health hazardous, kerosene lamps.

Links

[Faktor 3 on EnergyMap.dk](#)